



unify consulting group

**“A day without laughter,
is a day wasted”**

- Charlie Chaplin

A Message From Our Founder



One of my favorite pastimes is the topic of this newsletter! Laughing, giggling, joking around with

others and finding lighter ways to bond. One word that I would use to describe myself is that I am playful. This is something that comes easily to me as I find it an effective way to connect with people.

I work with pretty heavy hearted topics all day long and I have to find a way through the darkness into the light. For me the path is usually filled with laughter and an ability to see the silver lining in some of the most difficult challenges that my clients face.

I also use this in the workplace when I am trying to connect with people. I find that if I can start a conversation with some lightness or everyday type conversations, anything that has to be said is much more well received. I also find that when we can be silly and playful we can be more creative and push some of those boundaries that prevent us from being innovative and risk taking.

Now there is a balance and a few things that I keep in mind is to always laugh “with” people and not “at” them. There is a fine balance between teasing someone and making fun of them. This is an art and something worth practicing. When we know people and they know us, through these interactions, this level of teasing is easier and often creates a stronger bond.

Finally, I really do love to laugh at myself. I can sometimes be too serious or worried about how things will appear or happen. Being able to see yourself with lightness and compassion can make a rather heavy, burdensome day just a little easier to get through!!

Laughter in the Workplace

Does laughing have the ability to build a stronger, more creative team atmosphere in the workplace?

Since the global economic downturn in 2008 and most recent recession in 2014, we may feel that laughing in the workplace is an indicator that we don't have enough to do. Increasingly, staff have been using email to conduct discussions with fellow employees that might previously be done at the colleague's work desk. Email and messenger chat rooms have made office chatter at times unnecessary.

What if, rather than indicating idleness, laughing with fellow employees is something that improves collaboration and stimulates innovation?

Studies have shown that we are 30 times more likely to laugh when we are with other people than when we are alone. When a group is laughing together, then it suggests that our protective guard is

down. This is important because there is research which has suggested that when our brains are relaxed, we readily achieve free idea association, which often leads to creativity.

A study by John Krounios (Drexel University) and Mark Beeman (Northwestern University) aimed to see whether laughter could aid people solve tricky logic puzzles. They showed test individuals short video clips of Robin Williams performing one of his stand-up routines and then asked them test questions. They found that laughing at the Robin Williams video clips improved puzzle solving by 20%. Beeman and Krounios surmised that laughter-linked lack of focus appeared to allow the mind to connect and juggle concepts in a way that tightly focused and rigid concentration does not.

Benefits of Laughter in the Workplace

Many organizations set up weekend retreats, staff parties or other events for the employees with the purpose of encouraging bonding and camaraderie, which are typical characteristics of effective teams. These events provide an opportunity for the employees to relax and escape from work-related pressures. Fun activities and team

building exercises are scheduled with the purpose that employees will bond with each other.

The problem with these offsite team building exercises and planned fun events is that it is a departure from the usual work atmosphere and approach to relating to fellow employees. Once they return to the office, employees feel that they must leave the idea of making work fun and their sense of humor at the door. However, they are expected to maintain the team spirit that was developed at the retreat but abandon the behaviors that generated that team spirit and bonding. As a result, the great emotional connections between the employees is lost as they are caught up in their daily work responsibilities.

The challenge now is putting the fun into work and bringing a lighter attitude to the workplace everyday. Here is a list of the benefits of laughter in the workplace.

1. Removal of Barriers that Separate Management from Other Employees

Power and authority are the natural barriers that exist between managers/leaders and the staff that report to them. When managers show that they can laugh with everyone else in the office, especially when they can poke fun at themselves, these barriers

come down. As a result, the manager is viewed as a “regular person”, like everyone else on the team. The breakdown of the manager/employee barrier is essential to open communication between the two parties.

Studies have shown that when the leader initiates the jokes and at times is the target of those jokes, he/she is viewed as a friend, rather than the boss. This friendship opens up comfortable and honest communication which result in team cohesiveness and increased productivity. This level of transparency can also aid when the time comes to have a difficult yet necessary conversation.

2. Open Communication

As stated above, once barriers are down, honest communication can occur between the boss and employee. A common complaint in the workplace is a lack of good and effective communication with management. A manager that shares humor with the team and provides a lighter workplace environment is a powerful tool that a leader can use to open up channels of communication. This allows team members to communicate openly, without fear of reprisal which is especially important when an employee

knows that their opinion differs from management.

3. Trust

One of the side effects of shared laughter and good communication between team members is a growing sense of trust. This is also a result of the emotional bonding that occurs when sharing positive humor. When open and comfortable communication is lacking or absent, there is no way that a team can function in an effective and productive manner. Without trust, communications between team members and leaders become distorted and defensive which can result in future misunderstandings.

4. Improved Morale

When organizations instill a culture of humor and fun on the job, employees enjoy their work more and people who love their jobs work effectively with their fellow employees. This is such an important benefit of humor and laughter on the job since employee morale has been diminishing due to the most recent economic instability.

5. Reduced Job Stress

It is common knowledge that humor helps reduce daily stress levels. Having a lighter attitude helps sustain a focused

mental state that is required to do one's work effectively especially when under pressure. It allows individuals the emotional flexibility to bend without breaking.

For those of you that have ever worked on a team, you have probably experienced at times other team members who are carrying a lot of stress. Their emotional state can quickly spread to the other team members which interferes with the entire team's performance. The more team members who receive the stress reducing effects of humor, the greater chances of success on a project.

6. Staff Retention

Who wants to leave a job you love coming into everyday that encourages teamwork and creativity through humor?

We have given you many reasons to lighten up. Teams that laugh, WORK!!!

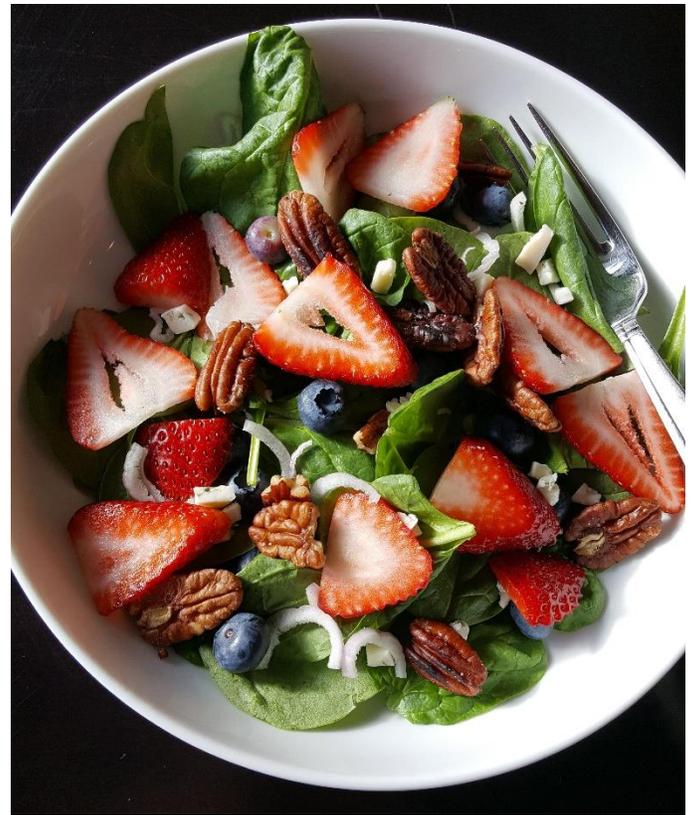
From Our Nutritionist



“I believe individuals and families can be empowered with nutrition education, coaching and tools they need to achieve optimum health.” ~ Jaime McNichol

Summer Berry Pecan Spinach Salad

This is a summer favourite that uses those berries and spinach that are in season early in the summer, which means they are full of flavour, are easily found locally and pack a nutritional punch! Berries are low in sugar and high in Vitamin C and spinach is a great source of vitamin K, A and C, magnesium and iron...to name a few! This is a simple, nutritious weeknight meal that comes together in 20 minutes.



Serves 2

Ingredients

- 8 oz. grilled chicken
- 4 cups organic spinach
- 1 cup berries
- ½ cup toasted pecans
- ½ cup slivered shallots
- 2 tbsp. gorgonzola cheese crumbles

Dressing

- 5 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 3 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. maple syrup
- 1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- Salt & pepper to taste

Directions

- While the chicken is grilling, toss the spinach, berries, shallots and toasted pecans in a large bowl.
- In another small bowl, combine the dressing ingredients and whisk until emulsified.
- Drizzle the dressing over each serving and top with grilled chicken and gorgonzola crumbles.

On The Lighter Side of Life



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