

FingerPoints

JANUARY 2006 EDITION

E-Newsletter for *Teaching Is Too Important to Take Seriously*

Welcoming in the New...

...Again!

Doesn't that describe the new year? It's a chance to start new again. For some of us, this seems like *deja'vu* (all over again.) I know this is the 27th straight year that I am committing to losing weight, and this year I MEAN IT! I'm sure that sounds familiar.

However, that *deja'vu* feeling isn't necessarily bad. At least, I hope not, because you will get a little of that feeling with this newsletter. You'll see that if you have been getting this newsletter for over a year, because the article below will sound familiar. It is the same one as last January. That is not a bad thing because the article is good one to start the year. It is push-

ing you to make a commitment to laughter for 2007.

Now that doesn't mean that there isn't anything new in this issue. First, I have updated the *Days of Our Lives*, and yes, there are new ones. But most importantly, you need to take a look at the article on page 2, titled *Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid*. It is my theme for this year, a new regular section of the newsletter, and my challenge to you for 2007.

Finally, good luck on the laughter challenge, I hope the new year finds you well and I especially hope it finds you laughing.

Scott Endres

The Finger of the Month - #2 Practice PHWH

Why do we focus on the 2nd finger during the 1st month? Because January is all about making resolutions, and making a commitment to laughter couldn't be a more important resolution to make. To do that, you need to Practice PHWH (Play Hard, Work Hard) However, just like any commitment to start something new, whether it is losing weight, starting to exercise or laughing more, it works best when you have a plan or in this case, a *Laughter Exercise Plan*.

Remember there are three parts of the Laughter Exercise Plan; the Daily Laughter Journal, the Weekly Laughter Goals and the Emergency Laughter List (ELL). We don't have space to go into the detail of each of these like I do in the book, but let's look at them a little.

The Daily Laughter Journal is nothing other than keeping track of the number of times you laugh during the day, when you laughed and when you could have laughed. As with any plan to change, like a diet, one of the first things you do is to keep a list of what your day is like to get an accurate picture of what you are doing. That is the goal of this journal

The Weekly Laughter Goals are just that,

goals for you to accomplish during the week. Divided into three areas; life goals, teaching goals and daily goals, it is designed to give you the structure and support to start your path to laughter. There are numerous goal ideas listed in the plan, but let me give you one which I know will work. Make it your goal to say "Have a Good Day" to at least 10 people each day.

The Emergency Laughter List in one part of the plan each of you can do today. Take a piece of paper and write down 10 things you know will make you laugh. For example, on mine I have a line from the movie *Airplane!*, "I am serious. And don't call me Shirley." Now put this list in your wallet, or purse, or someplace where you can get to it quickly, and when the stress and pressure of life get to you and bring you down, pull the ELL out and one of those ten is bound to make you smile.

Do I guarantee that the Laughter Exercise Plan will work for your resolution this year? No. But I will guarantee, that following this exercise plan will be a lot more fun than an exercise plan to lose weight. With that kind of guarantee, what do you have to lose?

Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid - A Lifestyle Choice

This phrase, *Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid*, has been hanging around my head for the past month or so. I don't why I thought of it, or if I heard it somewhere, but I do know that it is stuck like a bad Duran Duran song (Hungry like the wolf...Hungry like the wolf.) Okay, so what about it. Well, after much thought I have adopted *Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid* as my lifestyle choice for 2007, and I suggest you do the same.

Why this phrase as a lifestyle? Because we spend too time not doing things because we are afraid of looking stupid. Think back to being in school, most of us at one time or another chose not to do something because we thought we would look stupid. Is that really a reason? Maybe when we were young it was, when we were unsure of ourselves, but is it really a reason now, when we're older. No, who cares if we look stupid.

Actually, in some instances being stupid can lead us to places we would have never dreamed. For example, on Good Morning America on 12/29 they had a woman from Tulsa, OK on the show who could whistle with her toes. Yes, you read that right, with her toes. They had her live in the studio, and she proceeded to bring her presumably clean foot to her mouth and whistle *Auld Lang Syne* with her 2nd and 3rd toes. It was easily one of the stupidest things I have ever seen. When the hosts asked her how she started this, she said that a friend was trying to teach her how to whistle the regular way, when she noticed that the woman's toes were bent in a perfect way to whistle and suggested she should try it. She did, and the rest was history (or hysterical.)

Now here is about as stupid of an act as possible, but because the woman wasn't afraid to be stupid at first, look what she got. An expenses paid trip to New York City to be on national TV and to spend New Year's weekend in the Big Apple. I'd spit milk through my nose for that. (Actually, I spit milk through my nose when I saw her whistle with her toes.)

Alright, the toe whistling lady is a funny story, but how does being stupid help teaching. It helps in at least three ways that I talk about in *Teaching Is Too Important to Take Seriously!* First, it helps to let students understand that you don't know everything and that is okay. I work a lot with math students on open ended problem solving, and one of the things I instruct students to do, is to make sure that their solutions can be understood by a complete idiot like Mr. Endres. This does two things. One it forces students to be very detailed in their answers and two, it takes me as the "know it all answer giver" out of the equation. Instead of relying on me to be the one to determine whether something is right or to save them when they are stuck, they start to rely on themselves.

Second, not being afraid to be stupid allows us to continue to breakdown the walls between us and our students. As I talk in the book and presentation, students often see us as alien beings, that are perfect and therefore have no connection to their lives. Letting students see us being stupid, and making mistakes, helps to break down those walls, and allows students to see us as people they something in common, being stupid. Third, quickly, being stupid is where I have gotten some of my best ideas for my classroom over the years. When I let my guard down, and don't worry about being stupid, I have come up with my most effective classroom activities.

So go ahead, be stupid. Make mistakes. Look silly. Because when you come right down to it, the best reason for being stupid is because it is just fun. And we could all use a little more fun in our lives.

These are the Days of Our Lives

January is a busy month as you can see by all the "official" holidays this month and there are even new ones for 2007. As always, these are real holidays celebrated by someone, somewhere. So just celebrate!

Month

Celebration of Life Month	International Creativity Month
Jump Out of Bed Month	National Hot Tea Month
Oatmeal Month	Slow Cooking Month
Book Blitz Month	National Returns Month
National Mentoring Month	National Skating Month
International Life Balance Month (shouldn't this be Practice PHWH month?)	

Weeks

1-7	Celebration of Life Week	1-7	Diet Resolution Week
1-7	Silent Record Week	2-6	Someday We'll Laugh About This Week
8-12	National Thank Your Customers (Students and Parents) Week		
10-13	No Tillage Week	11-17	Cuckoo Dancing Week
15-19	Nat. Fresh Squeezed Juice Week	21-27	Hunt for Happiness Week
21-27	Nat. Take Back Your Time Week	22-26	No Name Calling Week
27-2/3	National Cowboy Poetry Gathering Week		

Days

1	Z Day	2	Happy New Year for Cats Day
3	Nat. Chocolate Covered Cherry Day	4	Dimpled Chad Day
4	Trivia Day	5	National Second Hand Wardrobe Day
6	Fruitcake Toss Day	7	I'm Not Going to Take It Anymore Day
8	National Clean Off Your Desk Day	8	National English Toffee Day
8	National Joy Germ Day	8	Show and Tell at Work Day
8	Thank God It's Monday Day	13	Penguin Awareness Day
15	Champion of the Month Day	15	Humanitarian Day
16	Appreciate a Dragon Day	16	Nothing Day
17	Judgment Day	18	Pooh (Winnie the) Day
20	Fancy Rat and Mouse Day	21	Squirrel Appreciation Day
21	National Disc Jockey Appreciation Day	21	National Hugging Day
22	Celebration of Life Day	22	Answering Our Cats' Questions Day
23	Rid the World of Fad Diets and Gimmicks Day	23	National Handwriting Day
23	National Pie Day	23	National Speak Up and Succeed Day
23	Snowplow Mailbox Hockey Day	24	National Compliment Day
24	Belly Laugh Day	26	Fun at Work Day
26	National Peanut Brittle Day	27	Todd Hollow Day of Encouragement
27	Thomas Crapper Day	29	Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day
29	Freethinkers Day	30	Inane Answering Machine Day

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