



JULY 2007

Issue No. 66

OREGON ATTORNEY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

# IN SIGHT

*for Oregon Lawyers*

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

## HUMOR YOUR WAY TO HAPPINESS, HEALTH, AND SUCCESS

Lawyers have been accused of being a particularly humorless group. Whether it's contentious litigation, delivering bad news to clients, or the job requirement that we anticipate everything that could possibly go wrong, lawyers don't often have occasions for levity. This is unfortunate, because research shows that laughter makes people happier, healthier, and more successful. Humor is also a neglected workplace tool. It diffuses tension, builds rapport, and motivates workers. Humor wields enormous positive influence over people, making them feel more relaxed and comfortable.

Just because the law is a serious profession doesn't mean we must take everything so seriously, ourselves included. Try the following tips, and see whether you find yourself chuckling a bit more.

**Lighten Up!** Funny things happen all around you every day. Take the time to notice. Write "lighten up" on your calendar every day for 30 days, and then start paying attention to the humor all around you.

**Find Your Style.** Humor is not just for class clowns or stand-up comedians. It's a way of looking at the world, at life. It's an attitude. Tune in to your own brand of humor. Does good old-fashioned physical comedy have you slapping your knee? Do you appreciate the more subtle, refined British sense of humor? Or is it your five-year-old's knock-knock jokes that bring a sly grin to your face? Don't be afraid to share your amateur wit with your coworkers. They could probably use the laugh, too.

**Start a Humor File.** The hardest time to find humor is when you need it most. Collect jokes, cut out cartoons, and jot down things you see that tickle your funny bone. Look through your file when you're having a stressful day. Buy a Dilbert comic book and laugh at the indignities of the workplace. It's amazing what perspective a hearty chuckle can lend to your troubles.

**Tell Stories.** People love stories, and personal stories that are unique to you are the most compelling. Think about things that have gone slightly awry in your life. Can you turn one of these experiences into a funny short story by looking at it from a different angle? Most everyone can recall a misunderstanding, mishap, or misadventure that would make for good retelling. Use these brief tales as ice-breakers.

**Be Positive.** A positive attitude and good humor go hand in hand. If you don't feel cheerful, fake it. Act as if you are in a good mood. Feelings follow action. If an opposing counsel has you grumbling into your cup of coffee, try lifting the corners of your mouth into a smile and hold that pose for two minutes. That feels silly, you say? Better silly than surly.

*Our thanks to Tanya Hanson, JD, for this article, which was based on a lecture entitled "Amuse and Conquer – Lighten Up and Be a Better Leader," by Roger Turk, The Punchline LLC. He can be reached at the [punchline@msn.com](mailto:punchline@msn.com).*