



April Fools' Day Is for Livers

April 1, 2019 By [Lucinda K. Porter RN](#)

I cherish April Fools' Day because it celebrates my favorite activity – laughing. I am an ardent practitioner of humor. It feels good to laugh and I am all about feeling good.

When I was first diagnosed with hepatitis C, it was not funny. The initial diagnosis was an especially serious time in my life. Eventually, I learned to live with it. I laughed the most about having hep C when I attended support groups with others who were learning to live and laugh with this disease. Hep C became a source of endless amusement, especially when I was taking interferon and ribavirin. I did some pretty silly stuff while I was on treatment. I learned really quick that if I was to endure the side effects, I needed to live on the light side of life.

Science agrees with me. William Fry, M.D., professor emeritus in psychiatry at Stanford University Medical School, spent much of his career researching the physiological benefits of humor. Fry discovered that laughter changes brain patterns, stimulates the immune system, and reduces stress hormones. Laughter also reduces pain perception.

Many books have been written on the relationship between health and humor. Norman Cousins' descriptions about his two brushes with death are riveting reading. Cousins surrounded himself with humor, convinced of the healing power of laughter. Later, as an advocate of humor, Cousins required his hospital staff to learn and tell a new joke every day.

Humor is all around us. In medicine, there are websites, podcasts and seminars devoted to the healing power of laughter, such as [Laughter Heals](#) and the [Humor Project](#). Physician and clown [Patch Adams](#) challenged the health care system by integrating laughter, joy and creativity in to the healing process.

Naturally, humor needs to be used judiciously. There is an appropriate time for laughter, just as there is a time for tears. Only you can be the judge of that. However, if mirth is noticeably absent in your life, you might want to add reading the comics or watching "I Love Lucy" reruns to your health maintenance regimen.

I have seen people laugh even in the last stages of liver failure. People who die with a smile on their face seem to do so with dignity and grace. This was eloquently stated when Anne Lamott declared, "Laughter is carbonated holiness."

Perhaps a laugh a day does not keep the doctor away, but it sure makes life more bearable. Humor can help us talk about the unspeakable. Peter Ustinov mused, "Comedy is simply a funny

way of being serious.”

This April Fools’ Day, give your liver the gift of laughter. Then do it again the next day and the next. It may not cure you of all ills, but it sure feels good.

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