

# Water Water Everywhere

I recently heard a statistic about water and sanitation that shocked me deeply: more men, women and children become ill and die from dirty water than any other cause. Even if you consider all the nasty illnesses in the world and add up the casualties, more people still die from dirty water than all other illnesses—combined!

I just walked into my kitchen and poured myself a glass of water, a ritual I repeat a few times a day and without much thought. However, this time I paused and realized how often I take this clean, readily attainable water for granted. If I were to be more thankful of the many things I now automatically accept as normal parts of my life, I think I would definitely appreciate life more. This may lead to changes in habit, perhaps in how much I consume and in the way I make daily decisions that affect my life and those of my family and community.

I've often thought it would be good if I could send each of my four children off for a month to a third world country to get a sense of how other people live on much less than we do. I think it would wake them up to as how fortunate they are and would ease their sense of "entitlement."

An esteemed colleague sent me a short Power Point presentation on water which I found quite sobering. It mentioned that 60% of my body is made up of water as well as 70% of my brain and 80% of my blood.

We can live up to a month without food but less than a week without water. Only 3% of the water on earth is potable

## Self-Care (continued from front cover)

feel powerless, and have lost sight of personal choice. They are badgered by seemingly insatiable inner critical voices. These critical voices are actually parts of the self that are trying to protect him or her, by telling him/her to play safe by doing over and over again what parental authorities expect: follow the rules, be a good boy/girl, do as you were trained to do ("work"/"give")—usually by parents who were trained with the same rules.

The same points apply to any kind of compulsive, ritualistic behaviour one

and most of that is in the form of ice. Less than 1% of the good water is accessible to us and only 0.007% is available to drink.

The presentation had my attention and went on to say that a quarter of all the water which enters my house is used to flush toilets. Each flush uses 3 gallons of water. A single load of laundry uses 40 gallons and a ten minute shower uses 50 gallons. If I brush my teeth with the tap running, 4 gallons is used and if I don't run the tap, merely .25 gallon instead.

Several years ago I met a water engineer who told me that some areas of the world, and more specifically the United States, are running out of water. He went on to say that conflict in the future won't be about oil but rather water.

The L.A basin can sustain the water needs of about one million people. In the year 2020 it is estimated that 20 million will live in that basin.

It is estimated that millions of people live on an average of 3 gallons of water a day. The average American or Canadian uses 160 gallons of water each day.

Then the presentation began to echo the statistic I referred to at the beginning of this article. Over 25 million people are displaced each year by contaminated rivers. One in three people worldwide lack access to adequate sanitation. One in five have no clean drinking water readily available.

The United Nations has estimated that a child dies every 15 seconds because of water related diseases.

The presentation on water urges me to "give water a second thought." It goes

may practice, even at mild levels—for example, invariably following strict, regimented routines in life; compulsively dieting, exercising, playing video games, procrastinating, gambling, etc. "Compulsive" means you feel compelled to do something, even if you don't really want to. You fear that if you don't satisfy the compulsion, something bad will happen - that you won't be admired or loved or that you may be criticized. These ritualized behaviours help in the short run to evade past traumas, or current fears.

on to request that I "use less, save more and advocate always!"

My mental health will be stronger if I don't take water or other aspects of my life for granted. We have it pretty good in this part of the world and many of our "problems" would fade away if we regularly reminded ourselves of just how good we do have it.



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They distract from, and postpone dealing with the actual problems.

It is important to find the courage to think for oneself, and to establish work-life balances that nourish and sustain the self. Compulsives of all stripes need to reject beliefs that they cannot manage without resorting to rigid, safe rituals to hold them together. They may want to seek professional help, to help them grow in confidence, self-determination and self-management.

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## Laughter Works Wonders

Shared humour is a universal language. It creates a universal connection. Laughter breaks through language, social and cultural barriers that keep people apart. It is associated with feelings of relaxation and a sense of well-being. According to psychologist Robin Dunbar, shared humour promotes bonding similar to the bonding produced by the physical touch.

There are many physical, emotional and social benefits of laughing. Researchers have found that it can raise our pain threshold, strengthen social bonds, strengthen our immune system and even provide a workout for our muscles. Laughter can even help us learn new things. It is easier to learn and retain new

information when it is presented in a humorous way.

Physiologically, laughing, like exercising, results in the release of endorphins. These endorphins start a chemical reaction in our body. This can help us contend with a difficult life-style and combat the physical symptoms of stress and pain.

Take a moment to think about a time when you laughed out loud. If you have just recalled a moment of genuine humour, I suspect you are smiling at the memory and perhaps even feeling a bit more relaxed.

We know it is good for us, we enjoy it and yet, somehow, when we are lost in physical or emotional pain, we often forget its power. Wayne Dyer said, "It is impossible for you

to be angry and laugh at the same time. Anger and laughter are mutually exclusive and you have the power to choose either."

This power comes through making a decision to see the situation differently. Our thoughts can lead us to dark places or they can lead us into the light by the choices we make. There are very few things in life that we can control. However, no matter what life dishes out to us, we can always control the way we will

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## Self-Care Can Be Surprisingly Challenging

Self-care seems like a common sense thing, something to balance out the stresses of life. However, certain kinds of anxious people have some difficulty with practicing self-care:

**Workaholics:** These folks are always focused on the next problem, and don't stop to appreciate how much energy they have spent on previous challenges. Driven by feelings of inadequacy and anxiety, living with an underlying sense of impending doom, they believe they have no right to rest. If the next project doesn't get finished pronto, disaster will arise. Telling such a person to rest and look after himself makes no sense to him; he is convinced the only way to feel good is to get the next task done.

He needs to be super in-control, and often, he is operating in crisis mode. He has trouble accepting praise and rarely

gives himself pats on the back, because anxiety only allows him to see what hasn't been accomplished. Yet there is only so much he can control. The workaholic can benefit from learning to rest, play and enjoy life.

**Compulsive Givers:** Another "type" of person who doesn't practice self-care is the constantly giving, care-taking person. While the workaholic believes achievement is all that matters, this person can only see good in herself when she is helping others or giving them time, love, energy, gifts and money. And, just as the workaholic does get reward from getting things done, the compulsive giver is often rewarded by her giving because recipients

are grateful for people like her who are around to boost, support and help out.

But the compulsive caregiver is not looking after herself at all. She is trusting that the universe will pay her back eventually, but it just keeps on taking. Eventually she burns out, wondering what happened. She has put herself last, and must learn to allot only so much time to others. She needs to fight inner self-accusations of "selfishness" to practice self-care.

Both workaholics and compulsive givers are driven by "have tos." They are highly anxious,

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# Treatment Options

Are you or someone you know struggling with substance use? Are you searching for suitable addiction resources and supports, but discovering this search to be confusing and daunting? Here is a breakdown of some of the programs available for adults.

The first stage in dealing with substance use may be detoxification in order to manage the withdrawal symptoms. There are two withdrawal management/ detox facilities in Vancouver and one in Surrey (Creekside); these are essential services operated and funded by the health authorities (Fraser Health & Vancouver Coastal). The detoxing process can range from 4 to 10 days depending on the substance as well as the frequency, duration and intensity of use.

Clinical counsellors at these detox facilities can also assist with treatment planning and can forward referrals to government approved residential programs. Going to a detox facility is not always necessary as many people withdraw on their own or with the assistance of their physician. No referral is necessary for admission to a detox facility. All one needs to do is call the intake line.

In addition to counselling / psychotherapy, outpatient options include various meetings and day programs. Meetings can be very supportive throughout the recovery process. There are numerous 12 Step meetings in the region, including Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Cocaine Anonymous. It is important to find a home group that is a good fit for you. An alternative to 12 step meetings is SMART (Self Management and Recovery Training). SMART is based on Albert Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) and other cognitive behavioural approaches of psychology. The program teaches self-empowerment and self reliance by offering techniques in the areas of: 1) Building and Maintaining Motivation, 2) Coping with Urges, 3) Managing Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviours and 4) Living a Balanced Life. There are

SMART meetings in the community and online. Twelve Step, SMART, and other related support groups are typically led by volunteers. There is no cost or referral needed.

There are also day programs called Daytox in Vancouver, Richmond, Surrey, and Chilliwack which are funded and operated by the health authorities. Daytox typically consists of a six week program that offers a range of psycho-educational groups, holistic activities, and medical support for those reducing their dependence on benzodiazepine. A clinical counsellor is available for further treatment planning and referrals to government approved residential programs if needed. Other day empowerment programs are often provided by community non-profit societies and agencies. Clients can self-refer to Daytox and most other day programs.

For many people struggling with substance use, the combination of



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**... the biggest indicator of success is the client's dedication and commitment to the program.**

counselling, meetings and day programs can often be sufficient in reaching recovering goals. But if someone is unable to achieve sobriety through outpatient supports and is highly motivated, note that residential programs are also available in the area.

Residential treatment programs can range quite drastically by: modalities (12 Step, bio-psycho-social-spiritual), length (30 days to over a year), therapeutic support (peer counsellors, clinical counsellors, psychologists, etc.), recreational activities, holistic approaches (acupuncture, yoga, art therapy, etc.), education/ job training opportunities, intensity level, and cost (\$40 a day, up to \$500+ a day). Treatment costs can be covered by: self pay, extended medical plans/ employers, income

assistance or government subsidies. The referral process varies. Some programs allow self-referral while others require a referral by an addictions counsellor or mental health professional.

As of the date of this issue, the government subsidized and approved residential treatment/ support recovery programs for adults (18 and over) include: Charlford House (Female), Central City Lodge (Male), Ellendale Program (F), Hanna House (F), Heartwood (F), Homestead (F), Inner Visions (M), Kinghaven (M), Last Door (M), Maple Ridge Treatment Centre (M), New Dawn (F), Pacifica (Co-ed), Path to Freedom (M), Peardonville (F), Phoenix Centre (M), Together We Can (M), Turning Point (M, F, Co-ed), and Westminster House (F).

There are also a number of private treatment programs and recovery homes within the province. However, if you are thinking of going to a private program it is important to gather as much information about the program as possible. Visit the facility, check websites, ask about the programming offered, see if there are trained professionals on staff, etc. The fact that they do not receive government funding doesn't mean they are 'bad' places. Many of them are licensed, accredited and have great reputations.

Numerous people ask "what program is the best"? All programs tend to keep their own statistics but the biggest indicator of success is the client's dedication and commitment to the program (whether it be out-patient or residential). One needs to participate fully and put into practice what is learned. Persistence is key! A person can increase the likelihood of engagement by finding the best fit for him or her as everyone is unique and has different preferences. Hopefully the above information helps you to make that first essential step to recovery.

For information on any of the programs noted, contact Information Services at 604-875-6381.

# Laughter Works Wonders (continued from front cover)

respond to each situation. Looking around for happiness instead of sadness can bring us out of unhappy situations. When our thoughts are more positive, our feelings become more positive and we tend to choose more positive, healthy, useful and helpful behaviours.

Humour can usually improve most situations. It improves our perspective and helps us see that things are not as bad as they seem. I remember a public speaking engagement. As I waited to begin, I was worried about how I would be received. I felt very nervous. When the moderator introduced me, he told a joke. I couldn't resist laughing. As I laughed, my nervousness disappeared. I stepped up to the podium relaxed and with a big smile on my face. The tension I had felt moments before was replaced by joy.

Attempting to overcome the barriers that keep us from understanding, loving and accepting each other is part of the human condition. Comedian Victor Borge said, "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people." Humour can be an icebreaker in socially awkward moments, diffuse tense situations and help people let go of anger and irritation.

There are laughter clubs, therapists and groups all over the world. In Laughter Therapy, one of the exercises that the participants are instructed to do is to run around the room acting like a choo-choo train and laugh while they are doing it. Can you imagine it? The image brings a smile to my face. Participants report that at first they feel awkward, as if they have regressed by decades but soon a strange thing begins to happen. The fake laughter soon becomes genuine. After the exercise,

they feel relaxed, happy and tired!

Not feeling very light-hearted in a situation? Researchers claim that light chuckles, hearty chortles, deep belly laughs or giggles don't have to be real for us to receive the benefit of them. Now, I think that is good news. We don't have to feel happy to get the benefit of a good laugh.

Be aware that all humour is not created equal. Forms of humour like sarcasm and teasing always involve a victim. It may get a laugh out of some but it can crush the spirit of another. Also be aware that there are moments when humour can be inappropriate and insensitive rather than uplifting.

Incorporate more humour into your daily life. Laughter, developing the habit of spending ten minutes a day writing about your feelings, and getting thirty minutes of daily exercise are three of the easiest and cheapest ways to retain your mental well-being. Each of these activities is available to us anytime and anywhere.

## "Laughter" by 10 yr old Megan Dalla Zanna.

*Have you ever laughed so hard that you cried? Or could barely breathe? Well, that happens to me a lot and when it does, I feel good after.*

*Laughter has many benefits. It can actually help your circulation and improve the flow of oxygen to body. Humour evens lowers blood pressure and helps the immune system. Think of it as exercise for your lungs. Laughter decreases stress, and relaxes your*

*muscles. It can add much joy to your life, improve your mood and help you deal with things better.*

*The sound of laughter is very contagious. If you see people smiling or laughing, you're probably doing the same thing without realizing it. Wouldn't the world would be a better place, if everyone laughed a little more often?*

*Some studies show that smiling or laughing even if it is fake, can be good. The body can't tell the difference between 'fake' laughter that you just start doing on purpose, and 'real' laughter. The physical benefits are the same, besides fake laughter usually leads to real laughter. So smile more, and fake laugh; you'll still achieve positive effects.*

*Did you know:*

*♣ Children are known to laugh more than adults: an average baby laughs around 300 times a day compared to an adult, who laughs around 20 times a day, however this can depend on a person's personality*

*♣ Laughter uses almost every major part of the body*

*♣ 13 muscles are used to smile, but 47 are used to frown. You have to smile nearly a quarter of a million times to make 1 wrinkle.*

*♣ People smile only 35 percent as much as they think they do.*

*♣ Every time you have a good hearty laugh, you burn up 3 1/2 calories.*

*It doesn't matter what language you speak, or where you live, everyone speaks laughter the same way.*

*A day without laughter is a boring day. So remember, it costs nothing to make someone laugh.*

## Enjoy a laugh ....

In a convent in Ireland, the 98-year-old Mother Superior lay dying. The nuns gathered around her bed trying to make her last journey comfortable. They tried giving her warm milk to drink but she refused it. One of the nuns took the glass back to the kitchen. Then, remembering a bottle of Irish Whiskey that had been received as a gift the previous Christmas, she opened it and poured a generous amount into the warm milk.

Back at Mother Superior's bed, they held the glass to her lips. The frail nun drank a little, then a little more and before they knew it, she had finished the whole glass down to the last drop. As her eyes brightened, the nuns thought it would be a good opportunity to have one last talk with their spiritual leader.

"Mother," the nuns asked earnestly, "Please give us some of your wisdom before you leave us." She raised herself up in bed on one elbow, looked at them and said: "Don't sell that cow."

Upon the Skeena River in far Northern British Columbia there once lived Columbine, a skunk. She had twins so identical she could only occasionally tell them apart. Columbine named one "In" and the other "Out." One day In left the burrow and was gone for such a long time mother became worried. She sent Out out to get In to come in. Out searched for an hour, found his brother and brought him safely home to the Skeena skunk sanctuary. Columbine asked Out how he managed to find his brother. "Simple," he said, "instinct."