"No Laughing Matter": Humor and Laughter in the Radiology Workplace

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• With increasing volumes of work and less time to complete the tasks, radiologists and radiology personnel are exposed to major occupational stress factors.

• Laughter at work is gaining ground as an easy way to brighten the workday and boost the overall health of the workplace or organization.

• People with a sense of humor often have the ability to deal effectively with people and work issues; they are able to keep the severity of the problems in perspective.
We discuss:

- The potential consequences of burnout
- The importance of happiness and laughter
- The benefits of laughter in the workplace
- Essential strategies for promoting humor and laughter in the workplace
Potential Consequences of Burnout

- Burnout can result in:
  - Emotional exhaustion
  - Depersonalization
  - Reduced sense of accomplishment

- Burnout increases the risk for medical error, which can lead to wrong diagnosis, wrong treatment, and result in patient harm.

- Injury to reputation and reliability of the Radiology and Nuclear Medicine Department.

- This may lead to loss of important professional relationships that radiologists and radiology practices rely on to be viable.
The Importance of Happiness and Laughter

- Happiness is a metric that has been rated by professional organizations, businesses, and places of employment as highly beneficial for workplace morale and for increased productivity.

- Physicians as a group demonstrate the highest levels of burnout, which lead to higher rates of suicide, decreased life expectancy, and worse health outcomes than the general population.

- A prospective pilot study of healthcare workers utilizing the ‘Three Good Things’ (3GT) intervention for healthcare workers demonstrated promising results, where participants exhibited significant improvements from baseline in emotional exhaustion, depression symptoms, and happiness over a 12-month period.

- More studies will need to be carried out in the future to demonstrate correlative effects with happiness and laughter.
The Benefits of Laughter in the Workplace

- Laughter breaks down barriers, builds relationships, and allows for better communication among co-workers in the radiology workplace.
- Numerous studies have shown that happier people are more productive at their work when compared with their unhappy colleagues.
- Happier physicians have been shown to perform higher quality work which results in:
  - Improved productivity
  - Improved interprofessional teamwork
  - Improved patient care
Essential Strategies for Promoting Humor and Laughter in the Workplace

• 1. Promote team-building exercises to help radiologists and radiology staff become more familiar with each other.
• 2. Promote a climate wherein radiologists and radiology staff are able to not only work together, but laugh with each other.
• 3. Be empathetic to stressful situations which may arise within the workplace.

BUT ABOVE ALL ELSE, KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE. Radiologists are human beings as well as doctors, and need to laugh just like everyone else! Promote this culture in the workplace, and take pride in it!
Conclusions

- Laughter reduces workplace stress, breaks up boredom, improves communication and teamwork, and diminishes fatigue and burnout.
- We demonstrate how happier, more relaxed radiology workers are able to better focus on tasks, make fewer errors in their work, and are more productive.
- Humor is also a good weapon to defend against the stress of various negative trends in the radiology workplace which include:
  - Increased work volume
  - Reorganizing
  - Downsizing

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