

# Laughing For Your Health

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With arms open and extended, we sway from side to side, laughing softly like bamboo rustling in the wind.

Symbolically we gently kick away anything we don't want in our lives. If this is done twice a day every day, one is said to attain long life, wisdom, and prosperity. I sometimes end a laughter session with this laugh.

In the native Indian tradition, the Navajos have a First Laugh Ceremony which honors the time when a child has his or her first laugh. This is said to be their birth as a social being and is considered a significant event.

Buddhists say that the beginning of wisdom is manifested by a smile. The Buddhist lama Surya Das points out that the spirit is ecstatic rather than static. Thus, finding joy and expressing it through laughter is considered a spiritual experience.

The channeled teachings of Kryon use the metaphor

of a candle to symbolize us sitting in a place of potential joy. But the wick needs to be lit by humor, for laughter to begin flowing, thus activating our natural state of inner joy.

Dr. Kitaria declares that laughter is a universal form of spirituality. I agree. I've watched people come alive when they laugh and I've seen their lives transform.

## Personal Experiences

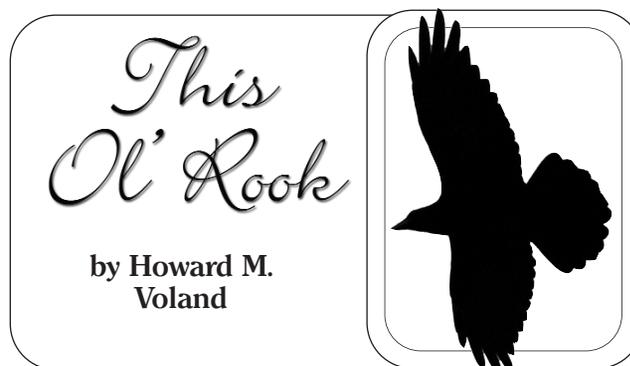
My experiences as a laughter leader are many and varied. I bring my laughter programs to health seminars, church retreats, corporate meetings, and countless retirement and assisted living communities. I've lectured before serious and stone-faced people about the many researched facts on laughter, only to watch them explode once the laughter session begins. Activity directors have repeatedly made such statements to me as, "I never hear Ken laugh except during one of your laughter sessions." Ironically such individuals are usually my most boisterous participants.

I've witnessed regular laughter club members significantly lower their blood pressure, level off an irregular heartbeat, heal a chronic lung disease, get relief from pain, sleep better, take the exercises home to their spouses and improve their relationships, and even fall in love. They all have attributed their successes to the increased laughter in their lives. Sometimes what I see is as simple as a sparkle in their eyes. This is especially true in nursing homes.

The fact that laughter is so beneficial is very ancient wisdom, now becoming revitalized in our culture.

Like the Laughing Buddha, remember to laugh often, laugh much, and laugh for no reason at all.

*Teresa Verde is a professional speaker and laughter leader. She can be reached at onethousandlaughs@yahoo.com. There is additional information at www.laughterclubs.com and www.laughteryoga.org.*



## Happy Interregnum

January is a rotten way to start a new year: dark, cold, and everyone with a massive load of guilt from two months of excess.

It starts with the frenetic sugar rush of Halloween, then a slow buildup to a super-sized Thanksgiving, and then comes the frenzied financial and emotional hurricane that has become Christmas — no matter what your religious beliefs — and ends with an alcoholic drowning on New Year's Eve.

Then along comes January and all everyone wants to do is sleep it off.

No such luck!  
After excess, comes guilt.

After binge, comes purge.

The media, the cheerleader of massive excess just the month before, now pushes great dollops of guilt upon us. The food section in the daily newspaper is an admirable example. Recipes calling for lots of cream, butter, eggs, and sugar during the holidays now give way to ones calling for tofu, nonfat yogurt, whole grains, fresh vegetables, and articles on the new food pyramid, not to mention the latest and faddiest of diets. (Where were those in December?)

So now it's time to repent with that, most dreaded of lists: OUR NEW YEAR'S

## RESOLUTIONS.

"Bah, humbug!" to quote my favorite holiday Scrooge.

New Year's resolutions are too fragile. They're broken almost before they're made, and that just piles on more guilt, and guilt is a lousy motivator. It's all negative. It compounds on itself. It obsesses about the very things we don't want to think about. Left unchecked it can gain so much mass that it becomes a black hole that devours us.

So for me, January is not the beginning of a new year. It's an interregnum.

February might be, too. I've found interregnums are fluid. This one might even last until 2008.

So, a Very Happy and Resolutionless Interregnum to you all!

*Howard Voland, this ol' rook, was raised as a journalist with the idea he should have an opinion about everything. Unfortunately, he does. He is also the co-author of the Grace and Doris mystery comedies for community theatre at www.ravenwriters.com.*

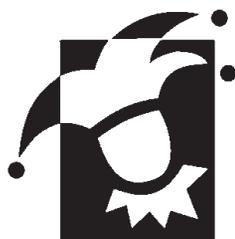
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