



The Laughter Boss™

A Humour Foundation Laughter Works™ Project

The Humour Foundation is a charity dedicated to promoting the health benefits of humour and was founded in 1997 by a group of 6 people including Dr Peter Spitzer, a general practitioner and Jean-Paul Bell, a performer. The Foundation's core project is the Clown Doctor Program. Clown Doctors visit paediatric and general hospitals, hospices and nursing homes. They have helped people find their smiles again in East Timor and Afghanistan.

The Laughter Boss – a new model

“What if one person from each aged care facility took on additional training, as well as doing their regular work, and became the Laughter Boss of that facility?” This was the creative and driving thought of Dr Peter Spitzer when he presented the concept for the first time at the National Conference on Depression in Aged Care in Sydney, 2003.

The Laughter Boss knows the people (residents, staff and families), the environment, the ethos and culture of their facility. The Laughter Boss creates bonds, nourishes, helps with improved coping, gives support and cognitive control, provides positive diversion and increases the 'smileage factor'. In a way, the Laughter Boss can be considered the Court Jester of the new millennium.

Laughter Boss training includes review of evidence, psychoneuroimmunology, examination of performance-related activities in the health care system, review of local and international programs, presentation of NH&MRC-funded 3-year SMILE Study looking at the effect of humour therapy in RACFs and dementia care. Expect a lot of experiential play (fun) as well as examining the role of props as communication tools.

Graduates of the training workshop receive a Laughter Boss Certificate that can be proudly and prominently displayed. It says that as the Laughter Boss, they are now certifiable.

Laughter, humour and play in the aged care facility do not stand alone. Whilst these meet quality of life and psychosocial 'coal face' issues, they can only work in cooperative partnership other therapeutic modalities and optimal care.

Some feedback from Laughter Bosses:

- Permission to be silly
- Always looking for opportunities to make someone react
- When staff join in, morale is boosted for the day
- Domino effect promoting conversation and stimulating interaction
- The simple things work best
- Dementia clients demonstrate most change such as reduced challenging behaviours
- Laughter from both residents and visiting family with all joining in
- Great QA for our accreditation and audits

"It is the job of the Laughter Boss, via open-heart surgery, to touch the soul and give it room to smile and laugh." Dr Peter Spitzer.

For further information please email info@clowndoctors.org.au

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