

# Woman

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### MIND BODY SPIRIT

## The healing adventure of choosing joy and humor

BY ADAIR HEITMANN

**H**ave you ever laughed in the face of death? I have at my father's funeral 15 years ago. I was standing viewing him laid out in the casket. He was only 65-years-old and had died suddenly.

He was to retire that year, after having led an active, involved life. I remember one of my siblings wondering aloud that it was too bad Dad missed his retirement. Without thinking I blurted out, "Retirement would have killed him!" The words were no sooner out then I had second and third thoughts about how irreverent I may sound and how shocking what I said may be perceived. And yet, my siblings and I started laughing. We knew what I said was true! It was profoundly healing in the midst of pain and sorrow, to laugh.

Did you know that laughter is a natural opiate? Laughter oxygenates the blood, which in turn allows the human mind, body and spirit to heal faster? Did

you know that laughter gives you natural pep, opens the ventilation system and elicits a relaxation response? Laughter is good medicine, it is good for the heart and the soul.

The role of humor in health and well-being is well-documented. You can study Norman Cousins use of laugh therapy in healing and recovering from illness, you can learn from Patch Adams, MD in his book, *Gesundheit!*

You can also follow the wisdom of children. When my son was two, we volunteered to bring cupcakes to his day care picnic. I wanted to make them with him, as our first mother/son baking spree. I purchased all the ingredients, including cupcake baking pans. I discovered I not only had no pans, I had no recollection of ever baking a cupcake.

*Remember and reclaim from your childhood those things that brought you joy*

We set out the night before the picnic. I read all the instructions, no where did they tell me to grease the non-stick pan! In our enthusiastic display of culinary delight, we over filled the pans with batter. The cooked extra-large cupcake muffins were overflowing and stuck solid to the pans. Using a knife I pried each and every one of those 100 cupcakes out. What we had created were actually crumbles of crumb balls.

I could have chosen to increase my stress, panic, get mad and rush out to buy new ingredients and start all over again. I could have worried about how my son and I may be judged harshly by others at the picnic for having messy cupcakes or I could choose joy and lightness.

I chose the latter. My son was having a good time, I was having a good time so we used

the icing like glue, spreading it on the crumbling bottoms of the cupcakes because they would only stand up on their tops. We called them "our famous upside down cupcakes"! Every last one was gleefully devoured the next day at the picnic. And I still remember our first baking experience with joy!

Living in a context of humor and lightness is healing. It is preventative medicine. Give yourself permission to be goofy in public everyday, wear a red clown nose while paying your bills. Remember and reclaim from your childhood those things that brought you joy. They are usually the simplest of things or activities. Humor, joy and lightness do not cost money. They are ways of being, ways of viewing your world and ways of being alive in the world. Choose the adventure of joy, it is good for your mind, body and spirit.

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