

Giggle, Guffaw, Hoot...Cackle, Chortle, Chuckle... Snicker, Snort, Laugh

When was the last time your belly hurt so bad from hysterically losing it through laughter? My guess is, you likely can't remember. It's been reported that four-year old kids laugh upwards of about 400 times a day. Adults...not so much. We are on record of being some number in the teens, which I quite frankly think is pretty high. When does the world change from fantastically funny to super serious?

I heard an amazing speaker talk about this point in a very interesting way, as follows:

Let me ask you something.

Who can paint a picture – raise your hand?

Who can sing – raise your hand? [*Less hands went up*]

What if I gave you \$1000 bucks – could you sing row, row, row your boat?

Who said they couldn't sing? [*speaker cautiously selects one audience member & says:*]

Please do something for me. Say, "I can't sing."

Now say, "I *choose* not to sing."

What's the truth?

The speakers point was this. If we asked a kid if he/she could draw a picture or sing a song, how many hands do you think would go up? Most, if not all. Why?

As adults, as we grow up, we tend to take ourselves so seriously.

We constantly send messages to our kids about who we are, whether it's a positive message or a negative one.

The truth is that kids learn from what we model, through our actions, not our words. Are you saying one thing, yet doing another?

As adults, what are we so afraid of? Why do we feel we can't laugh? One reason might be that we may be setting ourselves up to be embarrassed. Today, kids/teens seem to be even more conscious about looks, fads, name brands, having the latest gadget, how they fit in, etc - than even when I grew up.

In 7th grade, my friend and I were given the opportunity to be in a major school play. But it wasn't for just any typical role. See...we were asked to play the part of a DONKEY. We had to make the outfit, wear it, and play the part. So we made a ridiculous, but creative costume, with paper machete head, a flowing body, and even a tail.

We come out on stage, waddling back and forth, and end up bursting out laughing hysterically. We hadn't really practiced much in our costume, and we couldn't even see where we were going.

Because my friend was taller than me, she got to be the front half of the donkey, which gave me the distinct privilege of being the *other* half. We had a blast, but can you imagine the hazing for being the back end? I really didn't care. Honestly.

On stage, the donkey act was a huge hit...especially when I stuck my head out to see where we were supposed to be exiting, with the audience screaming with laughter.

We could have been totally worried about what other people thought and could have felt really embarrassed by the experience. But the truth is we weren't. Instead we had a ton of fun!

But as I got older, that worry started to set in. Not sure why or how. But it seemed as though that making a mistake was really frowned upon. I became overly self-conscious. No one made me feel this way; I *chose* to feel this way, even though I didn't realize it.

In 10th grade, our high school band, of which I played the clarinet, was awarded the amazing opportunity to perform at a Green Bay Packer half-time show. We practiced the songs over and over and also spent a significant amount of time walking in sync, doing numerous formations, all in line with the beat of the music. All of the memorization was difficult and the emphasis was on perfection, not fun.

When the day came to perform on the field, I was so flipped out due to the tremendous hype the event was given, I actually chose not to play one note on my clarinet. I was too worried about taking the correct step, that I didn't feel I could blow one note. Can you imagine if the whole band made that choice?

Remember, that others learn by our actions – let's not teach 'worrying'. Imagine what a difference we can make by modeling behaviors like: do your best, try your hardest, have fun, embrace the moment. Take time every day to laugh with, not at, others. Giggle, chuckle, maybe even let out a snort or two. It's invigorating when your face hurts from laughing so hard, which certainly beats your head hurting from crying so hard.