

HUMOR, RISK, & CHANGE™

Training Leader's Guide

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this Leader's Guide is to offer information that will help you answer questions, stimulate and guide discussion.

In guiding others through this training series your job is to have fun--it's dirty work, but someone has to do it! It is best to maintain an informal atmosphere for groups viewing the videotape. Humor, Risk & Change (HRC) should be presented as an enjoyable, interactive learning experience.

VALUE OF THE PROGRAM

HRC can be an important tool in many training and meeting formats.

- During or prior to periods of organizational change, pressure, and challenge, HRC can help strengthen the adaptability and creativity needed to cope with difficult transitions.
- HRC is a provocative meeting opener or closer for sessions on health, stress, change-management, customer relations, brainstorming, or creativity.
- As part of new employee orientation, it can help instill a positive attitude and flexibility that are so important in dealing effectively with job pressure.
- Because all three modules of HRC combine entertainment, motivational material and useful information, the series can be used to link longer and/or drier training programs.
- Some companies keep several copies of HRC available for home check-out since employees often find the program worth sharing with their families.

FORMATS

HRC has been designed to be "user friendly" in several training formats.

- Each module is usable as a stand-alone segment for a meeting opener or closer.
- As a series, HRC can be shown in three separate sessions over one day, or as a single session in just over one hour.
- Other uses have included a brown-bag lunch series over three separate days, and even as a weekly series for TGIF sessions.

PREVIEW

Previewing the tapes is important with HRC because there are physical exercises involved (Humaerobics™), and you'll want to encourage the group to join in.

We suggest you try a few of the tools suggested prior to leading any discussion on the HRC series. Your personal experience with this material can become a valuable part of what HRC has to offer.

C.W. Who?

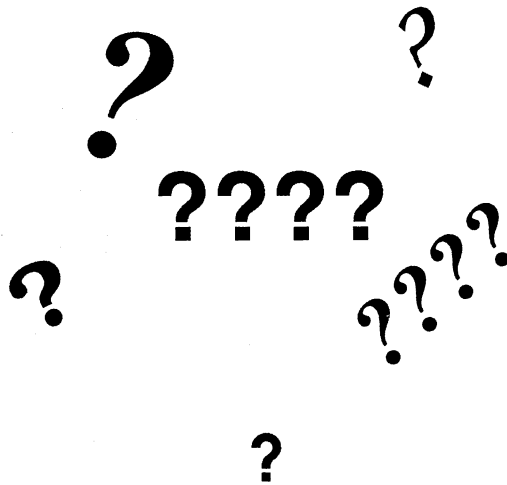
C.W. Metcalf developed Humor, Risk, and Change in a series of over 600 live presentations since 1983. His company's world-wide client base includes: IBM, the U.S. Air Force Strategic Air Command, the Mayo Affiliate Hospitals, Canadian Parks & Recreation, the National Council on Alcoholism, and Hoyts Ltd. of Australia. Mr. Metcalf's work has been featured in the Wall Street Journal, Fortune, Health, on CNN's Moneyline with Lou Dobbs, and Today.

Before founding his Colorado-based consulting firm, C.W. served on the faculties of the University of Michigan, Bennington College and Florida State University, wrote and acted for television, and worked in business as the vice president of an advertising firm.

But it was C.W.'s hospice volunteer work with young cancer patients that led him to develop this program.

"The first group of children I worked with became my gurus," says C.W. "They taught me that a sense of humor and joy in being alive could help people thrive in change and crisis."

Supplementing his personal experience with research drawn from sociology, psychology, medicine and business, C.W. developed Humor, Risk, & Change to help individuals and organizations stay sane, healthy, and competitive in a rapidly changing world.



INTRODUCTION

In working with this material, we suggest that you consider Mark Twain's wise observation: "Analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog; when you're done you understand it, but it's dead."

This series is neither a dry, postmortem study of humor nor a frivolous look at after-dinner joke telling. It is an interactive, fun (gasp!) video series with a serious purpose. The skills we describe here are common to people who thrive in environments of rapid change. HRC offers a new look at the value and power of humor in the work environment.

THOUGHTS BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The following material has been successful for other HRC leaders. Since you know your work environment and your people far better than we ever could, we suggest that you consider C.W.'s remarks as blueprints to be rephrased according to your specific needs.

- "This is not a training series on how to tell jokes or how to be a funny public speaker. We won't tell you to show up for work in a beanie, rubber duck-feet and playing a kazoo: (unless, of course, you're planning to quit--and then, why not?)."
- "Too often, in our pursuit of work-related goals, we lose sight of the values that make the work worth doing. We become bitter, brittle, and easily broken. HRC can help you to stay flexible and unbroken in trying times."
- "Good humor is a general sense of joy in being alive, a developed perspective, an attitude that allows for a sense of control in this often maddening, change-racked world."
- "We are not presenting humor as the Way, the Truth, and the Light: nor, are we claiming that laughter cures disease and extends life. (If humor made us live a long time, where did all those bitter, nasty old people come from?)"
- "We do know that humor skills are a vital component in the healthy, adaptable and creative work place. Our intent is to offer you the skills and tools necessary to develop those strengths--if you choose to do so."

MODULE ONE

A Humor Perspective

Overcoming Fear of Embarrassment and Failure

NOTE: This section is longer than Modules 2 or 3 since information developed here will be used throughout the series.

Index

Fear of Embarrassment and Failure.....	5
A Humor Perspective: Accessing Joy in Adversity	5
Exercise #1	6
Humaerobics™: the What, How, and Why of it All.....	6
Exercise #2	7
The Reference List and Humor Libraries	8
The Humor Inventory	9
Exercise #3	10
Photo Phunnies	10
Is this the Center of the Universe?.....	10
Exercise #4	11
Changing Point of View	11

Fear of Embarrassment and Failure

The primary block not only to the development of humor skills, but also to creativity, team-building, risk-taking and adaptation, is fear of embarrassment and failure. It's a perfectly natural function that all of us must learn to deal with.

The brain, on a biochemical level, tends to respond to any threat as a threat to existence. That's why we often think or say, "I was so embarrassed, I could have died." Whether the threat is an attacking bear, criticism, or job-loss, our biological reaction tends to be the same: the fight or flight response.

Because most human beings respond to change as a threat, working in a constantly changing, high-pressure environment can put us in an ongoing state of fight or flight: numerous biological changes prepare us for doing battle or beating a hasty retreat. Those changes are effective when a bear is threatening us, but they are debilitating when the threat is ongoing change or mental stress.

Humor skills can help us tell the difference between a threat to our life and a threat to our ego or security, and defuse the fight or flight response when it's inappropriate.

A Humor Perspective--Accessing Joy in Adversity

A primary humor skill, shared by those who deal effectively with change, pressure and crisis, is:

- the ability to access joy in adversity.

This does not mean that you should ignore a problem and go skipping merrily into the sunset. It does mean that if you can find the absurdity in events, situations, institutions and self, you gain a sense of control over those things. That sense of control allows for flexibility and creative response. In short,

- a humor perspective allows us to lighten up and live rather than tighten up and snap in the face of challenge.

What examples can the group bring up for discussion that show how a humor perspective helps us cope more effectively with crisis, trauma, and change?

What about the film and television series M*A*S*H? Or how about the comment made by President Reagan following an assassin's attempt on his life? Just prior to surgery, Reagan said to his physicians, "I hope none of you are Democrats."

EXERCISE #1

Accessing Joy in Adversity

What examples can the group bring up for discussion that show how a humor perspective helps us cope more effectively with crisis, trauma and change? Be bold! Jump out in front with an event that happened in your own professional or personal life.

Ask each member of the group to give a suggestion on how they could lighten up their work environment or gain a healthier perspective on the difficulties that they might be facing. Ask how it would be possible to access joy in adversity.

Humaerobics™--the What, How, and Why of It All

WHAT

Humaerobics™ is a physical tool that can help us stay in touch with our playfulness and humor perspective. Such exercises as the Stand, Breathe and Smile, the Shake n' Face and the exaggerated yawn help people find out that making fools of themselves won't kill them! ("I was so embarrassed I could have died" is a pretty powerful and negative statement.)

Most of us go to a great deal of trouble to build and preserve a public image of some kind. It is on that physical, outward level that our fear of foolishness and failure is most exaggerated, and easiest to access.

HOW

Humaerobics™ work in much the same way that Outward Bound trainings do. In Outward Bound, individuals learn, among other things, to gain confidence by overcoming physical challenges. After scaling a rock face with a team of co-workers, the challenges of the work place seem easier to handle. In the same way, Humaerobics™ help overcome our fear of embarrassment and failure by physically challenging us to take risks with how we think of ourselves and how others see us. Once you've overcome that physical, outward challenge, the risks of thinking and acting in new ways seem easier.

WHY

If you don't use it you lose it is as true of humor as it is of other skills. When we suppress our physical expressions of feeling good (smiling, laughing, knee slapping, etc.), we also inhibit our psychological ability to see and touch, along with our ability, right and desire to experience feeling good.

When done even infrequently, the physical humor exercises help maintain a looser perspective. Like the ability to run a marathon, a healthy sense of humor is usually developed over a period of time. The more you exercise your humor skills, the stronger they become. Humaerobics™, like the Stand, Breathe, and Smile, the Shake n' Face and the exaggerated yawn, are easily done in the morning. (But they'll probably scare the dog, your kids and your spouse, so have them all join in, and together, you can scare the neighbors!)

EXERCISE #2

Humaerobics™: Exercising Your Enjoyment

Encourage participants to join in the three Humaerobics™ exercises included in Module One. For exact details on how to do these exercises, please preview the tape.

1. **Stand, Breathe and Smile.** Count to three, have participants stand, breathe deeply, grin largely, then turn and stare at one another.
2. **Stretch and Yawn.** Have the group stand, stretch and yawn like they're just getting out of bed. Encourage them to use their whole body in the stretch and get as ugly as possible.
3. **Shake n' Face.** Standing, have the group members loosely press their lips together then blow out--an effect something like the wind fluttering curtains, but noisier. Have them first shake their right arm, then left; then right leg, then left. Then have them shake their whole body--and don't forget the lip press!

Pointers for Exercise #2

1. If it's difficult for you to facilitate this series, let participants know that. You'll be far more successful--and have more fun--if you present yourself as a novice-guide, rather than an expert.
2. Let participants know that these exercises can relieve physical stress, help them to overcome their fear of embarrassment and failure, stimulate creative thinking and strengthen a humor perspective. (And, if you do the exercises in a bus, you're almost always guaranteed a seat--everyone else will get off!)
3. We support you, the HRC leader, by underscoring the difference between silly and stupid, and the fact that humor is about flexibility, not foolishness. Still, a few individuals will feel reluctant to do the exercises--that's natural. There are many reasons, from social upbringing to biological or emotional turmoil, that will block a few people from experiencing the fun of this training. Respect those limits and do your best to make such people comfortable. Let viewers know, that if some of them don't laugh or find the series immediately meaningful, there's nothing wrong with them. We all experience humor, joy and laughter in different ways, at different times and for different reasons. Encourage participants to take in the information and try the exercises for several weeks before passing judgement.
4. Stop the tape after the exercises and take the group through an intensified version, say, of the Stand, Breathe and Smile exercise. The effect is often hysterical, and supports the point that humor and laughter can be created in many cases, by simply choosing to act out those positive emotions.

The Reference List

The reference list includes materials that can help you get more in-depth information on the skills and tools offered throughout this video series. For those who enjoy reading or listening to audiotapes, it is an excellent way to begin expanding your humor perspective.

- Benson, Herbert, MD. Your Maximum Mind. New York: Random House, 1987.
- Borysenko, Joan. Minding the Body, Mending the Mind. Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1987.
- Burns, David, MD. The Feeling Good Handbook. New York: Morrow, 1989.
- Cousins, Norman. The Healing Heart: Antidotes to Pain and Helplessness. New York: Norton, 1983.
- Ellenbogen, Glenn C., ed. The Directory of Humor Magazines and Humor Organizations in America. New York: Wry-Bred Press, 1985.
- Kushner, Malcolm. The Light Touch. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990.
- Metcalf, C.W. Humor Allies. Fort Collins: C.W. Metcalf & Co., 1988 (audiotape).
- Metcalf, C.W. Humaerobics™. Fort Collins: C.W. Metcalf & Co., 1988 (audiotape).
- Metcalf, C.W. Humor, Risk & Change™. Fort Collins: C.W. Metcalf & Co., 1986 (audiotapes).
- Millman, Dan. Way of the Peaceful Warrior. Tiburon, Calif.: H.J. Kramer, Inc., 1984.
- Morreall, J. Taking Laughter Seriously. Albany: State University of New York, 1983.
- Ornstein, Robert, PhD & Sobel, David, MD. Healthy Pleasures. Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1989.
- Robinson, Vera. Humor and the Health Professions. New Jersey: Charles B. Slack, Inc., 1977.
- Siegel, Bernard S. Love, Medicine and Miracles. New York: Harper and Row, 1986.
- Trueblood, Elton. The Humor of Christ. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

This selection is far from being comprehensive. It doesn't include joke books, or the work of such great humorists as Will Rogers, Woody Allen, Dorothy Parker and Herbert Hoover. A trip to the library and a look under Humor, Humorists, Comedy, and/or Politics of Vacuum Cleaners, can yield some additional stimulating and humorous material. Book store humor sections are also good places to begin exploring.

Start a Humor Library

This can include anything from tapes to books, articles or a list of personal "bloopers."

Many businesses have followed the example of hospitals around the world and established humor libraries or Lighten Up rooms. They set aside one place where employees can check out everything from comedy films and videotapes to different games, magazines, books or audiotapes that support fun, play and relaxation.

In the same environment, they might provide a room for lunch meetings of a humor support group or a HRC screening room for those who feel the need to review material from time to time.

The Humor Inventory

A humor inventory is a great place to begin rebuilding or strengthening a humor perspective. This process allows us to see how our histories have shaped our humor responses, and to make new decisions if we choose to do so.

- As mentioned on the tape, it's usually easiest to start with grade school and move through junior high, high school, career, parenthood, middle-age and elder years. Include positive and negative experiences.
- If you have yet to move through any of those stages, write out a future inventory of what you would like your humor experiences to be.



EXERCISE #3

The Humor Inventory--Get Specific

This process is simple but effective. Look at the various times in your life when your sense of humor has been either nourished or denied.

Write down:

1. What happened? The specific event.
2. How did the event make you feel? The emotional reaction.
3. What has the experience left you with? The intellectual response. Do you want to keep the response you were left with or discard it?

The purpose is simply to put your humor history on paper, get a better perspective on the choices you've made. Talk about them with someone then decide to reaffirm or change what you've been left with.

Example

(1) When I was in grade school, Danny made fun of me because I was skinny. (2) It made me feel angry and embarrassed. (3) I'm still suspicious of people who make fun of others, and I suspect that most humor is intended to hurt people. I still don't like to see people attacked with humor, but I'd like to find more humor that isn't hurtful.

PHOTO PHUNNIES

Silly? You bet! But a photo-strip of yourself looking ridiculous can go a long way toward maintaining a healthy humor perspective. This simple tool allows you to remind yourself at uncomfortable moments (prior to giving a speech, making a deal with a difficult person) that you are not just the problem you're facing; you're this too! It provides an unfailing reminder that you're not the center of the universe!

IS THIS THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE?

When things change and move in a direction we don't like, didn't plan on and don't want to participate in, we often try to force them back to the way we want it to be. We begin blaming the universe, management, the customer, each other or the weather. (We will discuss the blaming response to change--its deadly effects and positive alternatives--in Module Three.) The results of our attempts to maintain a status quo in the face of unavoidable change puts us in a position of killing responsibility--at the center of the universe. We become, in turns, tyrannical, guilty, furious, morose, fearful and/or ill.

The Captain Alfred Haynes story used in the tape series to illustrate this point is an excellent example of how a highly professional, skilled, dedicated and serious pilot implemented that humor perspective to maintain control and grace under pressure. Like Captain Haynes, our job may be crucial, but humor skills can allow us to remember that we are not the center of the universe and, in doing so, help us stay flexible enough to respond creatively to crisis instead of falling back on old and/or inappropriate response patterns.

EXERCISE #4

You in Relationship to the Center of the Universe

Take a plain piece of paper. Using your most creative flair, draw a free-form circle (something that looks like an amoeba) and put an "x" right in the middle. Label it, "The Center of the Universe." Now, draw another "x" somewhere on the fringes and label it, "You."

Now, stand back far enough to admire your art. Get the picture?

CHANGING POINT OF VIEW

The tools offered in this module are intended to help people overcome their fear of embarrassment and failure, and begin to develop their ability to access joy in adversity. Suggest that participants begin with only one of the exercises instead of doing all of them at once. Once individuals have used a tool for several weeks, they might want to replace it with another for a period of time. Trying to incorporate all the tools at once can lead to "humor overload" and just become another source of stress.



MODULE TWO

Take Yourself Lightly and Your Job Seriously Overcoming Terminal Professionalism™

NOTE: Prior to beginning this module, take the group through Humaerobics™ exercises from the previous module. In fact, many HRC leaders will stop the tape and do one or more of the exercises whenever they feel a need to loosen up the group.

Again, you may want to remind the group that there are several good reasons to do the exercises.

- To help them overcome their fear of embarrassment and failure on a physical level--which helps to make risk-taking on a psychological level a bit easier.
- To keep them in touch with their physical ability to play and express feeling good, because that physical capacity is tied to their psychological capacity to see and experience humor.
- Humaerobics™ keep the blood from draining out of their brains and settling in their buttocks which causes regressive or bureaucratic thinking.

Index

The Disaster of Dead Seriousness	13
Draw the Line	13
Exercise #5	13
Mini-Vacations	13
Exercise #6	14
Humor Support Groups.....	14
Humaerobics™ Part II	14
Exercise #7	15
When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Get Loose	15

The Disaster of Dead Seriousness

Dead serious is an all too accurate term for what happens to us when we fail to develop humor skills; we tighten up, bear down, kick in and put the pedal to the metal. We become our jobs, and little else. And when our job goes crazy, we tend to go right along with it. The result is Terminal Professionalism.

Module Two refers to the Japanese Ministry of Labor's attempt to help lighten up their work force. In part, that effort was initiated by the fact that in the late 1980's, in one eight-month period, ten CEO's of Japan's largest companies died in office of stress related illnesses. They had two things in common: most were young by Japanese standards; and none of them had taken a vacation in more than ten years.

This module is not about "laughing off" or ignoring the serious problems; neither is it about slacking off and going fishing when there are deadlines to meet. It is about balancing and infusing our work life with the elements that allow us to stay flexible enough to be creative and healthy under pressure.

Draw the Line

One group of business women decided to keep foam rubber clown noses in the glove boxes of their cars, and put them on during the rush-hour drive home. The response from the other drivers ranged from disgust to hysteria. But it never failed to help these women release their workday worries and begin to access the joy, fun and playfulness that would help them stay flexible and return to work refreshed.

Helpful Hint. Many HRC leaders have a clown nose available to put on when they tell the story. A few of the braver ones have even experimented with the nose before suggesting it. The stories are legion, including one about a woman who was stopped by a police officer who wanted to know where he could get a nose like hers.

EXERCISE #5

Attack of the Rubber Clown Nose

Donning a rubber clown nose is just one example of making the transition between your work and home. Write down at least five other draw-the-line exercises that can help you celebrate the end of the work day and the beginning of the rest of your life. Share your creativity with the others in your group.

Mini-Vacations

The value of mini-vacations has been supported time and time again by literally thousands of HRC participants. Here's how it works. Keep maps of exotic places you have or hope to visit, and look at them for a few moments when you feel crazed. Ditto for postcards, snapshots, souvenirs--a rock from a favorite mountain, a jar of sand from that special beach, or a surfboard for that legendary wave you'll ride someday.

The briefest of breaks during the day--even for only a few seconds--can keep the creative juices flowing, and the stress from building to a snapping point.

EXERCISE #6

Design Your Own Mini-Vacation

Have each member of the group describe their ideal vacation. Then assign them the task of bringing to work a reminder of that vacation--a map, a photo, a coconut--anything that can serve as a debarkation point.

Humor Support Groups and Plus Conversations

One of the most effective ways to ensure that HRC becomes a permanent part of the work environment, is to encourage people to form humor support groups. The process can be simple.

- Informal meetings can consist of two or more people from the HRC sessions, getting together to have an upbeat conversation about what's going on in their department.
- Some groups select an item from the reference list and discuss it.
- One group formed the "humor for lunch bunch," whose members take turn setting up lunch meetings in off-beat places.

Meeting once a week or once a month, humor support groups can keep the information fresh by discussing new ways of applying humor skills.

Humaerobics™ Part II

Yes, here they are again, those "silly" exercises. They are an ongoing part of each module as they are an essential element in development of humor skills. Now, you get an opportunity to add another Humaerobics™ exercise that was only briefly seen in Module One--the American Bat Face.

When you were a child, a parent may have said, "Don't make that face; it will stick like that!" Ever since, you've abandoned your quite remarkable ability to look utterly ridiculous.

Years ago one of C.W.'s hospice kids taught him to make the American Bat Face, which she guaranteed to be the silliest face an adult could make. In your ongoing efforts to help people lighten up, take themselves a bit less seriously and develop the ability to access joy in adversity, it's time to teach the American Bat Face--a hallmark of the HRC training.

Come on now, no guts no glory, no grins, no gains . . .

EXERCISE #7

The American Bat Face

Instruct group members to place one hand atop their heads, with the fingers pointing forward; then, reach down their face with the middle two fingers, touch the tip of the nose and pull it up gently--very attractive. When the nostrils are flared, you open your eyes wide and wag your tongue furiously while making any noise you can. Voila! You are now officially a member of the Bat Face Grouch Patrol.

Suggest to the group that they include the Bat Face in their Humaerobics™ exercises every morning, or any time they pause in front of a mirror to assess how truly terrific they look. With a bat face on, nobody is the center of the universe.

When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Get Loose

Flexibility, not rigid toughness, will be the hallmark of success in a rapidly changing world. In addition to accessing joy in adversity, another humor skill that contributes to flexibility is taking yourself lightly, even though you may take your job, problem, or challenge seriously. Any one of the tools offered in this module can begin to help develop that skill.



MODULE THREE

Thriving in Change

A Developed Sense of Joy in Being Alive

NOTE: Again, prior to beginning the session, take participants through the Humaerobics™ exercises--don't forget to add the American Bat Face. To amplify the effect of the exercises, you might want to suggest that people pair up, with each partner attempting to look sillier than the other.

Index

Ch-Ch-Ch-Ch-Ch-Change.....	17
Blame vs. Action.....	17
Exercise #8	18
The Joy List	18
Exercise #9	19
Plan to do Nothing.....	19
Humaerobics™--Again? Part III	19
Exercise #10.....	20
A Sense of Joy in Being Alive	20

CH-CH-CH-CH-CH-Change

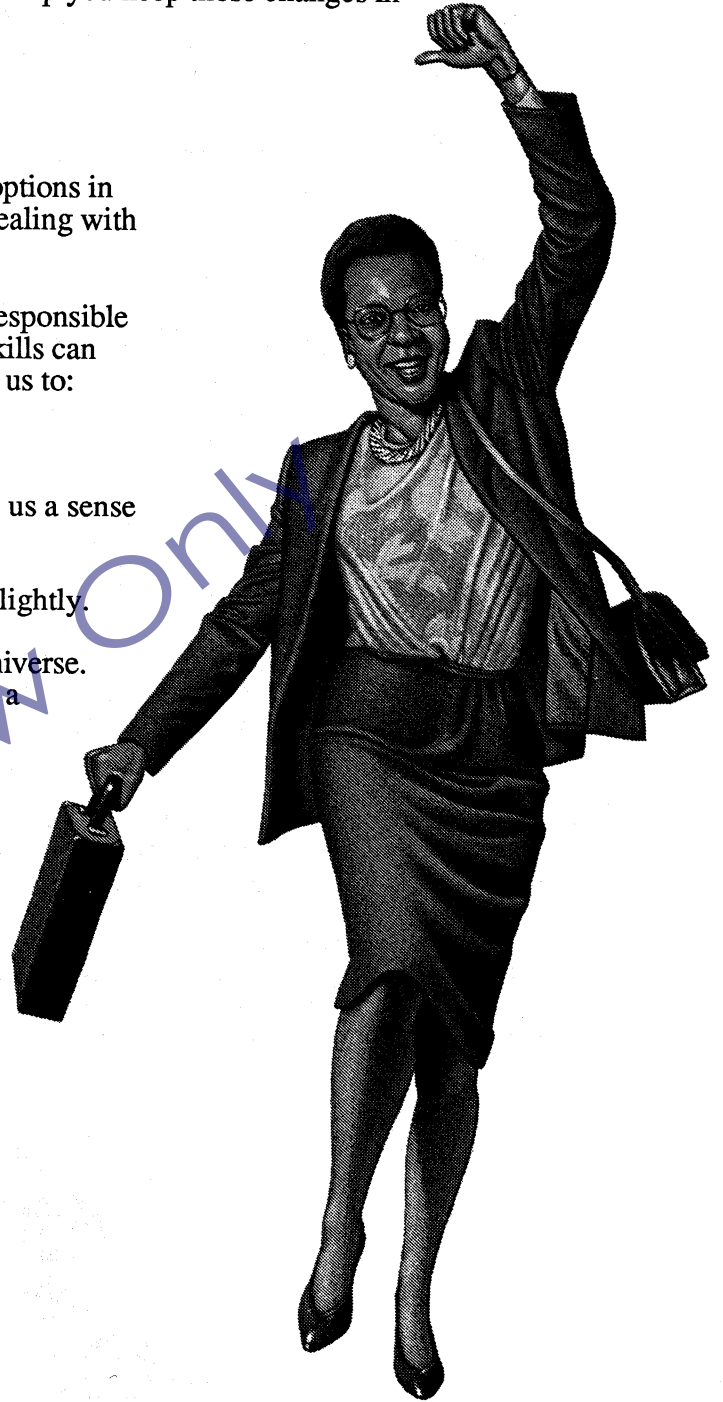
Thinking of change as stress is nothing new. However, the rapid, unrelenting change that occurs in today's work place--as is pointed out in Module Three--can be particularly devastating if left unbalanced. Humor skills can help you keep those changes in perspective.

Blame vs. Action

It is sometimes profitable to keep these two options in mind, so that we can check our direction when dealing with changes.

Are we getting stuck in blame? If so, what responsible action can we take to break that cycle? Humor skills can help us cut short the blaming cycle by reminding us to:

- Access joy in adversity.
- See the absurdity in an event, which gives us a sense of control over our reaction to it.
- Take the problem seriously and ourselves lightly.
- Remember you are not the center of the universe. Avoiding blame doesn't mean abandoning a search for solutions.



Exercise #8

Blame vs. Action

Recall a time in your life, either professionally or personally, when you were caught up in the blame-vs-responsibility trap. With the others in your group, explore the difference between blame and responsibility. Given the same situation today, how would you handle it differently?

LOOK AGAIN--A Few More Tools for Humor Skill Development

The Joy List

Ask most people to write down a list of their complaints and gripes, and they could fill pages. But in literally tens of thousands of cases over the years, I've found that many people are unable to compile more than a brief list of the things they do to nourish and sustain their sense of joy. (Not including the things they hope to do, or used to do, but don't have time for anymore.) To help people get started, here are a few **Joy List** tips.

- There are two things that don't go on the list. First, things that hurt others. Second, things that hurt you. Examples? Well, let's say it makes you feel good to hit the boss in the face with a cream pie. Not included. Or perhaps getting drunk and falling downstairs is your idea of fun. Not included.

- Anything that brings a smile to your face, a sigh of relief, a gasp of amazement, and a sense of hope or laughter gets written down. The intent is simple. The more attention you pay to finding positive experiences that inspire or lighten your way, the more of these you'll find.

- Examples from participant lists include everything from fishing, cooking, reading and jogging to collecting humorous greeting cards, soaking in a hot tub, playing with children, calling old friends or teaching the dog to walk backwards.

Most people are astonished to find, after only a few weeks, that there are dozens of such moments in their personal and professional lives that they simply never noticed before. Once you begin to honor yourself enough to pay attention to those humor/joy sustaining moments, your perspective and your ability to control your reaction to difficulty are strengthened.



EXERCISE #9

The Joy List

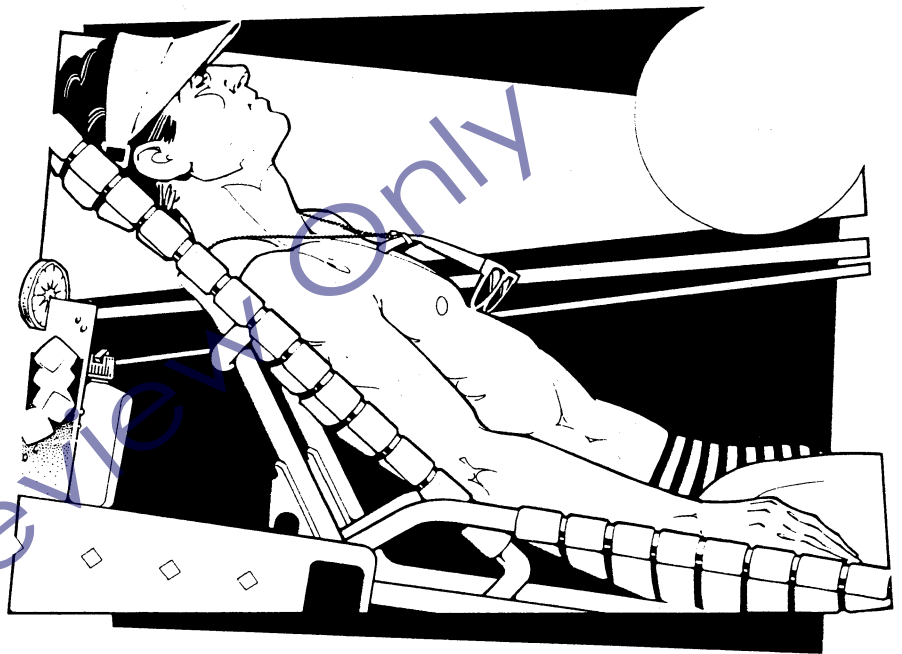
On a blank piece of paper, write down twenty things that give you joy--either things you've done in the past or something you'd like to do. This list should include anything that makes you happy.

Plan to Do Nothing

Okay, it's impossible--almost. Don't start with a week or an hour of nothing, try, oh, fifteen minutes at the end of the day and work your way up slowly to half-an-hour on a weekend, or early morning. (Ps-s-s-t-t . . . television watching doesn't count.)

Sandy Sanborn of the Colorado Outdoor Education Center calls it "rock sitting"; the opportunity to just sit, stare and appreciate.

We could all use some rock sitting. Most of the people I work with in business over schedule their vacations to the point that getting back to work is a relief. We often get used to moving so fast, we miss the trip. An executive friend of mine, for instance, recently returned from Hawaii. When I asked him about the volcanoes, he replied, "What volcanoes?"



Humaerobics™--Again? Part III

Yes, again. The physical exercises are a basic component developing and strengthening humor skills. Even if you only do the exercises a few times a week, or in moments of preparing for a stressful event, you'll find this information stays fresher and more relevant.

EXERCISE #10

A Howl for Joy

Get the group to their feet with the Stand, Breathe and Smile exercise, and perhaps throw in a good stretching, grimacing, groaning yawn.

Now, ask everyone to think of something that makes them feel good. It might be a person, place, or event. Let them focus on whatever might bring a smile or a fond memory.

Instruct them that on the count of one, they should focus again on that thought; on the count of two, they should take a deep breath; and on the count of three, they should let their head tip back slightly and let out as loud a howl as they can make.

Demonstrate: come on, don't wimp out now . . . let out as loud a howl as you can.

The purpose of the exercise is to have the opportunity, at least once in your life, to really express how good you feel. Many of us have no problem expressing irritation. But expressing how good we feel with a resounding howl is great.

Remind the group that practicing our expressions of enjoyment and humor is the surest way to keep the humor sense alive. You might need to take folks through this one a few times before they really get into it. (If they find it embarrassing, just tell them to close their eyes--nobody can see you when you're eyes are closed, right?)

We also think this is a great exercise when you're stuck in a traffic jam. There you are, your stomach grinding, your jaw clenched, and is this moving the car along? No. So, why not roll down the window, think of something that makes you feel good, and howl for joy. Then look around. Are people staring at you? They're probably looking the other way. Perspective restored, humor exercised, removed from the center of the universe, you'll fully appreciate the relationship of Humor, Risk & Change.

A Sense of Joy in Being Alive

As with the other skills, developing a sense of joy in being alive is simple to say, difficult to do. Failure to honor ourselves enough to make room for fun, play, or "unscheduled" time means that we often end up successful, yet wondering, in the words of Rabbi Harold Kushner, "Why everything we always wanted isn't enough."

Again, we want to make it clear that development of the skills and tools outlined in HRC will not solve all your problems or guarantee that you'll never again feel pain, confusion or resentment.

Perhaps these tools will only make a one-percent difference in your response to dealing with change and crisis. But consider this: John Kennedy was elected to the White House by a one-percent margin of the vote; and slightly more than a one-percent shift in the oxygen content of our atmosphere would make the world unliveable. A one-percent shift, over time, can make a tremendous difference!