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Altenheim Resource Services

Empowering older adults and caregivers through information, education, and support
Contact us with questions about aging or caregiving issues

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March is National Social Work Month! We'd like to take the opportunity to recognize our social work colleagues who help others across all age ranges and across all areas of need. Thank you for all you do!

One of the greatest challenges in being a social worker is taking care of yourself. Social workers by nature are caring people and they can get overwhelmed with the burdens carried by the people they are helping. In an attempt to start that self-care, we are offering a few ideas to brighten your day.

The [Cleveland Clinic](#) says that laughter is good for you. It reduces stress, strengthens social bonds, increases oxygen to your body and improves heart health. Dr. Grace Tworek from the Cleveland Clinic says that it's not about adding "laugh" to your to-do-list. It's more about thinking of things that bring you joy. Of course, there's nothing wrong with a good joke as long as it isn't laughing at someone.

What is funny to one person isn't necessarily funny to others. Have you ever tried to explain why something is funny to you? [Carl Reiner](#) seemed to have had insight into what makes something funny. "There is no doubt about it," he says. "Laughter is my first priority. I watch something every night that makes me laugh. I wake up and tickle myself while I'm still in bed. There is no greater pleasure than pointing at something, smiling and laughing about it. I don't think there is anything more important than being able to laugh. When you can laugh, life is worth living. It keeps me going. It keeps me young." There are others, too, who make us laugh because of their insight into what makes something funny. Think of some of the great comedians such as Carol Burnett, Tim Conway, Bob Hope, Betty White and Gilda Radner. You can check out some of their funniest material [here](#) or on the [Ranker](#) website.

Laughter can have a dark side. Research has shown that inappropriate laughter can be an early sign of dementia. Patients with frontotemporal dementia are most often affected with inappropriate laughter. An article on the [Aging Care](#) website says that dementia impairs social functioning and the patient loses the ability to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. The article also gives some tips for caregivers in coping with the patient's inappropriate laughter.

Overall, laughter is an essential part of our lives. [Robert Provine](#) in *Psychology Today* gives a summary of recent research into laughter. In the end he concludes that while we wait for definitive evidence about the benefits of laughter we should just go ahead and laugh. . . "it can't hurt -- and it's certainly enjoyable -- to laugh."

Did you hear about the new restaurant on the moon? It has great food but no atmosphere.

Don't forget to "spring forward"! Daylight savings time starts on March 10!

Guest editor: Jeanette Wojcik

All information presented is for educational purposes only.