



WEEK TWELVE: Embracing Joy & Humour in Recovery

Author Brene Brown describes what she calls “knowing laughter”, as a spiritual communion between souls; a way to say “I’m with you, I get it”. It isn’t the laughter that we can hide behind, or the awkward laughter of self-deprecation, but the laughter we experience when we realize we understand something on the same level as someone else, and we can bond with each other over it. As we’ve learned, connection with other humans is the foremost survival tool that we have, and laughter is a very effective tool in creating those connections.

Laughter through humour is a direct gateway to joy - when we laugh, our bodies release all kinds of joy-inducing chemicals, including endorphins, which reduce pain and actually increase our threshold for pain. Think back to a time when you laughed so hard your face hurt, or your stomach muscles began to ache: how did you feel? Who were you with?

(read: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-laughter-may-be-the-best-pain-medicine/>)
(watch: Dr. Norman Cousins (The Cousins Centre of Psychoneuroimmunology)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--CW46nYRsw#action=share>)

We are living in particularly difficult and rapidly shifting times - it can be especially challenging to focus on the positive aspects of life when we are being inundated with violence and oppression. I feel it’s important to maintain a balance of realism - embracing our shadow sides and viewing the changing tides as necessary on the path to a world where we can recognize, forgive and heal - while finding the light where and when we can. I don’t want to encourage distraction: one

way to embrace both reality and laughter is to access your news from satirical sources (this is how I maintain sanity, as a former journalist and ever-curious/fascinated human). I don't want to pretend like "everything is ok", I want to challenge myself to have the difficult conversations that need to be had around racism, oppression, violence and privilege, while giving myself the space to be awed by the beauty, understanding and grace of others and the world around me.

So how can we facilitate opportunities for our clients to experience more laughter and joy while in recovery?

Beyond laughter, how else can we encourage people to find joy in their everyday lives, particularly as they are navigating through a difficult time?

RESOURCES for funny/joyful/quality stuff:

Wonderful, difficult stories about people who have triumphed over especially challenging circumstances: <https://www.kcrw.com/news-culture/shows/strangers>

Enlightening, hilarious stuff with JP Sears: <http://awakenwithjp.com/>

Silly, ridiculous, hilarious, weird: www.funnyordie.com

Uplifting Films & TV:

Life in a Day
Wasteland
Searching for Sugarman
Good Will Hunting
Wonder Woman
Amelie
Shawshank Redemption
Life is Beautiful
Harry Potter (any of them, really)
Stand by Me
Star Wars
Fried Green Tomatoes
As Good As it Gets
Sense 8
The OA
Colossal
Dances With Wolves
Contact
Interstellar

Arrival
Lion
Loving