

## April 2014 Health Notes by Evelyn Ames

### Adding “Joy” and “Laughter” to Your Steps to Healthy Aging!

At the conclusion of Dave Mauro’s presentation at March’s WWURA Travelogue, we were encouraged to add joy to daily living. With this in mind and with brief definitions of “joy” and “laughter,” April’s Health Notes offers helpful suggestions for healthy aging with joy and laughter as important components.

Joy is “the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires” or “success in doing, finding, or getting something done.” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/joy>. The Joy Project suggests “we are born with the capacity to be joyful - we don't need anything else or anyone's permission. We can be joyful all the time - it's a choice!” [http://www.thejoyproject.com/our\\_definition\\_of\\_joy](http://www.thejoyproject.com/our_definition_of_joy). Laughter is the action of or noise produced by laughing” and is the “experience of manifestation of mirth, amusement, scorn, or joy” <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/laughter>.

“Humor is infectious. The sound of roaring laughter is far more contagious than any cough, snuffle, or sneeze. When laughter is shared, it binds people together and increases happiness and intimacy. Laughter also triggers healthy physical changes in the body. Humor and laughter strengthen your immune system, boost your energy, diminish pain, and protect you from the damaging effects of stress. Best of all, this priceless medicine is fun, free, and easy to use” ([http://www.helpguide.org/life/humor\\_laughter\\_health.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/life/humor_laughter_health.htm)).

Add laughter to daily living: Smile (it is the beginning of laughter!). Count your blessings! Move toward laughter when you hear it! “More often, people are very happy to share something funny because it gives them an opportunity to laugh again and feed off the humor you find in it. When you hear laughter, seek it out and ask, “What’s funny?” “Spend time with fun, playful people.” “Ask people, “What’s the funniest thing that happened to you today? This week? In your life?” [www.helpguide.org/life/humor\\_laughter\\_health.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/life/humor_laughter_health.htm) Other ideas: laugh at yourself, lighten up (look for funny pictures/posters), deal with stress as it can dampen laughter and humor, and observe the play of children! Children know how to have fun when they play!

The 1999 Resource Booklet from the American Association for World Health highlights these **10 Steps to Health Aging**:  
1. Live a healthy life--START NOW... It’s never too late. 2. Eat right and keep moving daily. 3. Keep your mind active--keep learning new things. 4. Select a health care provider who is knowledgeable about healthy aging and conditions affecting older people. 5. Know health care benefits available to you under Medicare, state programs and private insurance. 6. Take advantage of prevention programs/services in community. 7. Get involved in programs in your own community that help you live a healthy life. 8. Stay socially engaged--volunteer in community with people of all ages. 9. Make informed financial decisions--plan ahead for older stages of life. 10. Become informed about living arrangements such as assisted living and life-care communities. For this last one, Whatcom Alliance for HealthCare Access at 800 E. Chestnut (lower level) is available for help. Phone is 360-788-6592.

**What is Your Aging I.Q.?** “We all know someone `old`. It might be a grandparent, a neighbor, or maybe the person behind the counter at the dry cleaners. But what is normal aging? In this booklet there are several very short stories, each followed by a few related questions. Some are multiple-choice, some are true/false (T/F), and some yes/no (Y/N).” Take this test at National Institute of Aging (NIH) <http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/whats-your-aging-iq/about-booklet>.

**Note:** WWURA brown bag lunch at REI Community Room: Date: May 16 (Friday). Time: 12-1:00 pm. Topic: "Nutrition for Arthritis: Reducing inflammation through diet." Presenter: Lisa Mitchell, Program Development for Great West Region of the Arthritis Foundation. If you have questions, contact [Evelyn.Ames@wwu.edu](mailto:Evelyn.Ames@wwu.edu) (734-3184)