



## **“How to Have Fun”**

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### **6 stress relievers you need to know!**

Have you lost something recently?

Can you recall the last time you laughed, played, or actually escaped from daily boredom and really enjoyed your life? Do you plan activities that bring you joy and laughter and bring delight with your family or friends? You may have lost sight of one particular priority – the priority to have fun in your life!

The frantic pace of modern life has made genuine relationships and the experience of pure fun a rarity. We often become lost in a routine of caring for others, managing our homes, and juggling every other request that comes our way. And without the balance of the simple pleasures of life, stress can take over your life like uninvited ivy on a trellis.

#### **Some common belief barriers to having fun include:**

- It's selfish to indulge in fun things.
- I feel guilty if I am doing nothing or relaxing.
- I don't have time for fun.
- One must be serious about life to survive.
- It will take away from family time if I have any individual fun.

#### **Making time for fun adds many benefits, including:**

- Enlivens your spirit & attitude
- It connects people and is contagious
- Enhances all relationships
- Improves health & reduces the dangers of stress on your body, mind and spirit
- Promotes creativity

#### **Here are six suggestions for simple stress relievers you can enjoy today:**

##### **Be Funny**

- **Laughter adds life** ~ Research has shown the health benefits of laughter ranging from strengthening the immune system to increasing one's threshold for pain. Laughter reduces the level of stress hormones, such as cortisol, epinephrine, adrenalin and dopamine. And laughter also increases the level of health-enhancing hormones like endorphins and neurotransmitters. Further, laughter provides a physical and emotional release. Laughter is contagious! When you bring more laughter into your life, you bring it into the lives of those around you.
- **Humor heals** ~ Humor is a universal language; everyone can relate to funny stories. Initiate humor in your life – watch a funny TV show or movie, visit a comedy show; listen to others (on TV or Radio) that make you laugh.

## Friendships

- **Connect** ~ There are few experiences in life that rival the satisfactions and pleasure of friendships. Break free from isolation of your hum-drum day, free from the responsibilities of your busy work day. Choose connections of friends that inspire and enliven you. Connect with these friends over a peaceful cup of coffee, or taking your dogs for a walk together. It only takes a small amount of time to feel the power of connection with a good friend, or a new friend. Relationships reduce stress by enriching our perspective and encouraging us to be our best.
- **Catch up** ~ What if you could reconnect with an old friend and catch up on each other's lives? Remembering the joy and laughter and hugs you used to share may motivate you to give them a call. Sometimes friendships end up taking the back seat, especially for busy women who are managing a home and perhaps also a career. Friendships take time and effort but the rewards are immeasurable. Do not let these personal connections fade. A simply note or phone call could be a big boost for both of you!

## Family

- **Change activities** ~ Add some variety and vary the routine of your average day. Many times we just go through the motions of the family schedule, and we loose connection with those we are closest to. Pick one day this week to do something totally new and unusual. Pick something that sounds enjoyable and challenging. Select a playful task that include all family members, and do something that you would typically not do. Laugh at yourself in the process. It is not the end of the world when the new Dad-installed window treatments start to tumbling down.
- **Creative cooking** ~ Let food be fun! Eating is something all families do. Why not clear the counter tops, print off some recipes you watched on TV, or dust one of those cookbooks off the shelf? Be carefree. Be creative. Make a family dinner together, where everyone plays a part. Enjoy the process of contributing to a final product – one that you will enjoy eating (hopefully)! But, hey, if it doesn't exactly turn out like the picture, just try it! And although I have, in fact, set a few toaster ovens aflame doesn't mean the entire dinner was a flop.

## Folly

- **Seek silliness** ~ Sadly many people spend their entire lives hearing messages like these: "Stop acting like a kid". "There's work to be done, stop being silly." How about visiting a local playhouse, a visit to the park, or go see that goofy new animated kid's movie! We can still be responsible adults, but also need to actively integrate folly and fun to balance the stress of our lives.
- **Set aside seriousness** ~ In what area of your life, do you need to take a large dose of a "chill pill"? Being overly serious or analytical can be a strain on your body, your brain, and on those around you. A child and her naturally curiosity is appealing to me. They are not afraid to ask questions. They seek to know more about their environment, and don't get hung up on process and procedure. We can still be practical but not be entrapped with perfectionism or paralysis of analysis.

## Find

- **A hobby** ~ What is something you really used to enjoy doing, but now feel you "just don't have the time"? Try carving out just 30 minutes to read, or paint, or do crossword puzzles. Spend some time savoring joy and wonder for yourself. Also, what is something you have always wanted to try but never got around to it? At least make some phone calls to obtain more information - about that invigorating challenge of sky-diving, or rollerblading, or writing children's stories. At any age, hobbies are fun and healthy!

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- A group ~ Ok, you enjoy mystery novels, join a book club. If you want to learn more about perennials, annuals or forsythias, find a gardening group. How fun and enriching to be with others and enjoy a common activity. Join a group and maximize your delight and pleasure of fun.

## **Favor**

- Surprise someone ~ Share your sense of thrill and fun with others! Surprise someone with your thoughtfulness. Invite a neighbor, or a parent from the carpool, or an acquaintance at the hardware store to do something fun together. Find favor in yourself and others and surprise someone today.
- Share your “gifts” ~ True happiness is doing for others. And when you utilize your strengths and your gifts, the task seems effortless. Put a smile on someone’s face – your bridge club members, your Aunt, or your spouse – and do something for them that you are gifted at. Could you bake a cake, or arrange flowers, or hang pictures. Remember your talents and gifts and when you share those with others, you share more than the item or the action; you share your delight and appreciation of them.

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**Contact Centerstone at (615) 460-HELP (4357),  
For information about help and support for you or your family.**

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### **About Centerstone**

Centerstone ([www.centerstone.org](http://www.centerstone.org)), a not-for-profit organization, is the largest behavioral healthcare provider in Tennessee and the ninth largest in the nation. Serving the community for more than fifty years, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to individuals of all ages and their families. Centerstone is devoted to research that seeks to identify, treat and eliminate mental illness. Centerstone provides services to more than 50,000 individuals annually. Children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and families all receive help from a multitude of different programs at more than 65 facilities and 140 partnership locations throughout the region. For more information about Centerstone, please call (615) 460-4357 or toll free at (888) 291-4357.

### **About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS**

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone’s wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone’s Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, “Homicide Response.” Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.

To request Susan Gillpatrick to speak with your group or organization about complete wellness in living, contact her at (615) 460-4445 or [susan.gillpatrick@centerstone.org](mailto:susan.gillpatrick@centerstone.org).

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