

## Discover Your Simple Power to Increase Happiness

By Bonnie Budzowski, President, inCredible Messages LP

Next time you need to boost your mood, head for a playground and watch the youngest children play. If you catch a glimpse of toddlers being pushed on swings or chasing balls for fun, you'll hear one of the best sounds in the world—laughter—and you'll feel better. Watching a baby or toddler in the act of play will lift your mood and bring a smile to your face.

Why does the sound of a child's laughter—even a child who is a stranger to you—have the power to lift your mood? How can someone else's laughter make you a little happier? The answer is simple: moods are contagious. Laughter has the power to enter into your very person and alter you and your mood, for good.

If you find this surprising, think about the reverse experience. We all remember days when our good mood was snuffed out by an angry boss, co-worker, or family member. We know bad moods are contagious. We have been victim to them.

We are, perhaps, less aware that smiles and laughter are contagious too. We might be unaware altogether that we have the power to spread good moods and enrich our own happiness in the process.

In *Primal leadership: Learning to lead with Emotional Intelligence*, authors Goleman, Boyantzis, and Mckee tell us scientists have begun to describe our limbic system, which is the seat of our emotions, as an open-loop system.

This is easy to grasp if we look, in contrast, at the circulatory system. Your circulatory system doesn't care about what is going on with toddlers at a playground or your colleagues at work. That's because the circulatory system is a closed-loop and self-regulating system—in many ways like your heating system at home.

Your limbic (emotional) system is a whole different story: what goes on with the people around you enters your system and alters it. In other words, the emotions and moods of the people around you are contagious. Some of the contagions are helpful and healthy. Some are definitely not.

Goleman and his co-authors tell us that scientists can now verify—by recording physiological data as two people have a conversation in a lab—that one person transmitting an emotional signal can literally alter the following functions of another:

- Hormone levels
- Cardiovascular function
- Sleep rhythms
- Immune functions

With this knowledge, you discover your own power to increase happiness, in yourself and in the world.

1. **Choose carefully the people whom you give access to your mood.** Minimize your contact with people who spread a pessimistic, grumpy, or critical approach to life or to you. Seek out people who are optimistic and upbeat. Build relationships with

people who are positive contagions. Seek out people who infect your life with laughter!

2. **Spread the good mood you wish to find in the world.** Schedule time in every week for some sort of playful activity. Give yourself permission to watch movies, shows, or YouTube skits that make you laugh. Schedule time to have dinner, play board games, or share an evening out with people who know how to enjoy themselves.

Play is the work toddlers do to explore and grow. Play and laughter is the work adults do to balance out the demands and stresses that threaten our health and happiness. A good belly laugh is never a waste of time. It's an investment in your good health and happiness.

**Bonnie Budzowski, President of inCredible Messages,** is a recognized expert—helping people to use influence and persuasion to sell their ideas and move business forward. Bonnie is a professional speaker, author and coach. She recently launched a new coaching project to help her clients **"Write the Book of Their Dreams."**

Clients appreciate Bonnie's practical, humorous and high-energy approach. She holds an MA in Communication and has been called upon to work with corporations, entrepreneurs, universities, and associations.

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