

Having a Sense of Humor is No Laughing Matter

Mitchell Milch*

Psychotherapist, Private Practice, Ridgewood, New Jersey, United States

***Corresponding Author:** Mitchell Milch, Psychotherapist, Private Practice, Ridgewood, New Jersey, United States.

Received: June 26, 2018; **Published:** August 28, 2018

Suffering is a universal and inescapable condition of life. Many of us effectively cope with this reality by strengthening our ties to other suffering human beings. We find in these bonds of mutual support, meaning, solace, comfort and reassurance that our sometimes powerlessness but to be hurt by our weaknesses and vulnerabilities need not devalue us. Many of us unfortunately, develop life narratives that fail to normalize this state of being human. Consequently, we add insult to injury by copping an unforgiving attitude for our honest mistakes and/or blame ourselves for the vagaries and vicissitudes of outrageous fortune. We become our own worst enemies falling on our swords of righteous indignation at what is a normal state of affairs; an ineffable progression of losses as we march toward our deaths. This normal state of affairs can feel very unnatural depending on how we compare ourselves to others and the crosses we perceive us respectively bearing. Livable suffering becomes intolerable misery when we interpret it to be an attack on the goodness or sufficiency of our essential natures.

Such foolish futility on our parts is nakedly funny to a mindful observing and reflective lens. No one is happy to suffer with disabilities of any kind but, until we stop banging our heads against the proverbial walls of those disabilities we are stuck with, we tie our hands in terms of harnessing our resources to make the best of our damaged situations. For decades I was a prime example of someone very unhappy attempting the insanity of trying to change history already recorded in the history books. In 2016 amazon.com published my memoir titled: *Do I Still Need My Head Examined Or Just A New Pair Of Running Shoes?* It might have been retitled: *Don't Play Me the Fool, No One Does That Better Than Myself!*" This memoir chronicled my efforts to get beyond merely surviving my developmental traumas to put my creative stamp on my life.

Well, you may not be shocked to hear me tell you that despite forging a successful second marriage, graduating as a psychoanalyst, publishing a memoir, and releasing a CD of original songs I gave myself almost as little credit for my accomplishments as my father had. The sad irony is that this was my sad fate in spite of the praise that was indeed heaped on me by many. I admit with great embarrassment that unlike Dorothy Gale of Wizard of Oz fame who didn't know she had it in her all the time to return home with a new perspective on her life, my shrinks had been telling the disbelieving me this for years. It was up to me now to demonstrate the capacity to be the kind, compassionate, forgiving, and oh yes, lighthearted parent to the many sides of myself I always wished for.

In truth I was too blindly morose to recognize the similarities between my life and the laugh out loud slapstick comedies of the 1930's that were such a delightful escape for so many of our for bears living with the twin cataclysms of The Great Depression and the gathering storm of world war in Europe. Here I was watching folks in my universe parade in and out of doors of opportunity for happiness and each time I tried to follow them I kept pulling at the doorknob with all my might sweating profusely all the while never turning the doorknob and never asking anyone to point out the error of my ways. This made up skit on my part is one a gifted comedian might have turned into a delightfully entertaining episode. Unfortunately for me I did not awaken to the insanity that were my self-defeating efforts to find light at the end of my dead end tunnel until I became good and depressed looking in futility for an outside fix to my unhappiness.

The X factor in the evolution of my personality and the end of my misery over being stuck with remnants of my traumatic past, was a good natured, self-deprecating sense of humor. The answer to my problems to quote a line from the movie *Stripes* was: "Lighten Up Francis".

To find reasons to have a good laugh each day is a coping mechanism of the highest order and an affirmation that our reasons for being here are to master the slings and arrows of misfortune so that we do not lose sight of the gifts of abundance from this universe. The transcendent quality of laughter reminds us that although we cannot solve all our miseries we can choose to lead meaningful and happy lives in spite of them. Having a sense of humor is no laughing matter.

Volume 7 Issue 9 September 2018

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