



Transcript:

The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor for Behavioral Health and Medical Professionals

Presenter: Mark Sanders

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PRESENTER: Good morning, everyone. Welcome, and we will get started in just a minute. We're going to give some people time to get in and get settled, and then we'll get started.

All right. Thank you again, everyone, for joining us. Our webinar today, is The Therapeutic benefits of Humor for Behavioral Health and Medical Professionals. Our speaker is Mark Sanders.

Today's webinar is brought to you by the Great Lakes MHTTC and SAMHSA, the Great Lakes ATTC, MHTTC, and PTTC are funded by the following cooperative agreements from SAMHSA. The opinions expressed in this webinar today are the views of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the official position of DHHS or SAMHSA. The MHTTC network believes that words matter and uses affirming, respectful, and recovery-oriented language in all activities.

I have a couple of housekeeping details for you. If you are having any technical issues, you can individually message Kristina Spannauer, or Stephanie Behlman, who will join us shortly in the chat section at the bottom of your screen, and they will be happy to assist you. If you have any questions for the speaker, please put them in the Q&A section, also at the bottom of the screen, and the speaker will respond to them.

You will be directed to a link at the end of the presentation for a very short survey. We would really appreciate it if you could fill this out. It takes about three minutes, and it's how we report back to SAMHSA. Certificates of attendance will also be sent out to all who attend the full session. They will be sent to you via email and it takes about a week.

If you would like to see what else we're doing, please follow us on social media. And, as I said earlier, our presenter today is Mark Sanders. We are thrilled to have him as our speaker today. Mark is the Illinois State Project Manager for the Great Lakes ATTC, MHTTC, and PTTC. He's also an international speaker, trainer, and consultant in the behavioral health field, whose work has reached thousands throughout the United States, Europe, Canada, the Caribbean, and the British Isles. Thank you, very much, Mark, and we look forward to your presentation.



MARK SANDERS: Thank you, Ann. And thank you Kristina. And thank you, Sherrie.

So four years ago I was traveling in, flying in from Arizona to Chicago where I live, and on the plane I was sitting next to a man with six Purple Hearts. And how do you earn a Purple Heart? I'm glad you asked-- bravery. He was about 90 years old, World War II, veteran. In other words, for 3 and 1/2 hours, I'm sitting next to the bravest human being that I ever met in my life. And at one point he said, Mark, what do you do for a living? I said, I give speeches. I'm a social worker. I talk to social workers, counselors, case managers, therapists, nurses, doctors, nurses assistants, paramedics. He told me to tell you, thank you for your service. So thank you for your service.

I read a book called, Good to Great, and the author's research says that you can tell what's most important to a society by it's tallest buildings. You see, 100 years ago the tallest buildings were churches. Today the tallest buildings are Fortune 500 companies and Fortune 100 companies. But the author said that no society is great just because you have tall buildings, and Fortune 500 companies, and Fortune 100 companies. He said, a society is great when you have great counselors, case managers, recovery coaches, nurses, doctors, paramedics. So if you're in a room, anywhere near a mirror, I invite you to look at yourself in the mirror and repeat these words to yourself. This is your lucky day. You're looking at greatness.

Take a moment, if you would, and claim. The world can't compensate you enough for the work that you do. Many seminars, workshops, begin with a polling of the audience. So let me poll you. By a show of hands, how many do outstanding work? Raise your hand if you're really good at your job? Very good. How many you, by show of hands, feel as a result of the work that you do, that you're making a difference in the lives of at least one human being? Raise your hand. And how many of you feel, as a result of the work that you do, that you deserve a \$90,000 a year pay increase? And every hand goes up twice.

As I said earlier, the world can not compensate you for the important work that you do. I don't have \$90,000 for everyone. What I wanted to do was to give you a gift in the form of a story, in honor of the work that you do. In 1983, I had a job where I earned lots of money, \$13,000 a year. I decided I better go back to school so I could learn more, but also so I can make more money. So in order to do that, I took an evening job where went from earning \$13,000 a year to \$10,000 a year. I don't know if you know what a \$10,000 paycheck looks like? Some of you are saying, yeah, I do. It's about \$300 every two weeks. And I was given \$150 of those dollars to the school I attended, Loyola University of Chicago, and \$125 to my roommate, which left me \$25 every two weeks, for pretty much nothing. I had to live off of \$25 every two weeks. In my field of study, social work, I did an internship, a practicum. My first practicum was at a hospital. And the first day I showed up, I was asked to go home because I was wearing gym shoes. They said, this is the professional



hospital. We don't wear gym shoes here. So where was I going to get a pair of dress shoes for \$25? You're taking, goodwill, Salvation Army. Years ago, there was a discount shoe chain called Favor Shoes. They were like Payless before Payless. So I walked into Favor Shoes. And the only shoes I could afford for \$25 were plastic. The problem was that it was September, and as you know it rains a lot in September. I quickly discovered the plastic and rain, they don't mix. I was slipping and sliding all over the place. And right around November I had a larger concern. A whole form right at the tip of the shoe. So now when I walk down the street my shoes were talking. And then December was on his way and, as you know, it snows a lot in my town in December. So my fear was that snow would get in the tip of my shoe and I would die of frostbite. So I took my shoe to the nearest shoe shop and I sat it on the counter. The owner looked at that shoe and ha, ha, ha, ha. You may as well throw these away, son. These are plastic. We don't fix plastic. It's not worth it, he said. Plastic can't be fixed. I put my head down, I walked about a mile, and stumbled into another shoe shop and sat the shoe on the counter. The owner looked at my shoe and ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. You may as well throw these away, son. These are plastic. We don't fix plastic. It's not worth it, he said. Plastic can't be fixed. Now, I'm desperate. I walk about two miles, I find another shoe shop. I sit the shoe on the counter. My heart was beating so fast. I knew he was going to say, we don't fix plastic. Plastic can't be fixed. Instead, he reached back, picked up a magnifying glass, looked at my shoe really carefully, he looked at me, smiled, and he said, I'll fix it. I'll fix it. And that was 1983. This is the year 2021. He's been fixing my shoes for 38 years. Not the same pair. But he fixed those four times that year. What he said to me is, it takes a special person to work at fixing something that the rest of the world says is not worth it. They can't be fixed.

It's the same thing a lot of people say about your clients, your patients. It's not worth it. They can't be fixed. So it takes a special group of individuals to dedicate yourself to doing this work, and I salute you for that decision. We're going to talk about humor today. There was a stand up comic named Steve Allen. And his famous quote is that Comedy is tragedy plus time. In other words, in order for something to be funny, it often comes out of pain. And then as time moves along, it becomes funnier once you can work through the pain. I get that firsthand. I'm from a family that had lots of alcoholism. Both of my grandfathers had alcoholism, my great grandfather had alcoholism. If you were sitting really close to me, you'd notice on the left side of my face, I have this little dot on my face. Can you see that small on my face? I've had that little dot on my face, since I was two years old. My mother told me that one day, when I was two years old, I was left in the care of one of my grandfathers who went to the bar to get something to drink. My mother told me that when he went to the bar he left, on the floor, a bottle of Drano that didn't have a lid on it. My mother told me that this little dot on my face is caused by my having drank the Drano. I'm from one of those families that starts the story but they really finish the story. You know, when kids are around they get really quiet? So I've been left to fill in the blanks.



So here's my fantasy. I drank the Drano, and the Drano was bubbling in my system the way Drano does. It made its way to my face, was about to leave that all over my face, but the doctors pump my stomach and saved my life so I have to speak with you today.

I've got a good friend I went to high school and college with. He came in one day looking really, really serious, and he said, Mark, we need to join a health club together. We're not getting any younger. In fact, we're old. Let's take of our bodies. I said are you kidding? My body is fine. Did you know that when I was two years old, I swallowed Drano? And this little dot on my face is the only sign that I swallowed the Drano. He asked me a million question. He said, the dot is the only time you swallowed the Drano? He said, how do you know your body's not green inside? I took two steps back and I said, I don't know, but I do know that I've never been clogged up. There's the good news. Welcome. We want to find out who you are and who's with us. Can you find the chat feature? And what I'd like to ask you to share in chat is your occupation. What do you do? What's your title? This will help us make sure that the examples that are given are tailored to your unique needs. What do you do? Who's with us today?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Have LPCIT, a health educator, a target case management, counselors, program directors, juvenile probation, social work, health navigator, a psychologist, LCFW, therapists, ICM-- which I don't know what that stands for-- college professor, CADC college professor, mental health case manager, child—

MARK SANDERS: Go ahead. I'm sorry, Kristina.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: I said about child and family psychology.

MARK SANDERS: Yeah. It sounds like a nice range and just-- I know you help others for a living. If ever there was a time when the world needs to laugh, it's right now. So we owe a great deal of gratitude to a man by the name of Norman Cousins. And Norman Cousins who had a medical condition where he was in pain 24 hours a day. And doctors told Norman Cousins that he would be dead soon. Norman Cousins said to his doctors, you're not God. So he checked himself out of the hospital, into a hotel room near the hospital, and the medical staff asked him, can we give you medicine? He said, yeah, comedy tapes. Norman Cousins figured that negative emotions, like anger and rage, contributed to his declining health. So he figured that positive experiences, like laughter, can heal them. And so he laughed every waking moment. And what he learned was that if every 10 minutes he laughed, he had two hours of pain-free sleep. Norman Cousins actually lived 16 years longer than doctors predicted that he would live. And he wrote a book called, *The Anatomy of an Illness*. You have to get that book-- *The Anatomy of an Illness*. And what he chronicled in the book is research on laughter, and its power to heal. So let me share with you some of the findings. Laughter releases endorphins in the brain that fight pain. Now, as we speak, you know



that heroin releases endorphins in the brain which fight pain. Heroin can also put you to sleep. You remember watching *The Wizard of Oz*? Dorothy, the lion, the tin man, and the scarecrow, when they wound up in the poppy fields, what did they do? They went to sleep.

OxyContin can release pain. The problem is OxyContin and heroin can lead to overdose deaths. With laughter, it helps with pain, but it ultimately is not going to end your life. It prolongs life. You'll see in a few moments.

So I know some of you, as I'm speaking right now, have some knee pain, some lower back pain. And as we age, we experience physical pain. And the research says that laughter can help us.

They did a study out of Israel where they had people keep their hand in ice water as long as they could, just keep it in there as long-- have you done that before? Keep your hand in ice water as long as you can. What they discovered is that those individuals who listened to comedy tapes while they kept their hand in ice water, were able to keep their hand in that water three times longer than the rest.

I used to work at a detoxification facility, and people were withdrawing from heroin. They'd be doubled over in pain. And then in the evening we would take them to the NA meetings. And at the meetings, they would laugh. Part of the paradox of recovery, mental health recovery, substance use recovery-- as a matter of fact, you know how you know when people are recovering? It's when they can laugh at stuff that we're killing them before. What I noticed was that as my patients, clients would go to the meetings and they would laugh, their pain would diminish. Then they would go back to their room and their pain would return. Laughter lowers cortisol levels, meaning that if you have a son or daughter that has ADD, laughter is good for them. As matter of fact, Eddie Murphy self-diagnosed himself as having ADD. His father had alcohol-use disorder, so Eddie Murphy would go to class, and he would be the class clown. He would make the class laugh. And the teacher says, Eddie, if you could just participate for 40 minutes, I'll give you the last five minutes of every class to make students laugh. Laughter lowers cortisol and protects our immune system. If laughter protects our immune system, it's really protective, one of those protective factors, against COVID-19. We need strong immune health in order to deal with COVID-19. So years ago, I used to do retreats for counselors that work with clients that were HIV positive. And this was the early '90s. Think back to the early '90s. People would get diagnosed with HIV in the early '90s, and sometime, as soon as they got their diagnosis, they would die. And so we had all of these retreats to support the staff whose clients were dying left and right. And just like there doing lots of experimental drugs to discover vaccines for COVID-19, back then they did lots of experimental drugs to discover what helps with HIV. And I was at one conference, and there was a doctor who said, we have found-- we have discovered 18 drugs that can be used to treat HIV. And I said-- actually there were 21 drugs. He was talking about 18 pills. I said that love is medicine.



You know Magic Johnson, Earvin Magic Johnson, the basketball player? Two years ago he celebrated the 25th-year anniversary of his having been diagnosed with HIV. And if you remember the year that magic was diagnosed with HIV, the medicine for HIV was so poor that people would get their diagnosis, as I said, and they die. And Magic said, two years ago, 25th anniversary, when Cookie told me that she loved me-- and Cookie is his wife-- and that she would not leave me, I knew that I would survive. You see, I tell stories. And sometimes people stay at the end of my seminars, and they tell me stories. So a woman shared the following story. She and her husband had a baby, and she asked her husband to go home and bring her some clean clothes, so she could wear some clean clothes home from the hospital. Her husband was gone for two days. His sister showed up and said that when her husband went home, there were men robbing the house. And he went and got the family gun and held these men at gunpoint and he called the police. His sister said when the police showed up and saw her husband holding the gun, the police didn't know if her husband was the good guy or the bad guy. So the Chicago Police accidentally shot and killed her husband. She said Mark, I was to receive the largest settlement in Illinois history wrongful death, police killing my husband. She says she was in the courtroom, and the judge opened his mouth, and the judge said you will receive. And she said, before the judge finished the sentence, there was a woman in the back of the courtroom who stood up and said, wait a minute your honor. He's not her husband. I married the man at first. We never divorced. The second woman received the settlement. Now the woman who told me the story was a really good probation officer. Before she got this news of betrayal from my husband, something like 35% of her caseload went back to prison. But after she got the news of betrayal, she was so bitter in her heart that her numbers swell from 35% going back to prison to 65%. Do you believe you can have some experiences that can affect your heart and affect your work? One day she was bitter and there was ringing at her doorbell, and there was a 13-year-old girl standing there. She told me the 13-year-old girl said, the woman who won the settlement is my mother. And the man who you married is my biological father. The girl told you that right before her mother received the settlement check, the state of Illinois went and did a background check, and found out her mother had been receiving public assistance illegally forever, a felony in all 50 states. They put my mother in prison. She said, when she got out of prison, she started using drugs. She neglected me. I haven't been going to school. I've been smoking marijuana. Can I live with you? Can I live with you? She said, Mark, against the recommendation of all my family and friends, I looked at the 13-year-old girl and said, you can live with me. She said, Mark, I mothered this girl. Love brought me back and it brought her back too. She's now a college student. She's in college. I told the group of doctors that love is medicine. That is why, when we involve people, loved ones in someone's treatment their recovery, their recovery is enhanced times three. Laughter is medicine, I share with the group. And living a life that's filled with purpose is medicine.



Did you know that if a person has work that gives their life meaning and purpose, or volunteerism that gives their life meaning and purpose, that research says they live longer? And that for those of you who are retiring soon, it's really important for you to have that "what next" figure out because purpose prolongs life. Incredible story about this man who was in a car accident-- an artist-- and he became paralyzed. And he was so bitter, and someone sent them to meet with you for therapy, and you asked him, what makes you a therapist? And he said, my hands, and I can't use them. You said, no, that's not what makes you a-- sorry. That's not what makes you an artist. That's not what makes you an artist. You said, what makes you an artist is that your purpose is to be an artist. So you taught him to paint, holding the paintbrush between his teeth. Laughter increases the antibodies which fight infections. Laughter activate T-cells and prepares the body to fight foreign substances. And then number four, laughter increases natural killer cell activity. And natural killer cells attack cancerous cells in the body.

There was a doctor named Bernie Siegel, who used to appear on PBS. You remember. And he worked with cancer patients. And even put cancer patients in two groups, the ones who received chemo therapy and radiation treatment only, and the ones who received that treatment plus listened to comedy tapes every waking moment like Norman Cousins. And when his research indicated was that those patients that looked to listen to comedy tapes, their tumors would shrink more rapidly than the rest. That's worth repeating because we all know someone with cancer. Those who listen to comedy tapes, their tumors would shrink more rapidly than the rest.

Laughter improves brain functioning and protects our heart, increases oxygen in the blood, which encourages healing. Laughter reduces stress and anxiety and fear, which suggests that right now is a good time to laugh because there are lots of people who are afraid-- COVID-19, the economic recession. Laughter elevates mood and increases energy. Laughter can decrease stress, lower blood pressure-- did you know that laughter is blood pressure medication-- and decreased muscle tension.

In a study of terminally ill patients, four out of five said they wish people would stop being so glum and joke with them. Studies of cultures where people often live the longest indicates that high esteem for older people, and humor, are key ingredients for longevity. My friends, if I could eliminate two words from the English language, if I could get rid of two words, those two words would be "senior citizen." And I would replace those two words with the word "elder." You know the difference between a senior citizen and an elder? A senior citizen is someone that people talk to like they're a baby, in that slow voice, and who they don't listen to. And elder our wise people.

There are a group of Africans that live in Georgia, in the mountains of Georgia, they call the Gullah people. Just Clarence Thomas was Gullah. Running back Jim Brown was Gullah.



They left slavery and went into the mountains several hundred years ago. And the Gullah people are still practicing their religion, several hundred years later, the way they did back then. And if you visit the area where they live, the houses are in the circles, four or five circles. And in the middle of the first circle are the elders, who are considered the center of the culture, the wise people, the all knowing people. And so in places where people live the longest they have no McDonald's, lots of olive oil in their diet and salads, they dance a lot, they sing a lot, and they laugh a lot. Laughter gives the lungs a workout. When we laugh heartily, we take in six times more oxygen than when we are talking.

When we laugh, the heart comes more, increasing blood circulation. According to Dr. Fry, 20 seconds of hearty laughter, gives the heart the same exercise three minutes of rowing. Take a moment to read that one. That's a little longer. We're talking the benefits of laughter.

One study found that new mothers who laughed a lot have fewer upper respiratory infections, and their babies did too. They've even looked at the benefits of humor at work-- decreases stress by 39%. A memory and recall is increased by 23%, at work, after watching something funny. Increased productivity times two, after taking a human break.

OK, let's talk about laughter as prevention of burnout of compassion fatigue. If you've ever experienced burnout, raise your hand. Some of you are saying, I'm so burned out I could barely-- I could barely raise my hand. Burnout happens in four stages. The first stage is called the honeymoon stage. It's when you first get that new job. You call your friends. Friends, I have the perfect job.

I don't need food, air, clothes, water, sex. All I need is this job. You're on a honeymoon. You're floating on a cloud. Two years later, you call those same friends, and you ask, do you know of anybody who is hiring? We call that second stage the stagnation stage. The honeymoon is over. Reality has set in. Difficult co-workers, difficult client, difficult patient, and a ton of paperwork. How many of you have a lot of paperwork to do? I used to bring my home with me. And then I stopped bringing my paperwork home because I became convinced, if I died a social worker tomorrow, I'd have at least one form to fill out before I died, if nothing else, a discharge summary. I stopped bringing that stuff home.

The third stage in the burnout cycle is called frustration. It's in this third stage that people are likely to do something positive about the fact that they're burning out. Let us check.

What are some positive things people do when they find out they're burning out? They catch it, and what do they do to recover from it? Positive stuff? What do you see there, Kristina?



KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Self-care, vacation, finding a hobby, getting more sleep.

MARK SANDERS: Somebody said vacation. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever needed a vacation as soon as you came back from a vacation? That's when you know your work is stressful. What else do people do when they're burning out?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Good sleep, hygiene, meditation. A few people answered yes to your question about vacationing. Seeking support from coworkers, getting more sleep, connecting with family, and getting together with friends, and time in nature.

MARK SANDERS: This is wonderful. Let me ask a question. Have you ever called him well before? You know you're burnt. You ever called in well? Hello, boss. It's me. I'm not sick, I don't have a cold or the flu. I'm not coughing. I'm calling in well. I'm feeling really, really good. 75 degrees, no wind.

Yeah, we have to take care of ourselves. Here's where it gets interesting. If we don't catch burnout, in that third stage, we're vulnerable to slipping into the fourth stage, which is called apathy, chronic burnout. Now your attitude is a job is a job is a job. You show up at 9 o'clock on Monday morning, you say the best thing about 9:00 AM Monday morning is three hours from noon, and noon is lunch. The phone rings. You want to shoot the phone.

Now, you're running from clients and patients. Why is that emergency doctor running? He's running from his patients. That's when you know apathy has set in. You say the best thing about Wednesday is that it's two days from Friday. For you, once apathy sets in, the most important moment of the whole week is 5:00 PM on a Friday afternoon. You don't even speak to your co-workers anymore, you're so burned out. How are you doing, Ralph? You start grunting and stuff like that.

I went to a workshop at the University of Arizona, and the keynote speaker shared his research findings on counselors, on therapists, who do what he called stupid stuff. He didn't have a better term for it, so he called it stupid stuff, and found the relationship between apathy, chronic burnout, and us doing stupid stuff. Stuff like marrying clients, moving clients in your house, adopting a client's child.

How about this? Smoking weed behind the agency with a client. Stupid stuff like depositing a coworker's expense check in your bank account. Stupid stuff like walking out of the agency, with the agency's computer on your shoulder, with the cameras recording the whole thing. Stupid stuff like robbing a Walgreens, during your lunch hour, while wearing an agency ID and



then calling a cab for a getaway car. He discovered that after we burn out, it can impact our ethical code where we stop caring as much. That's burnout. And then there's compassion fatigue, the stress of caring too much. Compassion fatigue differs from burnout, in that burnout is caused by organizational stress. And backbiting, backstabbing, and gossip causes burnout, and feeling ineffective in our work.

Let's take a moment to talk about feeling ineffective in our work. I have a friend named Greg Risburg. And Greg Risburg started off as a fourth grade teacher in public housing, right behind public housing in Chicago. And he went from there to being a social worker and then a motivational speaker. We were talking about feeling ineffective in your work. And Greg said, let me tell you a story. He said one day a man called me at midnight and woke me up and said, are you the same Greg Risburg who taught fourth grade, across the street from Robert Taylor Public Housing 30 years ago? And Greg said, yeah that's me. He says, I was a student in your fourth grade class. You were my teacher. He said I'm a decorated military man. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if I wouldn't wind up of achieving the rank of a Colin Powell. I was just calling you to tell you that you really made a difference in my life. And Greg said, what did I do? He says, every Friday you would stop teaching, and you would sit the whole class in a large circle, and you would have us to read the newspaper from cover to cover. And then reading a newspaper from cover to cover, what I learned, was that there was more happening in the world than simply what was happening in public housing. So it made me curious about the world. So here, I am graduating high school and joined the military, and I went around the world twice, he said. One day you did something more special than that. You invited the whole class to a special field trip to your house. You asked everybody in class to bring a bag lunch to your house. And when I looked in my refrigerator that night, I saw that I had no food. And when I made it to your house with no food, you went in your refrigerator and you fixed me a sandwich. He says, anyway, the reason I'm calling is because we still have a home in Chicago, and I'll be coming home next month. And I wanted to invite you over to my house so I can fix you a sandwich.

One way you can feel effective is to view your work like a farmer who plant seeds, who may not see the fruits of your labor in the season that you plant the seed. Sometimes it takes many seasons to see the fruits of your labor. Did you know that a seed could even blossom through concrete? Some of our clients are really tough to work with.

Compassion fatigue difference from burnout in that burnout is caused by organizational stress and feeling ineffective, and compassion fatigue is caused by caring. Another definition of compassion fatigue is the emotional residue, as a result of working with those who suffer, secondary trauma, secondary PTSD. Its signs include anger-- you've been listening to so many clients stories of trauma and pain-- irritability-- you were always on work on



time at first, now you come late on a regular basis-- loss of energy, loss of hope, loss of enthusiasm, loss of idealism.

The next time you're in a Zoom meeting with your coworkers or at work, here's what I want you to do. I want you to look at your co-workers, the ones who've been doing this work for less than a year or two, and then the graduate students. I want you to look in their eyes and notice how their eyes glow. You see, when workers are new to this work, their eyes glow because they feel like they can save the world. We called it, idealism. And as compassion fatigue sets in, the eyes can begin to dim. Spiritual distress-- I remember being a consultant for our child welfare system. We call our child welfare agency in Illinois DCFS, the Department of Children and Family Services. Some of you might call it, Child Protective Services. And back then, some of the DCF caseworkers had caseload to 250 clients. And sometimes they would come to me and they would say, Mark, I no longer believe in God as much as I used to. Because if there really is a God, then how are there so many children being abused? Or like some the HIV case managers in the early '90s would say, I no longer believe that there's a God because if there's a God, then how are there so many people dying of HIV? Compassion fatigue can lead to a shift in one's worldview. Let me explain.

I had a child in a late age. And we needed a babysitter. But because I was a 35-year social worker at that time, I had 35 years of stories in my head-- still do-- of bad things that have happened to children being left with babysitters, like abuse and neglect.

My wife was a social worker for 30 years. She had 30 years of stories in her head of bad things that happened to children abuse and neglect. So we were much less likely than others to get a babysitter. As a matter of fact, we did something insane. We hired two nieces to babysit at the same time-- talk about costly-- because of our work.

So who's vulnerable to compassion fatigue? Counselors, case managers, recovery coaches, individuals with trauma histories. Did you know that the research says that helping professionals, like nurses and doctors and counselors and case managers and recovery coaches, that we actually experience more trauma in childhood than any other profession? What that means, in terms of this work, is that if you have a trauma history, it's easier to be re-traumatized by our clients.

Receptionist-- because everybody who calls the agency in a crisis, and everybody who walks through that door, is a part of the receptionist caseload. So they are absorbing all of this pain. They're vulnerable.

Paramedics are vulnerable-- nurses, doctors, other hospital personnel. As a matter of fact, let me put it to you this way. Anybody whose job requires them to look away sometimes when they see their patients or clients, you have to look away, you're vulnerable to compassion fatigue.



Lawyers, especially criminal lawyers, that read about bad stuff that happen, police officers, firefighters.

You know, one thing that's interesting about a firefighters training is they're taught the opposite of so many other professions. Firefighters are taught, in case of an emergency, save yourself first, then save your co-workers, and then help others. The rest of us are taught, to heck with ourselves. To heck with ourselves and our co-workers.

Let's say working with the clergy-- could you imagine listening to spend all day? And then, of course, soldiers on the battlefield, are vulnerable. Criminal justice professionals-- probation parole, people who work in prisons, are vulnerable because of all the things bad things you see, read, and hear. If you're not careful, you can carry that stuff with you.

But there is good news, according to the research. Laughter's been found to reduce the risk of burnout and compassion fatigue, and have it reduce the impact of both occupational hazards. Let me ask you this.

You ever hurt so bad that all you can do is laugh? I'm serious. A relative of mine called me, told me he was a quarter of a million in debt. He was laughing like a hyena. I said why are you laughing? He said, man, sometimes things hurt so bad that all you can do is laugh.

Joan Rivers said that laughter is God's gift to humans. You never see a cow laugh. By show of hands, how many you have kids? Raise your hand if you have kids.

February 3, 1995-- February 3, 1995 was the scariest and happiest day of my life all wrapped up into one, if you could imagine such a day. It was the day my son was born. He came out weighed five pounds five ounces, looking exactly like his dad. Scared me to death. Now those of you who are like leaning away from your computer screens, you don't understand. Lean in. Lean forward.

My son was born with a frame this big. He had my nose, my I adult nose, on a frame this big. My boy was all nose. I walked around the hospital room to get different angles. Looked like everywhere I walked his nose was following me. You could swear that his nose had eyes. Then I wonder why nobody had ever told me.

The second my son was born, I had love-- more love for him than people I know my entire life. So strong was my love for my son, that everyone the nurses took him, I followed. My fear was that my son would get mixed up with someone else's son. Or someone else would want to bring in a future NBA star home-- just kidding-- had therapy about that.



Now in a hospital where my son was born, most of the babies were born weighing between five to eight pounds at birth, and they were sleeping in the fetal position. There was one baby there I never will forget. That baby was born weighing 12 pounds, sleeping like this.

Looked like a grown man, like he's ready to say, give me a pillow, some popcorn, and put the TV on channel seven. That was a huge baby. We brought our son home. And after about a year he learned to laugh, and smile and laugh. And some mornings, as I was headed to work, my son would laugh and I would laugh with him. The catch was, nothing was funny and I felt better. Thought I was losing my mind.

Then I saw on Nightline that the fastest growing movement in India are laughing clinics. There are these people who are clinically depressed. They show up every evening in the town square, they do 15 minutes of yoga stretching, then they laugh for 45 minutes and nothing is funny.

Researchers say they eat better, they sleep better at the laughter, they have a brighter look on life, less medication needed. In short, my friends, the research said there's a value in laughing, even if nothing is funny. You're a probation officer parole, you're a counselor, a therapist, you're a tech, you're an emergency medical technician-- your work is stressful. You need to laugh. The research says, it doesn't have to be funny to reap the benefits. So I know your work is stressful. So here's what I want you to do for the rest of your career. Every evening when you get off work, 6 o'clock, 7 o'clock, 5 o'clock, whatever time you get off work, I want you to go to the parking lot and get in your car, and lock the door, then look around in both directions, make sure nobody's watching, and simply laugh. Even if nothing is funny, the research says, it has those benefits.

Let's take a moment to talk about laughter and mental health. Humor raises endorphin levels in the brain and reduces the emotional pain. So does heroin. So does Oxy.

You know, 25 years ago I traveled to a commonwealth of the United States called the US Virgin Islands. You ever been there? It's so beautiful I said, God, is heaven as beautiful as the Virgin Islands, the palm trees, the ocean? And I was invited to the Virgin Islands to give a speech to a group of high school students that were cutting school. They were smoking marijuana cigarettes by the size of the trees. By the way, the marijuana that teenagers smoke today is about 40 times more potent than the marijuana you all smoked in high school. I see you, looking like nobody ever smoked weed in high school. OK. So I gave the speech. And they invited me on a cruise on the Atlantic Ocean, and the sun was setting. I saw a rainbow in the sky. God, is heaven as beautiful as this?

When I arrived to the hotel from the cruise, the red light in my hotel room was blinking. And I call the lobby desk, and they said, call home. There's an



emergency. Your wife called. So I call my wife, and she told me that our six-year-old son, at that time our only child, had just died. And I went for what felt like heaven to hell. I didn't think I could do my work again. I was so bitter in my heart. And I figure something out. If I was to have any healing, I needed to turn off the news. You see some of you, and some of your clients, some of your patients are watching too much news. I encourage to watching in the morning, some in the evening, but turn it off. And what I did for two years after my son died, is I watched the comedy channel at night instead of the news. Like right now, I never watched Saturday Night Live regularly until COVID-19 because it makes me laugh. It's good for trauma and stress.

You know, watching the comedy channel got me through a lot of my pain. I'm so convinced that laughter is important when you suffer tragedies and pain. If you gave me a choice between taking some of my intelligence or my sense of humor, I'd say take the intelligence. Because if you can laugh, it's amazing to think that you could make it through, even if nothing is funny.

It is also believed that human activities neurochemicals in the brain, such the dopamine. So does methamphetamines and cocaine, and acts as an antidepressant. The emergence of a sense of humor is one of the signs of mental health and progress in therapy. So when you see a group of clients laughing, healing is happening.

A sign that you enjoy life is a good sense of humor. I'm quoting my big sister, Vanessa Sanders, my big sister, who married a man named Greg Williams. Her name became Vanessa Williams. When her name became Vanessa Williams, my sister worked in sales. And at the time my sister worked in sales as Vanessa Williams, Vanessa Williams, the actress, was Miss America. And what I can tell you is this.

When my sister worked in sales, her name was Vanessa Williams, she could be in the Guinness Book of World Records as for the sales person that received the quickest callbacks. Tell them Vanessa Williams called. Then she married Church, and she became Vanessa Williams Church.

Now by show of hands, who in our webinar is the oldest child in your family? Raise your hand. Keep them up high. Keep them up high. OK, everyone else take a look at them. These are really special people. You know how I know?

Right now in England, Charles is the King. And one day the sun will set on his kingdom and William will inherit it all because he was born first. Could you imagine what it would be like to be his brother, Harry?

You'd probably smoke weed in a Vegas hotels, streak in a Vegas hotel, join the front line in the war. Yeah, I don't know if you watched The Crown? I watch all seasons of The Crown. Much of their argument was that I wasn't born first. You have more privileges than me.



OK. Now, who in our webinar is a middle child? Raise your hand if you are a middle child? If you are a middle child, raise your hand?

OK. OK. OK.

I'm sorry to hear that. Oh I'm so sorry to hear that. That is not a special position.

Oh, my, God. I'm a middle child. You see, if you're born first, you're the king of the queen. If you're born last, you're the baby. Both of those are special spots. Mom, why is he still at home? He's 80 years old. Why is he still living at home? He's my baby. Leave him alone.

But if you're in the middle, uh. They've done a ton of research on sibling order. Research says that middle children leave home permanently first. They leave home permanently before oldest. And they're in the least number of family photos.

Middle children leave home permanently first, and they are in the least number of family photos. And the good news is that middle children in families make excellent lawyers and negotiators because they understand the position of others, older and younger. And get this, out of all the sibling positions, the middle children are the best, in terms of relationships. You want to be happy, marry a middle child.

OK, how many of you, in your family, are the youngest child in your family?

Let's see those hands. If you're the youngest, let's see those hands.

OK. The research says, you have the most fun, you make the greatest number of stand up comics, and you use the most drugs. Now that may not be as an individual. That's what it says-- 1400 sibling order studies.

If you're an only child, raise your hand. They worried a lot about you, but you turned out just fine. They only had one chance to get it right with you.

All right. Now let's chat. With sibling position do you think achieve the greatest amount of worldly success? Youngest, middle, oldest only, who achieved the most success? What are you seeing there, Kristina?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: It looks like some oldest and some youngest. Mostly oldest. No middle children yet that I see.

MARK SANDERS: See what I mean? See what I mean? All right. So here's the answer. It's not even close. The oldest children in families achieve the greatest amount of worldly success. The king and the queen, they're born first. As a matter of fact, 21 of the first 25 astronauts who went to outer space were first born. The majority of disproportionately CEOs of Fortune 500 companies first born. Presidents of the United States, first born.

The research also says that first born children have a tendency towards perfection. And my big sister, the oldest perfectionist, rose to the rank of corporate executive. She invited me to her organization to speak to her



workers. And what did she do that for? Because whenever I talk, I tell stories-- family stories.

So my big sister was sitting in the back looking perfect. And I told them that we grew up in poverty. My family grew up in poverty. We lived in Robert Taylor public housing on the 16th floor. Visualize 16 stories of poor people stacked on top of each other. And we were so poor, I told her workers, that for Christmas we didn't have-- we couldn't afford toys. We didn't have a Monopoly, Clue, Sorry, Checkers, Battleship. And we had, on top of all that, these bugs that wouldn't go away. They would exterminate every week. The bugs would just multiply, I told her workers. And so I told them that when we were in fourth grade, we had no toys, my big sister going to the game called, There's a Roach On You. That we'd both say Mark, there's a roach on you. Say, well, he's on your head. I'd hit my head. He's in your sleeve. I'd look in my sleeve. He's in your shirt. I told her, wiggle my shirt. And then we'd all laugh. And then I told her workers, and our family, we were so poor that Vaseline tripled his hair lotion, face, grease, and shoe polish. I told her workers-- and my sister turned beat red. She's about my complexion. I told our workers that one day we wanted candy, and we couldn't afford candy. So my sister went in the refrigerator, put out some butter and some sugar, put it in a skillet, got it hard, and called it butterscotch candy. She looked at me like, I'll kill you. And I didn't talk to her for a month. And my big sister called me, said, Mark did you know that when you told those people, my workers, those imperfect things about me as their boss, it actually made people come closer to me? People start talking to me, inviting me to lunch. She told me that two secretaries ran up to and said, hey, how do you play the game, There's a Roach On You?

My big sister told me that nobody wants the perfect supervisor. You see my big sister was cheated out of a childhood. You know middle children? Some of the people attending our webinar, that were born first, never had a childhood. They were cheated out of a childhood. They become junior mothers and fathers.

So not only was she perfect, she didn't have a childhood. You know, a glorious day for me and our family? Is when my big sister left corporate America and got a job as a waitress at a comedy club, downtown Chicago, called All Jokes Aside. She went from boss to waitress. And she became the booking agent, before these men were famous, she was one of the booking agent, of Cedric the Entertainer, Steve Harvey, Bernie Mac, and a bunch of other really famous African-American comics. I met them before they were famous. And it was amazing to see my sister laugh, after having all those years when we were growing up that she didn't have the opportunity to laugh. Abraham Maslow weighs in and says, "A good sense of humor is one aspect of self-actualization." How many of you, by show of hands, have birthdays? I just want to make sure you're still paying attention.



You know what the Aborigines-- I learn from the Aborigines? There's a few Aboriginal tribes in Australia.

They don't celebrate birthdays. They say, you should have a birthday for your parents on your birthday. I'll give you a moment to think about what I just said. The Aborigines say you should have a party for your parents on your birthday. These two tribes I read about, they celebrate what I'm calling your self-actualization day. Each member of the tribe sets out to be more self-actualized this year than they were last year. They work out of growing mentally, emotionally, spiritually, socially, physically. And once they become more self-actualized, they'll pull the tribe together and say, I'm better this year. Let's have my party. Maslow said, that if we work on growth in our own personal life, we will begin to see the sense of humor in more stuff.

We will take ourselves and things less serious. Just grow. Work on ourselves. How about a moment for a therapist joke? A therapist is in the basement when he notices a massive leak that could damage many expensive things. Desperate, the therapist called the plumber who asked if it needs to be fixed today, if he charges more on Sundays?

The therapist explained that it can't wait and the plumber comes right over. He takes a look, a long look at the leak, pulled out a small wrench, hits part of the pipe softly a few times. The leak immediately stops. Satisfied, the plumber hands a therapist a bill for \$500. What? Shouts the therapist. I'm a highly successful therapist. I don't get paid \$500 for five minutes of work. And the plumber says, well, neither did I when I was a therapist.

Let's take a moment to talk about the therapeutic benefits of humor in counseling. A goal of counseling is to help clients to feel better and act differently. Many models of counseling attempt to reach this goal by interventions that are focused on one of four areas-- feelings, behavior, thinking, and biochemistry. Humor can affect changes in all four of these areas of a person's life.

So let's talk about the therapeutic benefits of humor in counseling. It's the great equalizer. You know, poet Maya Angelou told Oprah Winfrey that only equals laugh with each other.

So when you and a client are laughing together, or in the case of medical staff, when you and a patient are laughing together, it elevates the relation. Think about what she said. Only equals laugh with each other. Let me tell you what that means.

If you work with clients who have homelessness or economic poverty, and you laugh with them, you've elevated the playing field. Laughter can bring the idealized council or doctor back to life. They see that you can laugh. That makes you a normal human being.



Laughter can reduce resistance. Maya Angelou told Oprah Winfrey, that the shortest distance between two people is a good laugh. It can decrease cross-cultural tension.

Maya Angelou told Oprah Winfrey, it's impossible to laugh and hate at the same time. When we laugh with our clients across cultures, it brings us closer together. Laughter can facilitate bonding. Research says that when clients laugh, it creates more self-disclosure because the environment becomes friendlier. You can allow some relief from pain-- physical pain, emotional pain. Laughter can allow clients or patients to change how they perceive a situation. It can ease some of the anxiety caused by a taboo subject. When you can laugh, it's easier to talk about the difficult stuff. It can provide insight, it can decrease stress and anxiety in counseling, it can make the therapeutic hours seem quicker. Time seems to fly when you're laughing in counseling. Increased client or patient eye contact. You see, they found that when something funny happens in a room, when you're with a client, they'll look at you more, hold eye contact with you more. Decrease stigma. You know, the stigma of certain types of medical conditions-- mental illness, substance use disorders. When we laugh, these are some of the benefits.

Laughing helps clients or patients cope with loss an illness. Laughter is contagious. It facilitates bonding in group therapy.

How about this finding. Laughter improves marriages. If you are married or ever been married, raise your hand if you would. If you've ever been married. Yeah, they say the first 100 years are the most difficult. Very good. The divorce rate is like 58% for first marriages, even higher for second marriages. You know why? Because most people don't understand marriage. So I'm going to talk about marriage and laughter. I've been married for 35 years. I knew nothing about marriage until five years ago, when the Salvation Army asked me to do a marriage retreat.

I did my research. What I learned is that marriage happens in four stages. The first stage of a marriage is called romantic love. It's like whenever you see the other person, your heart skips a beat. When you're together, violin music is playing in the background, but nobody can hear the music except for the two of you. You talk on the phone for hours and it feels like minutes. You can see no fault in the other person.

Let us check. How long does that phase last? Romantic, love, faith, how long does it last?

What do you see there, Kristina?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Two years was the first answer. A year. Not long at all.



MARK SANDERS: Somebody said not long at all. Not long at all. Yeah, they say the maximum of that is like two years. And after that, love is work. That's the first stage.

The second stage of marriage is called disillusionment. That magic is worn out. Now you can see the person is a human being. You can see their faults. You start hearing people, the couple, saying things to each other like, that coat won't hang itself up by itself. That plate won't put itself in the sink. Those boots will not put themselves in the closet by themselves. You see who the person really is, including their faults.

The third stage, now check this out. The third stage of a marriage is called one of us has-- one of us has got to change. One of us has got to change and guess what? It's you.

So they spent years arguing, bickering, fighting, trying to convince others to do things the way they want to do it. You know what often happens in this phase? They stop laughing.

And can I share something with you? When couples stop laughing-- remember how easy it was, often in the beginning, to make each other laugh? When they stop laughing, they may as well start looking for the lawyer. Divorce is on it's way.

If they stay together, they answer what's called the fourth stage. We're a good team. We can make it.

They're no longer trying to change each other. They're no longer fighting all the time. Some of the laughter might come back into the relationship. And my friends, I added a fifth stage. I added a fifth stage of marriage. I call it soul mates. You see, the clergy who perform wedding ceremonies would have you to believe that when you marry that person, your soulmate, you don't even know them. You just married their representative.

Tell me, am I telling the truth? Some of you had no clue who your spouse was until you married. Tell me I'm making that up.

So there was a man who gave a speech. He was receiving an award about 90 years old. His wife was about 89 years old.

And as he got the speech he said to the audience, my wife is out there. She's the most beautiful woman in the world. I figured it out.

He was talking about her soul. He was no longer married to her physical form. They were soul mates.

But it's difficult. Even with me going through those five stages, it's hard. They say it's the first 100 years of marriage that are most difficult.



You know, there was a stand-up comic that weighed in. And he said that, "Someone asked me why I wear my wedding band on the wrong hand. It's because I married the wrong person."

You know, even the 16th president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, chimed in. He said, marriage is not heaven. It's not hell. It's purgatory. But it works-- when it works well, it really is a good thing.

OK. Let's take a moment to talk about utilizing humor in counseling. And I want to ask you a question. How many of you utilize humor in your work? Would you just put "yes" in chat if you use humor in your work?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: We have a lot of yeses.

MARK SANDERS: OK, very good. Now, I invite you to chat, but you can also unmute yourself if it's humanly possible.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: They don't have the ability to unmute themselves.

MARK SANDERS: OK, then we're going to continue to chat. Thank you very much, Kristina. All right, so what I want to ask you is, how do you use humor in your work? Let us check. How do you do it?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Scott says, that he absolutely does, especially with couples. They use it to help connect to others to diffuse tension.

MARK SANDERS: Well, Scott it would be great if you really thought that because that's really important. A lot of couples come in-- nothing is funny. Go ahead.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Sometimes as an icebreaker, Robert says. As group bonding, when you're working with youth especially, and to normalize problems or to be OK with not being OK. Some people use it to start building rapport, within a group therapy setting, to show that everyone is human and to just be in quotes, "real." And then also to show humility.

MARK SANDERS: You know, what you're saying is impressive. I just want you to know that I really heard what you said. Some of you are using humor and in a really effective way.

I also encourage you to use it with your co-workers and at work. Because when we have humor at work, it increases morale. If ever there was a time we need increased morale in the workplace is right now.

OK. Here we go. Many counselors agree that the best humor by counselors is thoughtfully spontaneous, well-timed, and takes into consideration who the client is. The goal should be to lessen client tension, increase client comfort,



and help clients gain insight. The primary purpose of humor is to benefit the client.

So plan spontaneity. You see, Maslow said if we work on self-actualizing, we will automatically be more funny in counseling in case management and therapy. Just look for the moments. I'm always looking for the moment. Exaggerations, sometimes making the situation bigger than it actually is, clients can see the humor in it. You're working with a teenager, they come in with a zit on their forehead. I have a zit. I'm distraught. Yeah, it looks like World War IV.

Sometimes they can see the absurdity in that. Changing dialect for whatever reason. You're working with clients.

You go from a Midwestern accent to a southern accent. Or you play characters where you go from a southern accent to Midwest accent. Or from a US accent to a British accent, or Australian accent. From older to younger, younger to older, for whatever reason it makes clients laugh.

Taking a client funny bone history. I imagine that most of you have done assessments. And lots of clients have come in with meet with us are mandated. And so I found that by incorporating these type of questions into the intake, lightens the moment. So I encourage agencies to do this. You know, we want to know you, the whole person. We'll be working together for a while. We want to find out what's funny to you?

What makes you laugh? Do you like to tell jokes or hear jokes? What kind of humor do you find unpleasant? What kind of things that make other people laugh that are not funny to you? What's the funniest movie that you've ever seen?

Let us check. What's the funniest movie you've ever seen? I'll start. I saw a movie called, Blazing Saddles. What's the funniest movie you've ever seen?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Tommy Boy is the first answer. I'll say Bridesmaids for me, at the time at least. When that came out, I thought that was really funny.

MARK SANDERS: Yeah. And I like a movie called, Something About Mary. Keep going.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Something About Mary? Yeah. Mrs. Doubtfire, Back to School.

Someone else had something in here. Coming to America. Is that the Eddie Murphy movie?

MARK SANDERS: It's about to come out again, part two, I think this week.



KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Nice. Young Frankenstein, My Idiot Brother, Ruthless Bull. I think that's a-- maybe that's a TV show. Meet the Parents, Pink Panther, Holy Grail-- Monty Python and the Holy Grail, I assume-- White Chicks, Logan Lucky, Spaceballs. I love Spaceballs.

MARK SANDERS: And let me ask you this group. Who are you-- who's your favorite comedian? Who do you like? Who makes you laugh?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: John Mulaney. He's very funny. Kevin Hart, Leslie Jones, Dave Chappelle, Eddie Murphy, Mitch Hedberg. Yes. I love Mitch Hedberg too. I really like Eddie Izzard when he was doing stand-up. Robin Williams, Gabriel Iglesias, Katt Williams.

MARK SANDERS: You have a nice range, don't you?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Yeah. Chris Rock, Jeff Dunham.

MARK SANDERS: All right. Very good. All right. So we're talking about loving humor in counseling. You know my third favorite technique is a technique called reframing. And what reframing is, is when you take something that's negative and turn it into a positive.

It's based upon the Asian concept of paradox which says that two things can be true about something at the same time. In other words, a glass can be half full and half empty. The sky can be partly sunny, partly cloudy.

It's where you take clients negative and you turn it into a positive, and it gives them hope. So for example, a father yelling at his son, the refrain would be, you must really want him to hear you? A father says his daughter's really stubborn. You say, that means that when she dates, people won't be able to take advantage of her.

The wife is chasing the husband around the house with a butcher knife. She's trying to grab his attention. You know one time, a couple came in to meet with me and said, give me the divorce papers now. Well, I'm not a lawyer. They've been together for 30 years, since they were teenagers. And he had 51 affairs in the marriage. She had 48 affairs in the marriage. They were one shy of 100 affairs.

And at one point I looked at them and I said, you know, the two of you are unbelievably loyal to each other. They looked at me like I was crazy. I said, any time two people could stay together for 30 years, in spite of almost 100 affairs, that's a lot of loyalty.

They laughed so hard, they almost fell out laughing. But they said that, that refrain gave them hope. And they stayed married all these years. Offering a menu. Some of motivational interviewing where you offer a menu of options. There was a program that worked with adolescents, and they would



say, let us show you our service. They'd bring out a menu that was about six-foot tall.

And adolescents can turn the pages and see the services offered. Just seeing that huge menu made them laugh. Stories making fun of yourself, sometimes you can combine them. When you make fun of yourself, clients find themselves not taking themselves so seriously.

So let me give you an example. When I was in middle school and high school, I always-- I wanted to have a girlfriend. But in order to have a girlfriend when I was in high school, you have to have a huge Afro. You see the counselor on the screen there? He could easily have an Afro, based on the amount of hair that he had.

My hair was really tight on my hair. And I had a crush on a girl named Mary, but I knew to date her, I needed an Afro. So I went to the one person who I knew could give me an Afro, the miracle worker, my grandmother. I said grandmother, I like Mary. Would you give me an Afro? She 's all, I'll be right back.

She went in the pantry and she found a straightening comb, invented by Madame CJ Walker. Put it underneath the fire and got it nice and hot. And visualizes this.

I had this much hair. My grandmother took that straightening comb after it was hot, she put it to the end-- to the roots of my hair, and she pulled my hair out. When my grandma was done, I went from this much hair, to this much hair. And they thought it was a new student in class, but it was me with an Afro. I'm confident. I'm going to ask Mary to go out with me.

Problem, it was part straight part Afro. So it fell straight down on my shoulders. There was no more Afro. It was on my shoulders. Devastated. I didn't quit. I heard at the barbershop they had a new technology known as the blowout. Do you know what a blowout is? It'll be on your exam at the end.

A blowout is they take something that looks like a blow dryer, it is a blow dryer, with an Afro pick on the end. You put it in the socket and it lets out hot air. The barber took the blowout kit, he pulled my hair from here to here, he trimmed it on the edges. I had a perfectly half-moon, holy grail of a hairdo-- the Afro. I'm confident I can ask Mary to go out with me.

Problem, the barber didn't tell me, if it didn't belong out there naturally, it wasn't going to stay. And it was real hot that day. And I started to sweat. It went back to his original position. I thought that for about 18 years.

Sometimes when we make fun of ourselves, it makes it easier for clients to disclose difficulties they've had in their life, mistakes they've made in their life.



The use of humor tools. If you surround your office with movie clips, cartoons, anecdotes, signs, and prompts, and masks, clients will know that you have a sense of humor. Repeating something funny that a client says, posting absurdities and illogical reasoning. Or pointing out absurdities, analogical reasoning.

Client says, I want to go to the NBA. And then you say, well, you told me you have been practicing like six months. Sometimes that will make them laugh. Use of art. Now let you in on a secret.

So many of us have a tendency towards perfection. And whenever you have a tendency towards perfection, there's a lot of secrets. And the reason parents push children towards perfection, when there's lots of secrets, is to protect the secrets.

In my family we have so many secrets. If you brought on eight A's and one B on your report card, they wouldn't say, it's wonderful that you got those eight A's. What would they say? Why did you get that B? You knew you had to be perfect.

So sometimes when we recommend art in groups, clients will get uncomfortable because they know it's not perfect. You want to know something crazy? I worked on that a lot.

I thought I was cured from the tendency towards being perfect. And I took up art recently after 40 years of not doing any art. Do you realize I started comparing myself to the artist that made that painting right there? I can't do that.

But I found that, that tendency is still there. So here's what I want you to do. Pick up a piece of paper, and I want you to scribble something, just like I scribbled right there. Nothing beautiful. Just some scribble. Can you see mine? I'm going to give you 30 seconds to scribble something. Pick up a piece of paper and scribble.

Kristina, are people able to show their scribble?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: It won't be able to show it, but if they want to write what they scribbled in the chat, I could read that off.

MARK SANDERS: All right. I'll give them another task. OK, now put that scribble-- maybe it looks like my scribble, maybe it doesn't. You have one minute.

I want you to take your scribble and turn it into something really beautiful. Turn that scribble into something really, really beautiful. My art teacher introduces exercise to me, taking scribble, and turning it to something



beautiful. Sometimes she'd actually say, take some paint and just splash it on the paper, and then turn into something beautiful. Oh, what a lesson for me.

Because what she taught me is mistakes can be beautiful. Mistakes can be fixed. You don't have to be perfect. So I've used this in group of clients. You know, role plays can be funny. You know, your probation and parole officers, role play high situations that might land you in prison. Pick other group members to play those roles and play it out. They laugh, but they also learn how to deal with high-risk situations. Group activities can be funny. So let's take a moment to talk about assignments we can give clients to incorporate more humor into their life, and then I'm going to give you-- and we're going to do a group activity together. All right. We can encourage clients to share funny stuff with others, watch a comedy show, keep a journal, watch a funny movie, spend time with friends who make you laugh, schedule time to be silly just to be silly.

Homework-- read the funny pages of the newspaper, buy joke books, post fun nights with friends, go to laughter yoga, make time for fun activities, watch Netflix comedy specials, et cetera. All right, we're going to do an auction. On the auctioneer.

Would you write down \$150 on a piece of paper? You have \$150. Now, get your chat feature ready because I'm going to ask you for a certain amount for the bid. You can bid on all of these things.

You'll be surprised that you can get a low rate. So if I say \$5, you've got to type your name in. Do it quickly, because whoever has the highest bid, you win. Get ready.

To be president of the United States, do I hear \$5? Are you seeing that, Kristina? Do you have \$5?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: [INAUDIBLE]

MARK SANDERS: What did you say?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: I was just going to say again, type your name in the chat if you want-- OK.

MARK SANDERS: Yeah. All right. Do I hear \$25 to be president of United States?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Mary Beth.

MARK SANDERS: What's that?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Mary Beth says she would.



MARK SANDERS: So \$25 going once, \$25 going twice, sold for \$25. Congratulations. Peace of mind. Do I hear \$50 for peace of mind?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Sharon Kephart.

MARK SANDERS: Do I hear \$75 for peace of mind? Going once.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: We have a lot of people who are offering \$150.

MARK SANDERS: Sold to everybody for \$150. Congratulations. All right. A good pair of shoes? Do I hear \$1 for a good pair of shoes? Do I hear \$10 for a good pair of shoes?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Kara. Kara says \$10.

MARK SANDERS: Do I hear \$15 for a good pair of shoes?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Anne and Gloria, but then someone-- Robert upped it to \$20. A few people upped it to \$30 and \$50.

MARK SANDERS: Do I hear \$40 for a good pair of shoes?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Karl takes \$40. Maria takes \$50.

MARK SANDERS: Do I hear \$70 for a good pair of shoes?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: I think Heather went up to \$100 for the pair of shoes.

MARK SANDERS: Do I hear \$110? \$100 going once—

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Mary Beth says \$150.

MARK SANDERS: Sold to Mary Beth for \$150. A good pair of shoes. Here we go.

To smoke one marijuana cigarette, do I hear \$1? Do I hear \$1 to smoke some weed? Going once. What are we seeing there?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Zeroes. No one would like-

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MARK SANDERS: No one's going to put it in writing.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Heather says, are we in a legal state?

MARK SANDERS: Yeah, Heather. Yes. Going once, going twice, that one's out. A gold mine. Do I hear \$50 for a gold mine? Going once.



KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Marie says, and then Kara says \$50 as well.

MARK SANDERS: Do I hear \$75 for a gold mine? Going once, going twice.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Kara says \$75.

MARK SANDERS: Do I hear \$100 for a gold mine?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Derek said \$250, but I thought we only had \$150.

MARK SANDERS: Sold for \$150.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: OK.

MARK SANDERS: To influence the education of children, do I hear, \$50?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Linda, Danielle.

MARK SANDERS: Do I hear \$75 to influence the education of children?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Suzanne, I think, was the first to offer her whole \$150.

MARK SANDERS: Sold for \$150. Congratulations, Suzanne. A new car. Do I hear \$25 for a new car?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Laurel offers her \$150—

MARK SANDERS: That's enough. Congratulations, Laurel. To snort cocaine. Do I hear \$1 to snort cocaine? Going once, twice, that one's out.

So here's the deal. I believe I invented this. And years ago I used to work in a detox facility, and the clients would isolate in their room and they will get depressed. So I'd have to come to the group room, and we do an auction. We'd all sit-in the room and it would make them laugh. And we would give them paper money, and they would buy things, and they would exchange, and they would talk about it. It would bring the community together. It would make them laugh.

But this is also therapeutic. I only show eight values here. We would use about 30 different values. Like to be able to drink without getting drunk again, for people with alcoholism. To be able to recover from mental illness without medication.

How about this? To be able to commit crime without ever getting caught. You know, you didn't buy the smoke one joint, but clients always buy it.



And at least to a therapeutic discussion, can you really smoke weed and not return to cocaine or heroin? Or can you really snort cocaine without becoming addicted to it, so it's therapeutic? Well, what I learned is that just bringing the community together and getting them to laugh was therapeutic within itself. We also did this in mental health facilities where the tendency was for patients to isolate in their room and not laugh we found that laughter facilitated healing. There are types of inappropriate humor-- laughing at clients, cheap shots, put downs, sarcasm, racist and sexist jokes, and when there's not enough distance from the pain. You know how Joan Rivers used to say too soon, too soon?

So when humor is inappropriate-- when the client a patient is offended by it, when it makes the client or patient feel like they're not being taken seriously, when it's used so often it seems boring, when the counselor uses it to avoid dealing with the client's issues and their own anxiety, and when it's inappropriately time. So one way to put more laughter in our lives is to remember when we were children. If you are a grandparent, or have a niece and nephew, that you spent time with, especially the youngest ones, and they make you laugh it prolongs life.

So think back-- kids laugh about 40 times more frequently than adults. Let us chat. When you were a kid what was your favorite game?

What do you see there, Kristina?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Building a fort, jacks, mancala, hide-and-peek-- a few hide-and-seeks-- tag.

MARK SANDERS: Let me ask you this. When you were a kid, what was your favorite food? What would you like to eat?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Mac and cheese, pizza-- a lot of pizzas.

MARK SANDERS: Do you know how many kids like to eat macaroni and cheese? Unbelievable!

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Ice cream, watermelon, home-cooked meals. That's great.

MARK SANDERS: That's some serious stuff there-- home-cooked meals. When you were a kid, what was your favorite cartoon character? I liked the cartoon character named Speedy Gonzales.

Remember Speedy Gonzalez? I always wanted to run fast like Speedy Gonzalez. Who did you like?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Scooby-doo, Bugs Bunny, Animaniacs Strawberry Shortcake, Mighty Mouse, Sailor Moon, Tom and Jerry. Apparently, they have a new movie coming out on HBO Max.



MARK SANDERS: And when you were a kid, what was your favorite song? I sang a song called, Zip-a-dee-doo-dah. I can still sing it to this day.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Anything by the Beatles.

MARK SANDERS: Yeah.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: "If You're Happy and You Know It," "Knock You Out," anything from the Beatles again, "You Are My Sunshine." I like this-- "The Song That Never Ended" from Lambchop. I don't know if anyone ever saw that. That used to really annoy my parents. "Part Of Your World," '80s alternative, Enrique, Anna.

MARK SANDERS: And when you were a kid, what was your favorite toy?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: A baby doll that sneezed. That sounds cute. A pull-a-long phone, Gameboy, big wheel, teddy bears, horses, stuffed bunny dolls, Baby Alive, stuffed animals, Micro-machines, Rock'em Sock'em robots.

MARK SANDERS: I remember that. I had one of those. And your favorite holiday as a kid?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Christmas, Halloween, a lot of Christmas and Halloween. Easter, Thanksgiving.

MARK SANDERS: And who was your favorite teacher?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Second grade, Mr. Fugate. Ms. Klaus, Mr. Clark, third grade, and a whole bunch of other names-- music teachers.

MARK SANDERS: You know, I wonder if those teachers had a sense of humor? Did they make you laugh? And your best friend? How many you still have contact with your best friend?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: One person says, no. Another-- a few others say, I do. Many, yes and I do.

And then, from my teens, I do. So maybe not elementary school. And some others say, from college.

MARK SANDERS: Nice. All right, so Norman Cousins, the author of the book, The Anatomy of an Illness asked, what else Contributes to well-being and health, along with laughter? He said, love.

I imagine that many of you have heard of the book Chicken Soup for the Soul. First, they had a first helping of Chicken Soup for the Soul, then a second, then a third, and fourth. Then they went chicken soup crazy.



Chicken soup for a horse's soul, the skunk soul, the pig soul. There was a book called, Chicken Soup for the Teenager Soul. Tells the story of this little girl. And for the first 12 years of her life bedtime was always the favorite time of day for her because she knew her dad would tuck her in bed and say to her, I love you little girl. In she looked forward to bedtime.

One day, when she was 13-years-old, she brought two friends over. And Dad said, I love you little girl, in front of the two friends and this embarrassed her because she was a teenager. And out of respect for her father she said nothing.

One day, when she was 22-years-old, she called home from college, a senior in college, and dad said, I love you little girl. And this pissed her off because of her independence. She was working and paying her tuition, her room and board. She said nothing out of respect for her father.

One day, when she was 35-years-old, she brought the kids over for Thanksgiving dinner, and dad said, I love you little girl when he opened the door. And she said, Dad, I'm not a little girl. I'm a grown woman. I have my own house, my car, my kids. Don't never call me that again.

And one day, when she was 42-years-old, her dad became ill. He lay in a hospital bed. And she was talking to him, but he wasn't responding verbally. He was connected to a respirator.

Feeling helpless, she took off her shoes. She climbed in bed with her dad, and put her head against his chest, and listened to the sound of her father's heartbeat. His heart said what he would have said if he could talk. His heart said, I love you, I love you, I love you, little girl, little girl, little girl. Love is medicine. Love is medicine.

Hope is medicine, faith is medicine. Not because just believing that you'll get better can help facilitate healing for people who have illness. Human touch is therapeutic. We need touch as human beings.

Creativity can contribute to well-being-- good nutrition and goals, and a sense of purpose, something that makes us want to get up in the morning. And we combine these things with laughter, Norman Cousins said it contributes to our well-being. What I learned over the years is not so much anything I teach, but more about the action you take.

So let us chat. What's the action you got to take after this webinar, as a result of the time that we spent today talking about humor and laughter in our life and our work? What will you do as a result of this time?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Watch more stand-up, someone says.

MARK SANDERS: What else?



KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: I think I'm going to get the book that you recommended, watch Melissa McCarthy, watch more comedies, find ways to have humor in a virtual workplace, watch Taskmaster on my lunch break, try to laugh more with clients, share what I've learned today with everyone around me.

MARK SANDERS: OK, so let me ask you this. Thank you so very much. Let me ask you this.

How many of you have ever gone to Vegas? Raise your hand. If you've ever been to Vegas, raise your hand.

You see, Las Vegas, Nevada is proof of what a criminal can do if you give them a chance. It was Bugsy Siegel that really created Las Vegas right there in the desert. Well, there was one period when I went to Las Vegas and presented a conference, every year for 11 consecutive years.

And yet, no matter how exciting Vegas-- it's exciting-- by the fourth day, I can't wait to get home. So the last time I'm in Vegas, I'm at the airport, and the announcement came over the loudspeaker, your flight has been delayed. You've heard that. You don't like that.

So instead of focusing my anger that the flight was delayed, as I waited for the next flight at the airport, I played the slot machines at the airport. I want \$1.7 million. Just kidding.

I don't even gamble. I'm like Sam Cook who said, if I ever get my hands on \$1 again, I'm holding on. Well, my next stop was to a small town called Galena, Illinois.

And Galena, Illinois is the opposite of Vegas. No roulette wheel, no traffic. Just you and your thoughts, crickets, and stars. I came back from that small town replenished, relaxed, ready to take on the world.

Norman Vincent Peale said that busy people like you, who help others for a living-- it's mandatory that you spend at least 15 minutes alone each day just to replenish yourself. And you have that much more to offer the world. Dale Carnegie said, if he had 10 hours of work to do and five hours to do that work, the first thing he'd do is take a 15-minute break.

I imagine if some of you saw the sitcom, Monk before. One Thanksgiving I didn't want to watch football, so I was channel surfing and I discovered Monk, the world's greatest private eye. Monk, I found, is a walking DSM file. He has obsessive-compulsive disorder, a fear of heights, a fear of germs, darkrooms. I watched two episodes. The first episode of Monk I watched, Monk was on a plane.



He hadn't flown since he was 9-years-old. He's shaking the whole time. Of course, being up in the sky frightens Monk. He's shaking the whole time. Sitting next to a salesman when the plane landed, the salesman thought that Monk was so strange, he demanded his business card back. Give me my business card back. Well luckily, Monk has his assistant.

Everyone in the world can use an assistant like Monk's assistant. The world thinks he's strange. She understands Monk.

The second episode I watched, his brother call. Monk, you never told me you had a brother. Hang up.

I haven't seen my brother in seven years. I haven't talked to my brother in seven years. Hang up. He'll stop calling.

And three weeks went by and the brother never stopped calling. Finally, the assistant picked up the phone again, and the brother said, there's an emergency. I need to see my brother Monk right away.

And she dragged Monk over. And as soon as she met his brother, she felt like she understood Monk better. The brother had a psychiatric condition called, agoraphobia, the fear the marketplace.

He was scared to go outside. Monk's brother hadn't been outside in seven years. No wonder Monk hadn't seen his brother.

The door was opened. And being the convincing and charming person that she is, Monk's assistant took his brother's hand, and she was leading him outside for the first time in seven years. And as soon as the brother saw daylight, he backed up, and she whispered, you don't know this, but your brother Monk, he's scared all the time too. What does he have and you don't? The brother looked at her and said, he has you, and I don't. He has you. What separates those clients and patients that you work with, probationers that you work with, from the ones that you don't work with? Is the fact, that the ones that you work with, they have you.

Thank you so very much. And thank you for joining the webinar. And I'll turn it over to Kristina.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Well typically, this is where we would have some time to do Q&A. If anyone does have any questions that you want to add in there-- there aren't any at the moment-- please do. A lot of thank you's in the chat too.

And this is excellent, Mark. And it really was. Thank you so much for the presentation.

MARK SANDERS: Thank you.



KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: All right. Well then since we don't have any questions coming in, I will thank all of you for joining us today. We will get the recording, PowerPoint, and transcripts posted in about a week onto the MHTTC products and resources page.

And as Ann mentioned earlier, you're going to be automatically redirected to a survey after this. We'd really appreciate it if you would take that. So thank you again, Mark, and have a great day, everybody.

MARK SANDERS: Thank you. Have a great day, everyone. Thank you.