



CIGNA Behavioral Health

LEARN TO LAUGH



It May
Be the
Best Medicine

When Hal Wright died suddenly at the age of 82, his children and eight adult grandchildren gathered quickly from around the United States to be with their mother and grandmother. The setting was in a quiet retirement community but, over the next three days, neighbors graciously tolerated the noise from the Wrights' backyard. What they heard was the sound of laughter. Although Hal was dearly loved and much missed, his grandchildren celebrated the rare opportunity to be together with stories from their childhoods, jokes and gentle teasing.

Laughter Is Good Medicine

What the Wright grandchildren were doing, of course, was coping with the stress of the loss of a loved one. Laughter is great medicine in all kinds of stressful situations. Hospitals often arrange visits from performing groups or celebrities to lift the pall of illness, or they use VCRs to show comedies and to help lighten the mood. Similarly, some employers host occasional parties to ease tensions in the workplace and reduce stress.

Humor Relieves Tension

Some people naturally use humor in stressful situations. Others feel that every situation is so serious that any humor is inappropriate. Most of us, however, appreciate a good laugh when we're scared or worried. It distracts us and relieves tension.

Coping With Stress

While there's no such thing as taking yourself too seriously, unremitting stress can wear you down and make it harder to cope. Scientists theorize that laughter releases certain "feel-good" hormones which, in turn, make it easier for us to cope with stressful situations.

Remember Laughter

The next time you're ill, worried or overstressed, try to remember that you can intervene in the stress process. Get together with friends, take in a show or rent a comedy video. You might be surprised at how much better you feel after you've spent some time laughing.