

Don't Be a Moody Dude

By Nick Arnette

Laughter not only helps us stay healthy, it can help us get into the active mode. Maybe you know a “Gloomy Gus” or a “Debbie Downer”—a natural pessimist who’s always in a bad mood. There definitely doesn’t seem to be much humor in his or her life. Maybe you have been singing the blues lately yourself. But the good news is there may be ways we can help ourselves lift our own spirits.

Have you encountered a lot of moody people lately? Here’s why. A University of Michigan study conducted by psychologist Randy Larsen showed that bad moods hit most of us an average of three out of every ten days. An even scarier finding is that about 5 percent reported being in a bad mood four out of every five days. Once you find out who these 5 percent are, give ’em lots of space! Better yet, RUN!!

So, don’t feel bad if you occasionally need an attitude adjustment. According to Dr. Larsen, most of us do. Here are a couple of studies that support the old adage “fake it ’til you make it.”

The pen experiment: A control group held a pen in their hand and another group clenched a pen between their teeth, forcing a “smile.” The pen clenchers rated cartoons as funnier than the control group. It’s known as the facial feedback hypothesis. Maybe there is something to “biting the bullet”!

The rubber band experiment: Researchers attached adhesive bandages connected with rubber bands to participants’ faces and then raised and lowered their cheeks. The conclusion was that people may feel happy when their cheeks are lifted upward. Go figure! I sure would love to have a picture of the people in that study. Wouldn’t that be a hoot?

Even if you can’t smile, there is still hope. Check out the Botox experiment: Participants were asked to read happy and sad statements before and then two weeks after Botox treatments. Great news for dermatologists: The world seemed less angry and sad after Botox treatments.

Conclusion: If you don’t want to smile, at least stop frowning. You’ll be less angry and sad. In other words, you’ll be chillin.’

So, the next time you’re bummed out, put a pen or pencil (lengthwise, okay?) between your upper and lower teeth and see if you find yourself feeling happier. Try it. It really works. It’s not a cure-all, but hey, it costs nothing to try. If you want to try the “not-frowning” experiment using Botox, you’re completely on your own. If you want to save some money though, you can just stand outside on a cold, wintry day until your face freezes. Let me know how that works out for you!

If you think that sounds like a lot of □ work and not terribly fun, the good news is that you really don't have to put a pen in your mouth or stick a needle in your face. Humor is an effective tool for reducing stress, improving productivity, and building teamwork—everywhere from the office to home. And laughing is good for us, inside and out. To tell you the truth, I think most of you already knew that without even reading about it. (At least now you have serious research to support your ideas.) You also know how it feels when humor is present, and how it feels when there's no humor at all.

The preceding article is an excerpt from *Me, We and Glee: How to have a great attitude, work as a team and keep your sense of humor*, by Nick Arnette. Known as *The Feel Good Funny Guy*, Arnette is a popular keynote speaker at business meetings throughout the United States and Canada. You can contact Nick Arnette at www.NickArnette.com, email: nick@nickarnette.com

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