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Giggles, knee slappin' and much, much more

by Carla Victor

Olds Albertan

Ah, lighten-up!

Everyday-life leaves many of us in need of a good joke.

We've all heard laughter is the best medicine, well that's just what Dr. Jones prescribes at *The Gift of Laughter* medical clinic.

Camilla Jones isn't really a doctor, she says she is just a jerk (a funny one). And *The Gift of Laughter* isn't a new clinic (although you feel so good after going), it's a seminar sponsored by different community support agencies. In Olds, Olds and District Neighbourhood Place Society books it twice a year.

The Gift of Laughter is better described as a two hour retreat that teaches those in attendance to be able to laugh at themselves and maybe put things in perspective.



Art Dickson

"She showed up with her hair set, haphazardly, in curlers wearing a house coat with a piece of burnt peanut-butter-toast stuck on her backside."

Bowman was overwhelmed by Jones' ability to turn the trials of parenthood and the strains of the working Joe's routine into something that really was funny, if you stopped to think about it.

She decided that everyone would benefit from learning how to do this. With that being her first priority, Bowman asked Jones to start *The Gift of Laughter* seminar.

"Camilla's attitude and humour are infectious; people who attend seem to come away feeling more positive about their daily lives," said Bowman.

Although Jones was a little nervous at first she began to see what Bowman did. "When I look at the biggest part of the population, I always think it would be very helpful if they would all just lighten up," says Jones.

As she shares hilarious tales of her life it's clear she doesn't save her funny stuff just for the classroom.

Jones has the God-given gift of being able to turn anything she does into something funny.



A trip to the dentist, wearing horribly disfigured teeth; a follow-up...
Camilla Jones cracks up audience members shown on this page.

photos by Carla Victor

up visit to the eye surgeon after laser surgery, wearing pop-bottle glasses, loudly announcing in a full waiting room that she can't see right; a remote control fart machine activated, precisely when the doctor is asking how her son is while she strains her face, are just some of the tools used on her mission to end world hum-drums.

"I think the biggest thing you can get from *The Gift of Laughter* is being able to put things in perspective," she says.

One of her favorite sayings, titled *Perspectives*, is: "A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove...But the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child." (Author Unknown).

Jones firmly believes that first and foremost, kids need to be the most important thing in everyone's lives.

"Try to tell kids, if they do something wrong, don't get all freaked out about it — just try to fix it. If they need help, help them. If you can't fix it either, oh well."

She tells this true story: "I spoke at a wedding and there was a little boy, with adorable red hair, in the audience. His shoes looked like well worn hand-me-downs that were way too big. I noticed they

were on the wrong feet and I mentioned it to him. When he bent down to correct them he looked up and me and said, 'at least my socks are on the right feet.'

"Wow, what if everyone had that attitude," exclaimed Jones with a eureka look smacked on her face.

Don't compare yourself to others!
"So and so has a nice truck — who cares! Don't wait for something to be happy, be grateful for what you have. There will always be someone out there better than you and someone worse off. Get over it."

Another true story:
"My husband's friends have said they're going to collect all their gold (old bracelets, rings and chains), melt them down and make the biggest gold medal to present to him for having to be married to me." Jones keeps a straight face while you laugh at how true that may be.

Stop worrying!
"Laughter is the best medicine and the stress caused by worrying is a major waste of energy. It nullifies the physical benefits

of laughter.

"I read a study done in Europe," she says. "It documented 100 worriers."

"Participants had to document every single worry and then follow through by writing down if any of the things they worried about actually happened."

She said 94 per cent of the time the worry or concern didn't manifest itself.

"So 94 per cent of the time, you waste your time and energy when you worry."

Don't complain!
"Ninety per cent of the people you're complaining to don't care and the other 10 per cent are happy that crappy things are happening to you instead of them."

Don't be over sensitive!

"Over sensitivity is a useless emotion and should not be confused with compassion which is. I think, the best quality in someone's character," says Jones.

"Things that really bother you — find a way to deal with them and laugh at yourself — because if you don't someone else is going to laugh at you anyway."

At one of the last seminars Jones did, she had everyone share their pet peeves.

"After just about everyone shared theirs, a little elderly lady spoke up. 'I have one,' she announced. 'My pet peeve is people with pet peeves,' we all had to laugh, it just seemed so funny."

And don't go thinking that Jones sees herself as perfect.

"I'm the last person to claim I'm perfect. I have numerous inadequacies, I just don't make a big issue of them."

"Before I had my laser surgery done," she explained "they had to do a test to see if the cornea of my eye was thick enough to perform the surgery. I thought, that's just great. All my life I've had a big everything, and just when I need it I bet my cornea is going to be the only thin thing on my body," giggles Jones. "Well that just goes to show that worrying is useless, because it turned out that my cornea was okay — it was fat, too."

So don't worry, be happy, instructs Jones at the end of the class.

"I know it's okay to eat drink and be merry because even the bible says it's allowed."

"So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun." - Ecclesiastes 8:15

"Amen," concludes Jones with a definite nod of her leopard hatted head.



Linda Olson



Sheila McGregor



Karla Reid