

# ***What's So Funny About Nephrology Nursing?***

Lesley Dinwiddie MSN FNP CNNe

# Goals

Nephrology Nurses will be able to:

- Engage in guilt-free stress reduction through planned social and educational activities especially those that provide opportunity to laugh!
- Utilize humor to effectively engage and educate patients and staff.

Speed, F. (2021). Caring for Ourselves While Caring for Others - <https://library.annanurse.org/anna/sessions/8666/>





IT'S SUPPOSED TO  
RELIEVE STRESS.



# Objectives

Nephrology Nurses will be able to:

- Define “funny” in terms of both a *stressor* AND a *stress reducer*.
- Define and describe the evolution of the science, *Gelotology*.
- Describe the application of Gelotology to professional education and practice.
- Identify personal favorite funny stories from nephrology nursing and share them!



Define “*funny*” in terms of both a stressor and a stress reducer.

- What does “funny” mean?
- the Oxford dictionary says “funny” can mean either humorous **OR** something difficult to explain or understand; strange or odd, as in *different*!
- Different is ***stressful*** and that is the key word here!
- Regardless, we cared for our patients AND coped with the stress – frequently with ***laughter***!

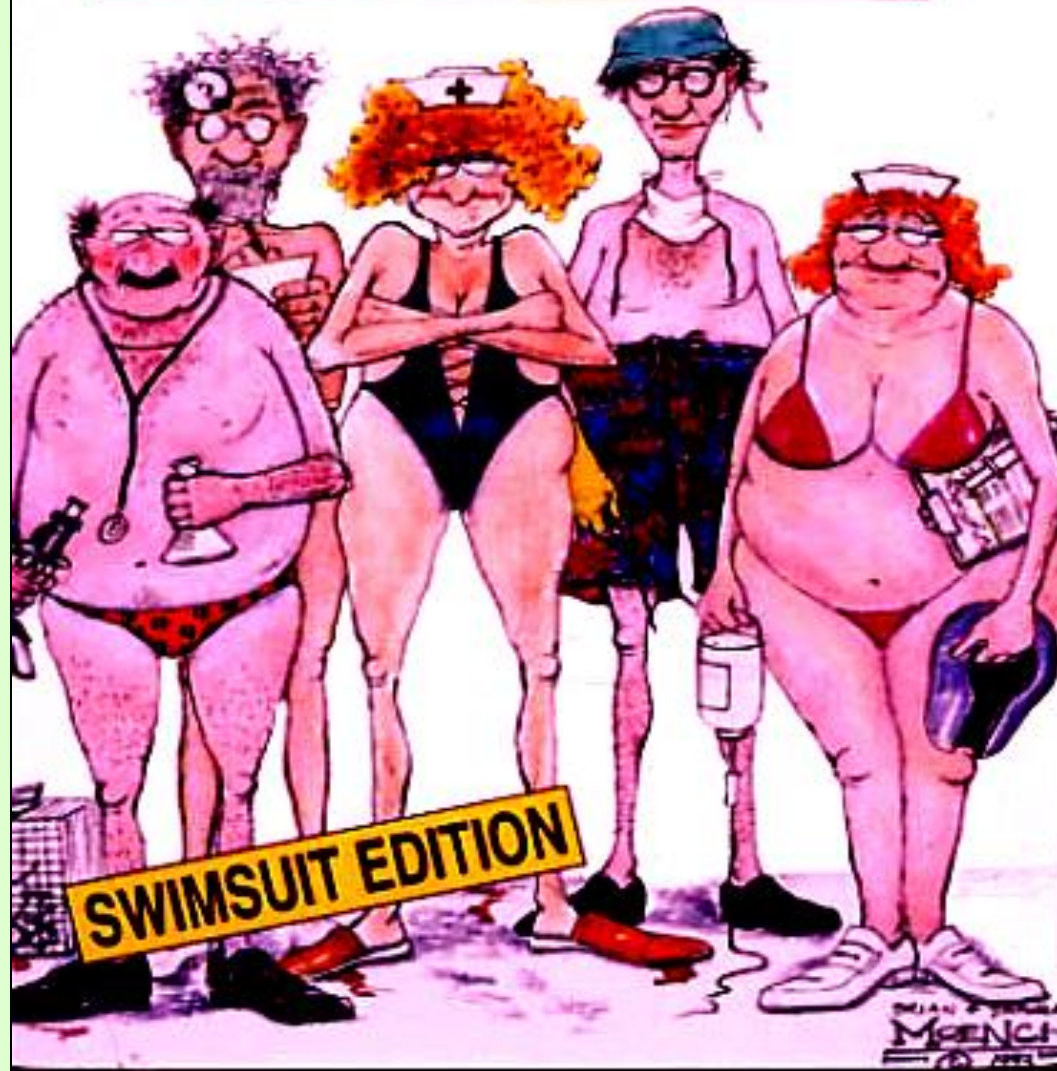
Define “*funny*” as a stress reducer.

- We did that with the humorous definition of funny as in “causing laughter”
- Early 90s and the “Dialysis Palace” – wallpaper around the dialysis stations???? Really ?????
- Dinner “meetings” to de-stress & laugh\*
- Stories – patient interactions and our “favorite” physicians
- We were the ***RNA***!

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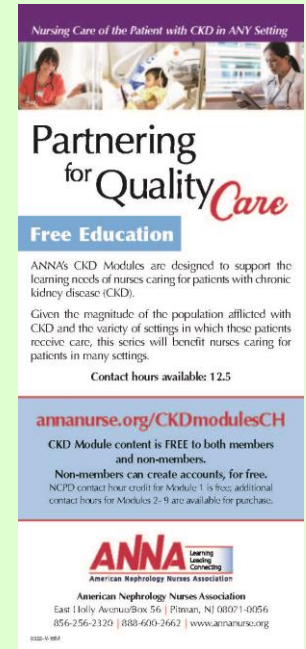
# The New England Medical Journal





# So Why **NOW**?

- Pandemic of 2020-2022 = STRESS! for NNs!
  - Short staffing
  - Anxiety re infection
  - Isolation from family and friends
  - ANNA offered me an opportunity!\*
- It has put the **ZOO** into Zoom!
  - What happened to in-person meetings??
  - How often did you get to tell stories and **laugh** on Zoom?



Nursing Care of the Patient with CKD in ANY Setting

Partnering  
for Quality *Care*

**Free Education**

ANNA's CKD Modules are designed to support the learning needs of nurses caring for patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD).

Given the magnitude of the population afflicted with CKD and the variety of settings in which these patients receive care, this series will benefit nurses caring for patients in many settings.

Contact hours available: 12.5

[annanurse.org/CKDmodulesCH](http://annanurse.org/CKDmodulesCH)

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# Gelotology: Definition & Description

- Comes from the Greek word, gelos, meaning laughter
- Anatomy and physiology of laughter
- The therapeutic application:
  - \*pain avoidance/control over a terminal illness e.g., Norman Cousins
  - \*"don't make me laugh" post-op respiratory tx.
  - \*stress reduction in both illness and health
  - \* mood elevation with fun memories
  - \*depression therapy
  - \*laughter yoga therapy

.....



# The Science of Laughter



Marshall Brain "How Laughter Works" 1 April 2000. HowStuffWorks.com.  
<<https://science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/emotions/laughter.htm>>

<https://youtu.be/FnZnbN3mQJ4>

# How Laughter Works!

- Laughter and Health
- What is Laughter
- Why Do We Laugh
- Laughter on the Brain
- The Limbic System
- What's Funny
- That's Not Funny\*

Marshall Brain "How Laughter Works" 1 April 2000. HowStuffWorks.com.  
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# What is Laughter?

Laughter is:

- The physiological response to humor
- Has two parts – a set of gestures AND the production of a sound – simultaneously!
- Hearty laughter produces changes in many of the body's muscle in both trunk and limbs
- Laughter is rhythmic, vocalized, expiratory and involuntary – 15 facial muscles contract
- The respiratory system is interrupted by the epiglottis half-closing the larynx producing irregular air intake and gasping!

# What is Laughter?

Laughter is:

- In extreme ***fits*** of laughter, the tear ducts are activated, the face becomes moist and red (even purple)
- The noises that accompany this bizarre behavior range from sedate giggles to hearty guffaws
- The sonic structure of laughter are vowel-like notes (ha ha ha OR ho ho ho) and very rapid (210 milliseconds apart)

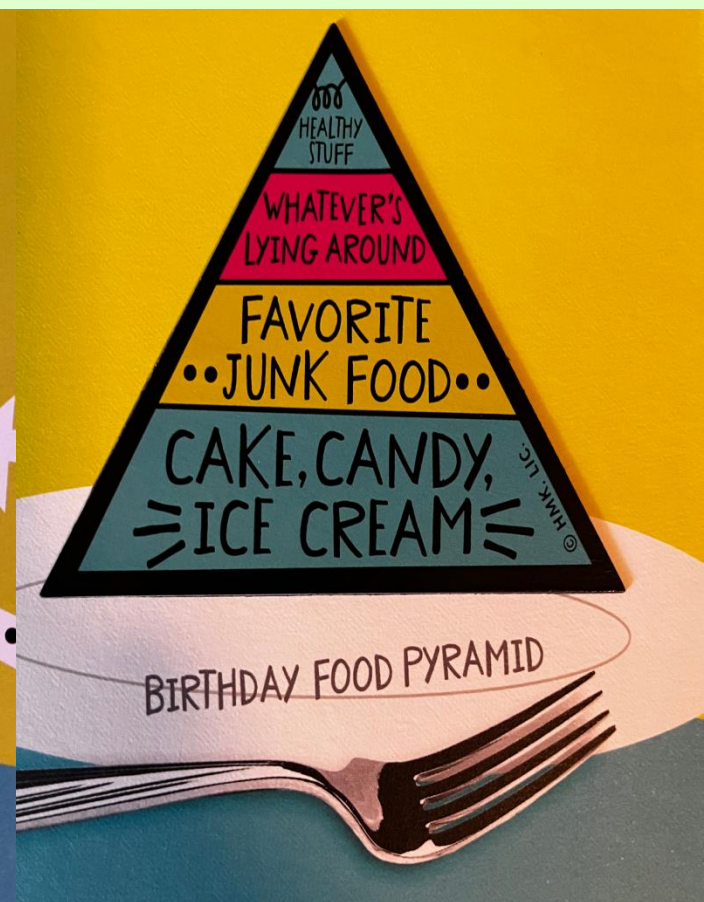
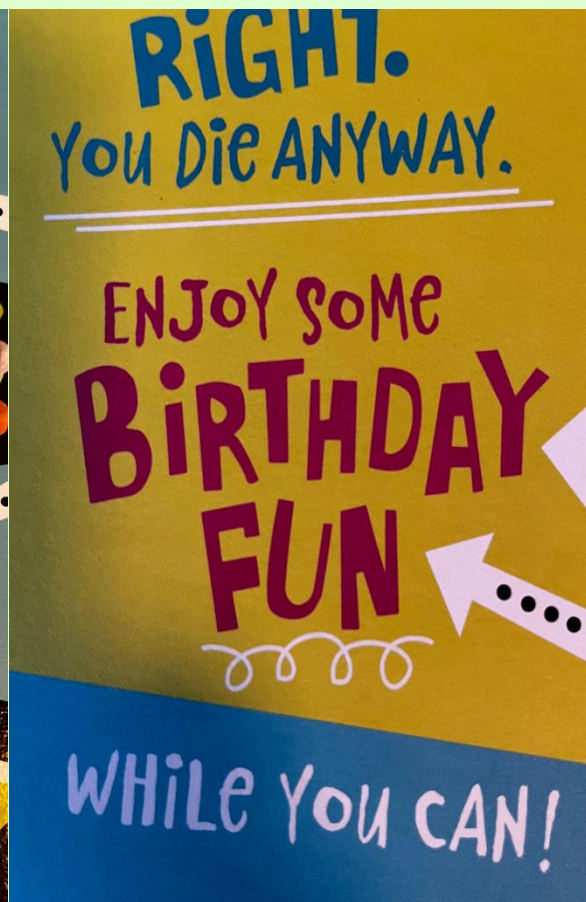
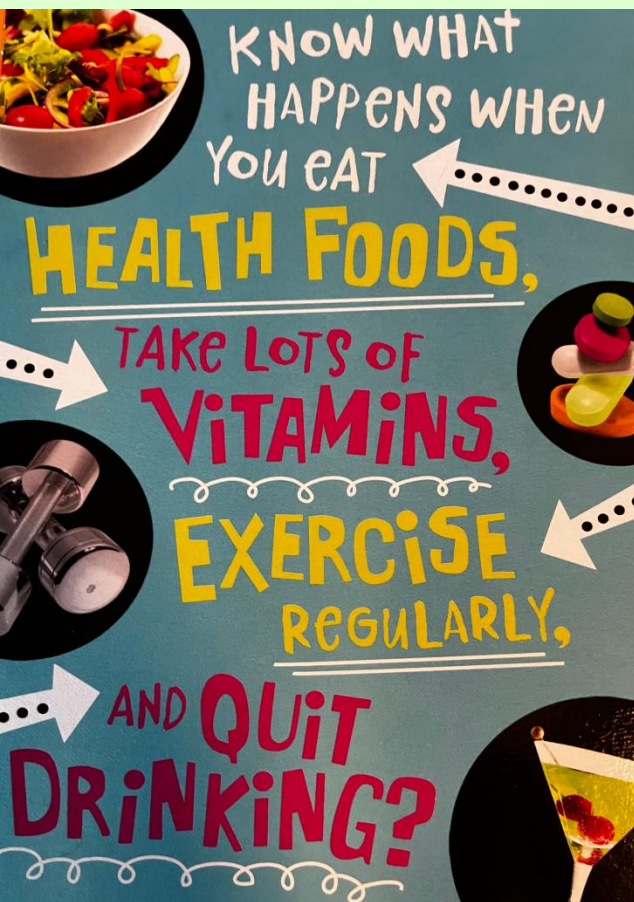
# What is Laughter?

Laughter is also:

“contagious” because *humans* have a detector that responds to laughter by triggering other neural brain circuits which generates more laughter!\*



- Humor researcher, Peter Derks, describes laughter as “a really quick, automatic type of behavior” in response to recognizing humor.





# Why Do We Laugh?

Laughter may have begun:

- As a gesture of shared relief at the passing of danger
- The relaxation of laughter may indicate trust in one's companions
- Purpose of laughter is related to making and strengthening relations
- Bonding laughter may be a feedback loop – as in the contagious effect!

# Why Do We Laugh?

Laughter as a behavior - Studies show:

- That dominant figures use humor more than their subordinates
- Controlling the laughter exercises power over the emotional climate of the group
- Laughter, as a behavior, may have evolved to change the behavior of others
- In an embarrassing or threatening situation, laughter may serve as a conciliatory gesture or a way to deflect anger (i.e., lighten the mood?)
- Laughter functions as a “social signal” – one is 30 times more likely to laugh in a social setting than when alone!



**GOOD FRIENDS CAN MAKE US LAUGH...**





**BUT.....**

**GREAT FRIENDS MAKE US  
LAUGH TILL WE PEE!**

***We laugh at the same things!"***



# Laughter on the Brain

## Gelotology - the A & P

- Emotional responses are frontal lobe function\*  
“while the relationship between laughter and the brain is not fully understood, researchers are making some progress.”
- EEG tracings of subjects showed that within 0.4 sec of exposure to potential humor the cerebral cortex (CC) was stimulated – a negative charge produced laughter but a continued + charge had no response!
- The L side (CC) analyzed the joke > activity in frontal lobe > then the R side (CC) voted on funny/not funny! \*

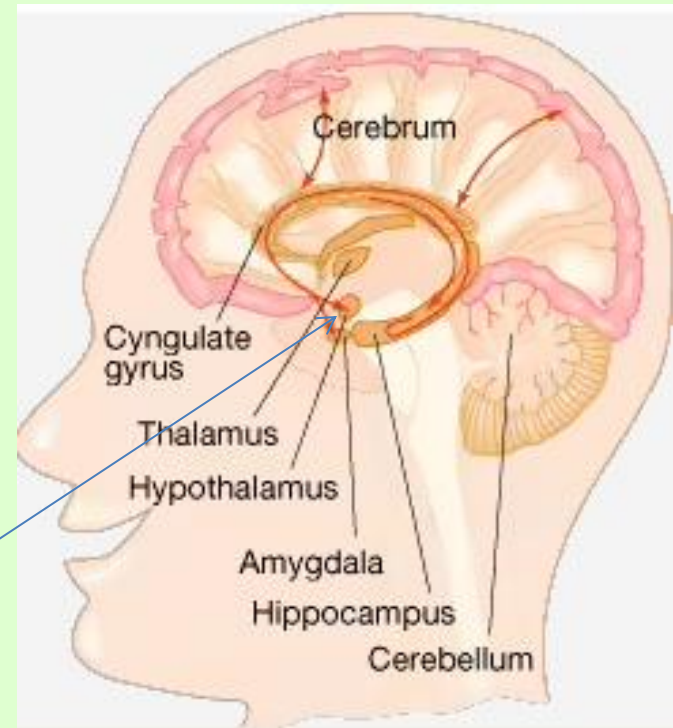
# Laughter on the Brain - Gelotology - the A & P

- Brainwave activity then spreads to the sensory processing area of the occipital lobe function
- Stimulation of the motor sections evoked physical responses to the joke (i.e. laughter)
- Laughter seems to be produced via a circuit through many regions of the brain!
- Protect your brain from Stress (Harvard)



# The Limbic System

- In the production of laughter, “the limbic system seems to be central”
- Essential to the life of all mammals (self-preservation etc.)
- Humans use it more for motivation and emotional behaviors\*
- Hypothalamus – major player in “loud, uncontrollable laughter”



Structures in the brain's limbic system, which controls many essential human behaviors, also contribute to the production of laughter.

# What's Funny?

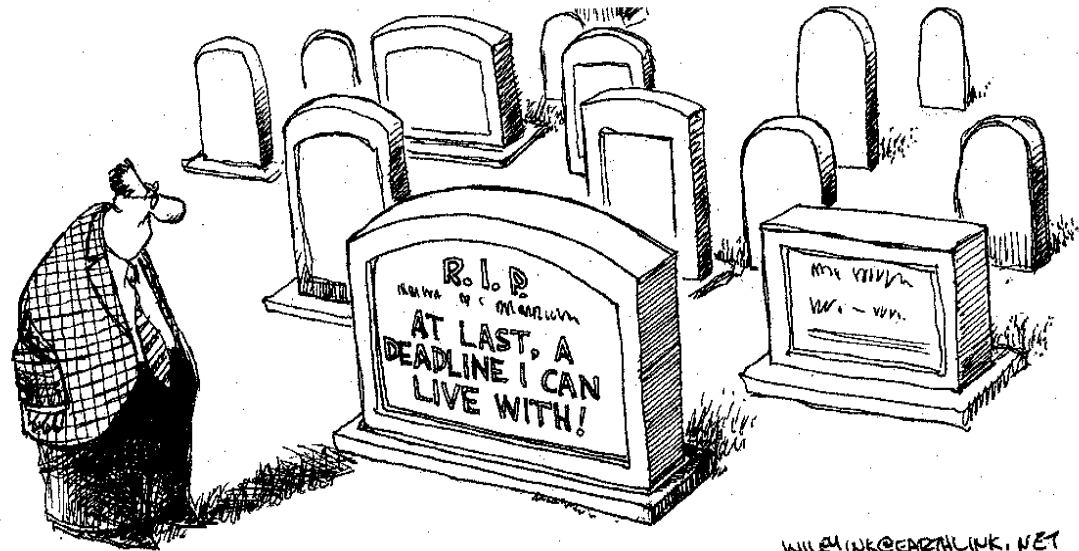
- Three traditional theories
  1. Incongruity theory – “when we expect one outcome and another happens”\*
  2. Superiority theory – “jokes about someone else’s mistakes, stupidity, or misfortune”
  3. Relief theory – the use of comic relief at the right time – cited example of dark humor to help workers cope with stressful situations.



# For those who know me well!

## NON SEQUITUR

THE FINAL  
REWARD FOR  
A WRITER...



"A  
Deadline  
is my  
Lifeline"

# What's Funny?



# What's Funny?

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"The act of producing humor, of making a joke, gives us a mental break and increases our objectivity in the face of overwhelming stress," L. Rosenberg



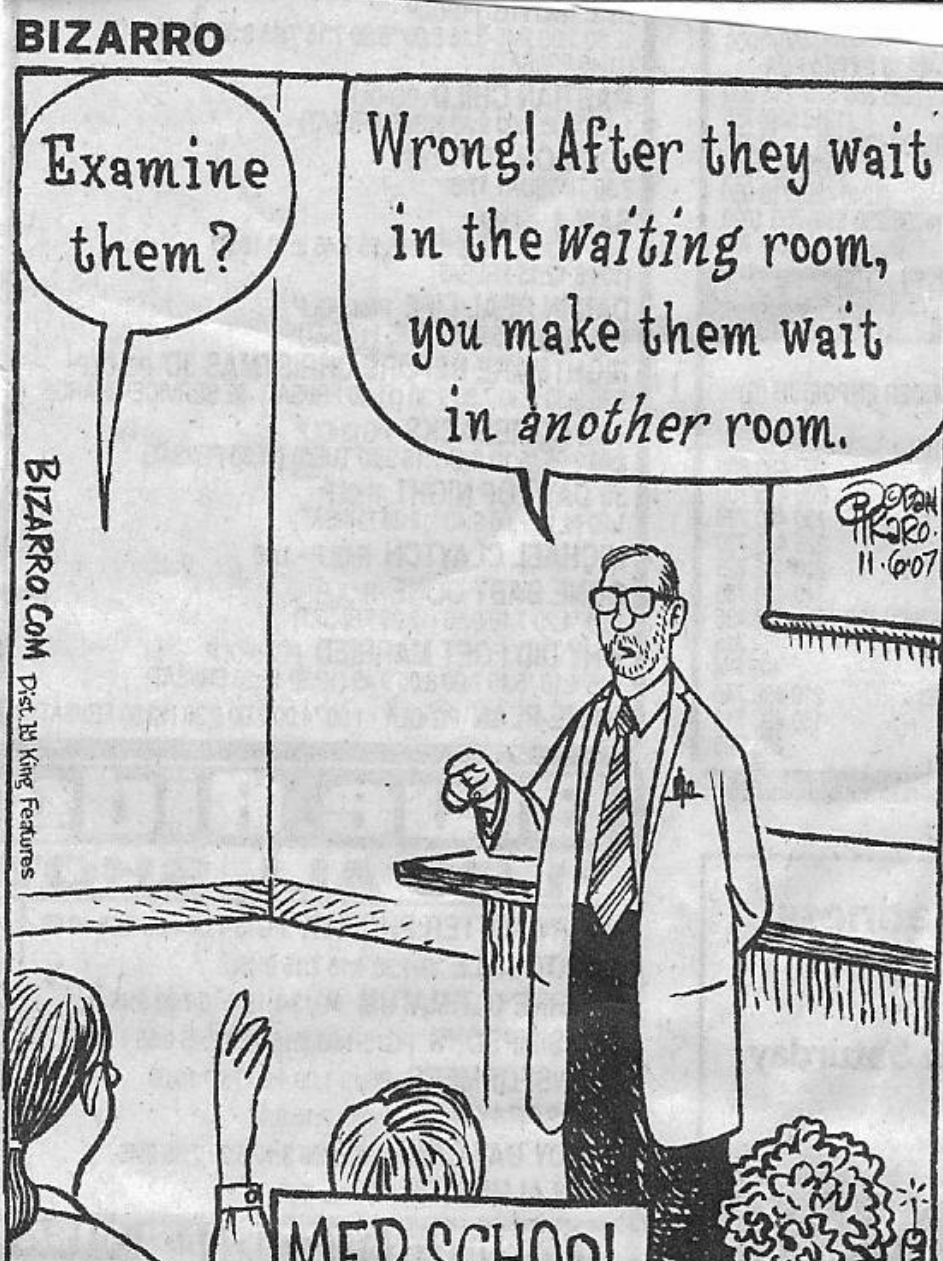
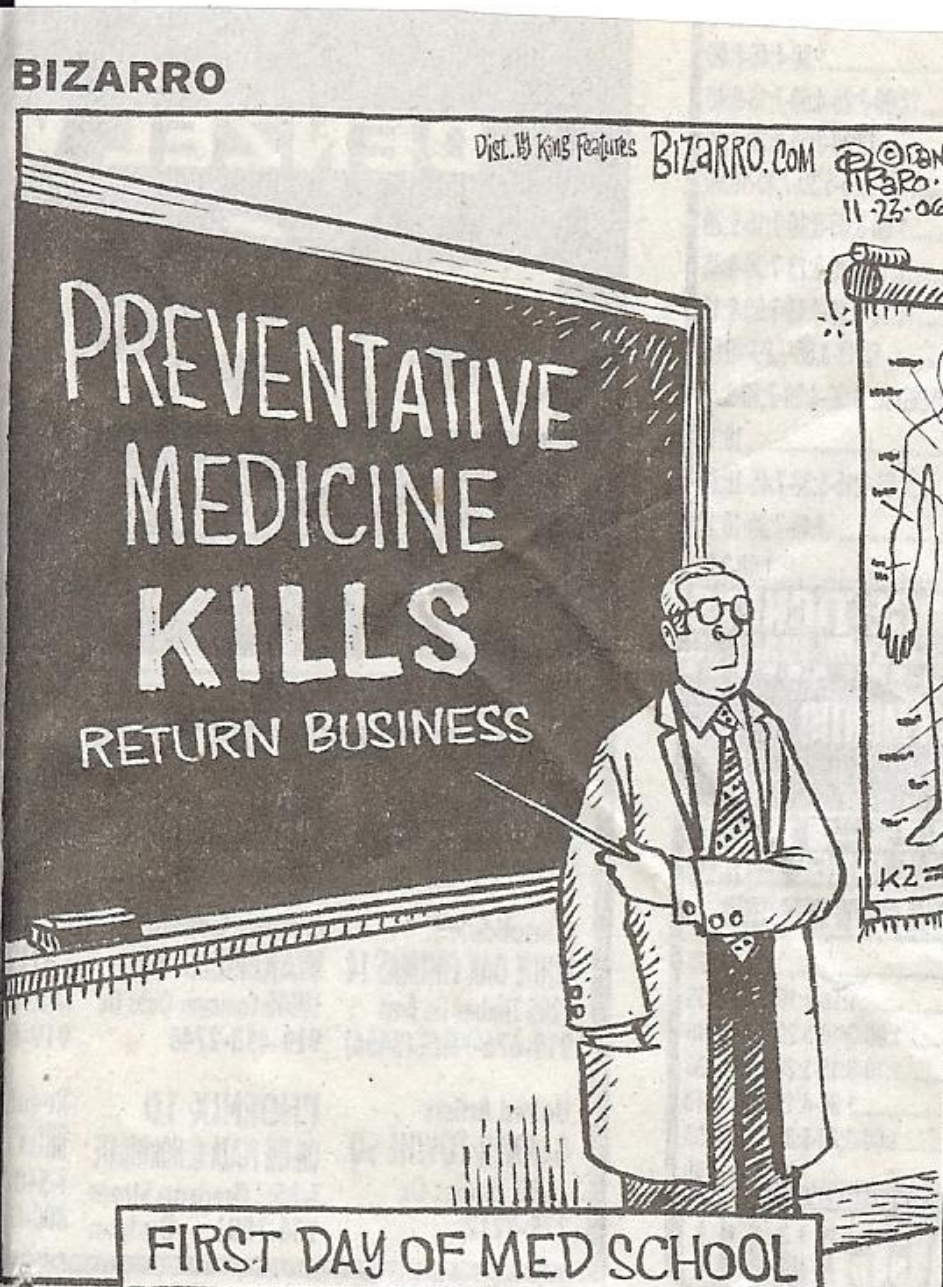


"In light of the burgeoning shortage of nurses,  
she's decided to be an undertaker."

Cartoon by Larry Katzman



# Healthcare???



# That's ***Not*** Funny!

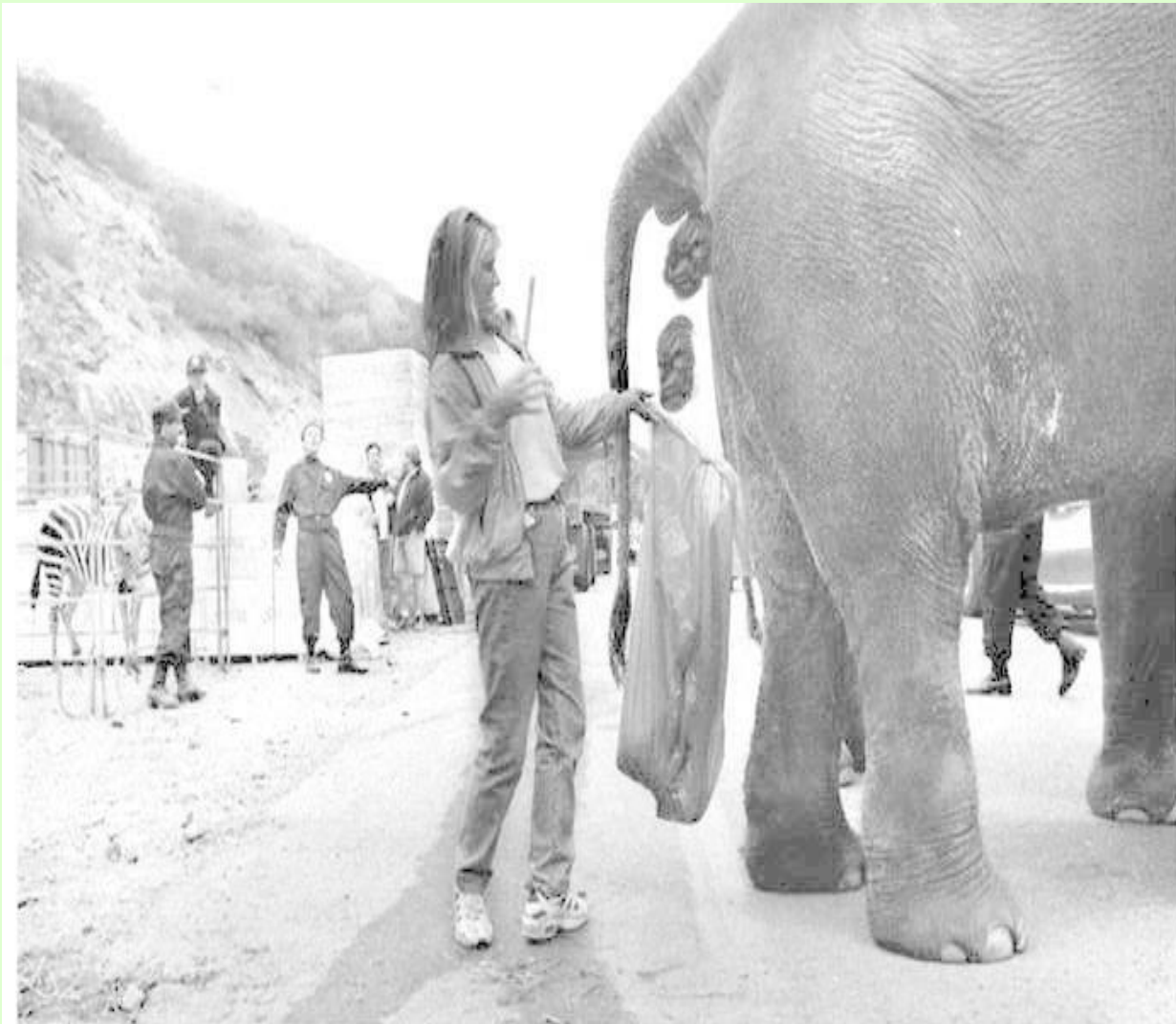
Several obvious differences in people affect what they find humorous:

- Age is #1
  - “Children like short and simple concepts – elephant jokes and what we refer to as "toilet humor." To children, a preoccupation with bodily functions is simply another way of exploring their fascinating new environment.





Another one for children of all ages!



And you thought your job sucked

Getting older is like visiting  
an all-you-can-eat buffet.  
What should be hot is cold,  
what should be firm  
is limp, and the  
buns are bigger  
than anything  
else on the menu.

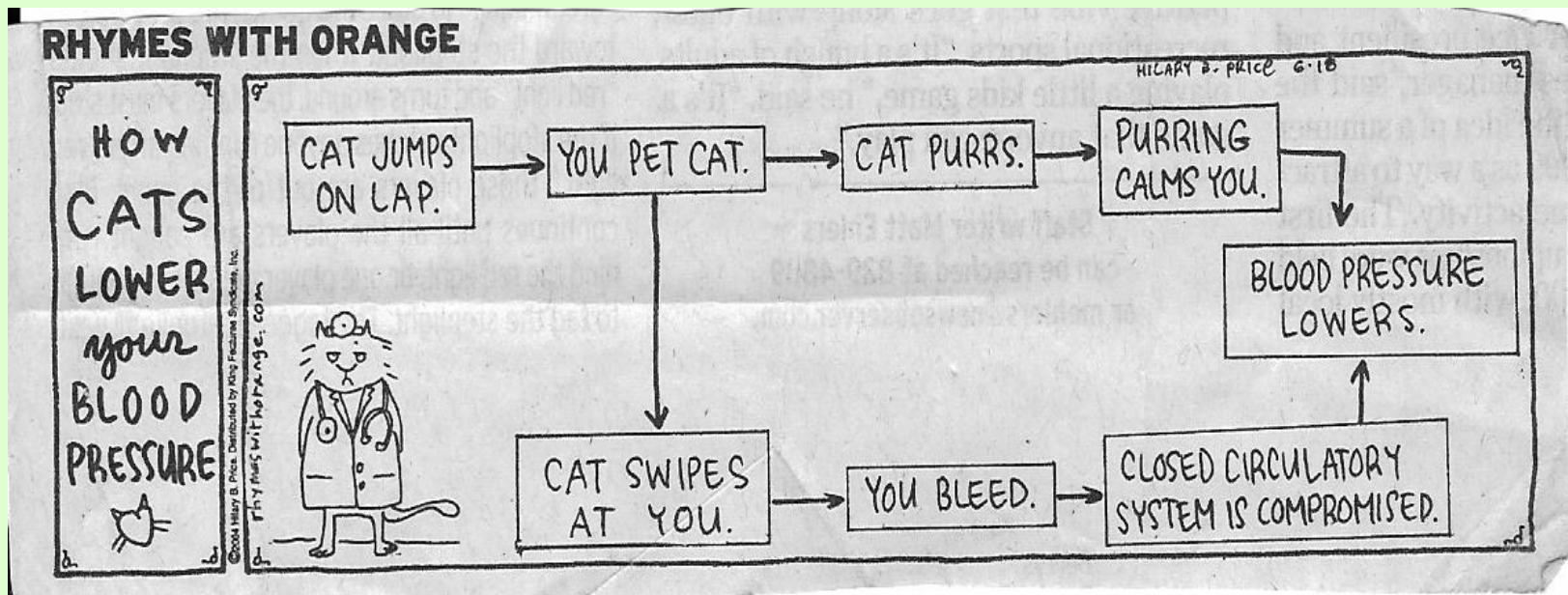




# Laughter and Health

More than a coping aid and de-stressor, laughter:

- Balances all components of immune system
- Reduces levels of stress hormones e.g. adrenalin & cortisol which have the effect of increasing BP & platelet production\*



# Laughter and Health

- Increases natural killer cells of viruses & tumors along with gamma-interferon, T cells and B cells
- Increases salivary immunoglobulin A
- Can be a total body aerobic workout
- The psychology allows people to express negative emotions safely through laughter
- Laughter is cathartic!
- Laughter therapy pioneer, Patch Adams MD of UNC



# Laughter as Stress Management

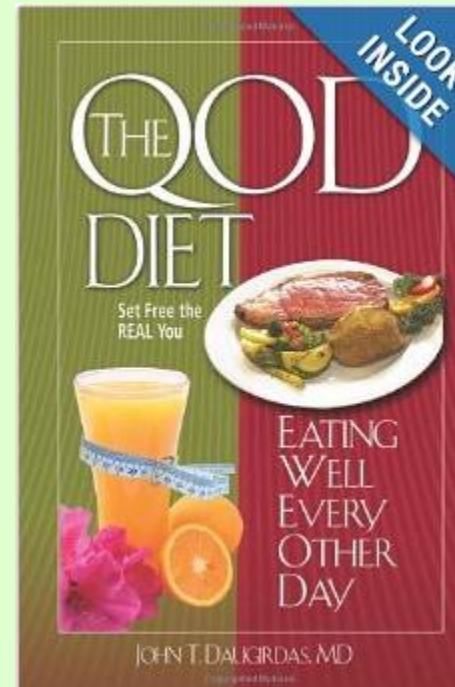
- “Basically, we laugh at the issues that stress us out.”
- What about the unhealthy ways we respond to stress?
  - Alcohol/drugs?
  - Eating?
- What do we do when the response becomes the stressor?





# Commitment to getting Healthy!

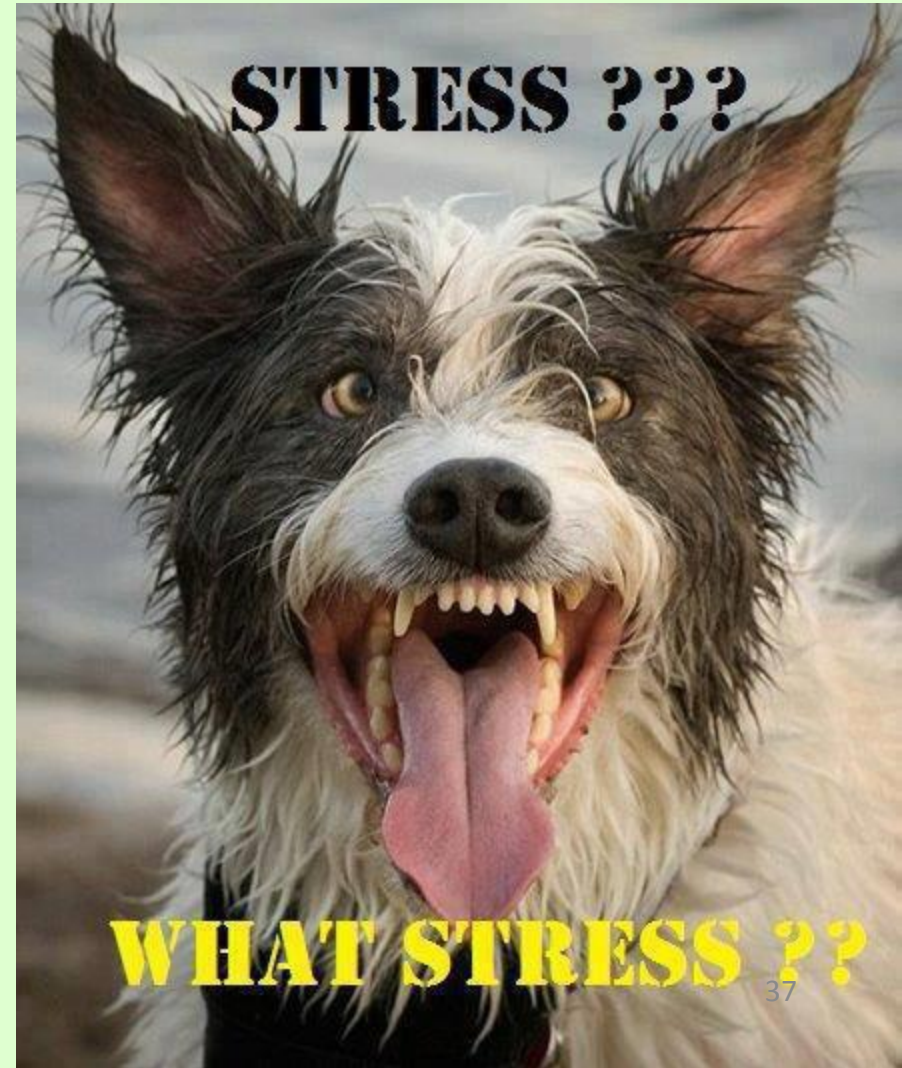
- When it comes to stress eating, diets DON'T work!





# Stress Eating!

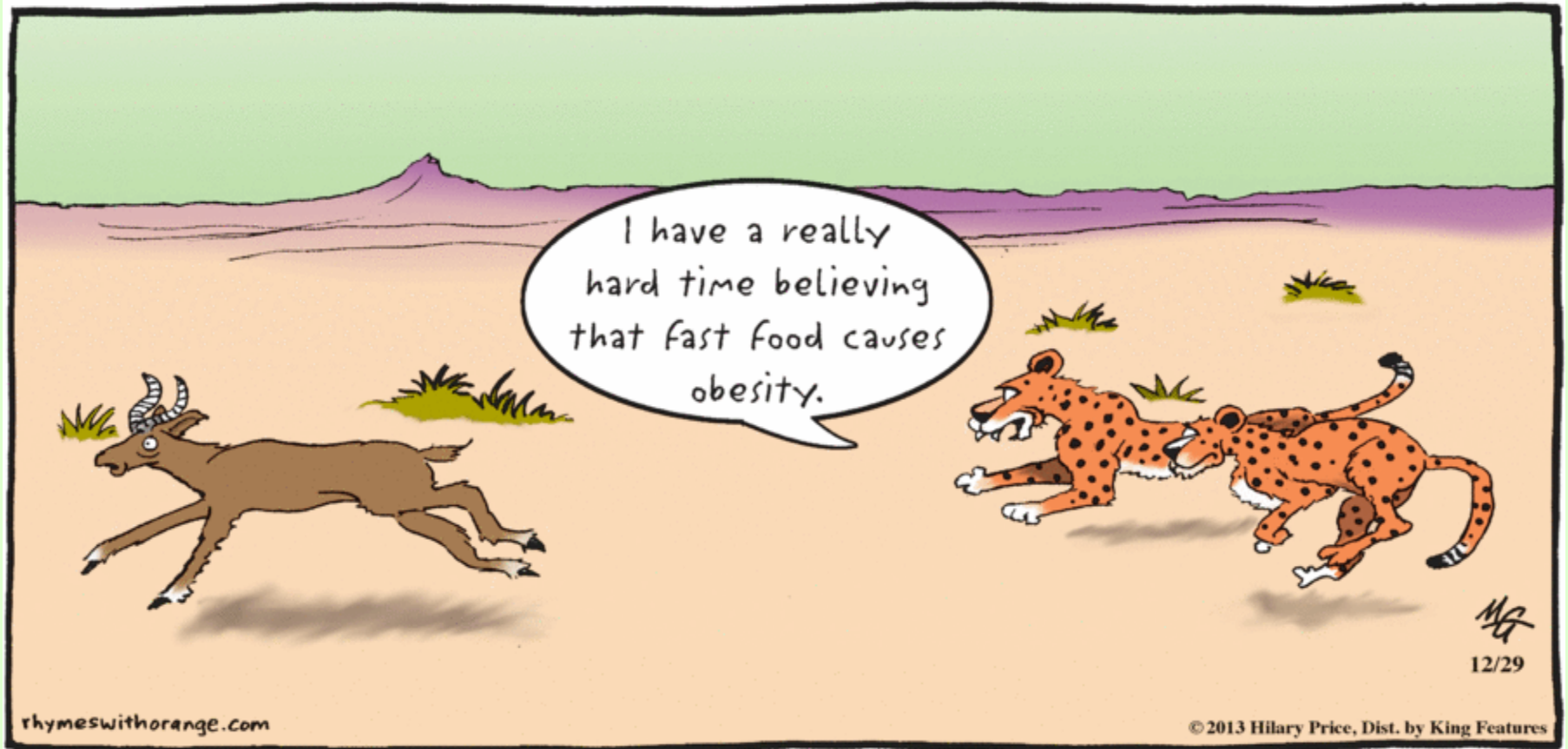
- LEXINGTON, Ky.,  
Jan. 26 (UPI)
- Intuitive eating vs  
Stress Management
- participants in the stress  
management intervention  
lost ~ 17 pounds
- significant decrease in BP
- participants in the intuitive  
eating intervention did not  
lose a significant amount of  
weight.
- weight loss held up at a 14-week  
follow-up,



You know it's time when .....



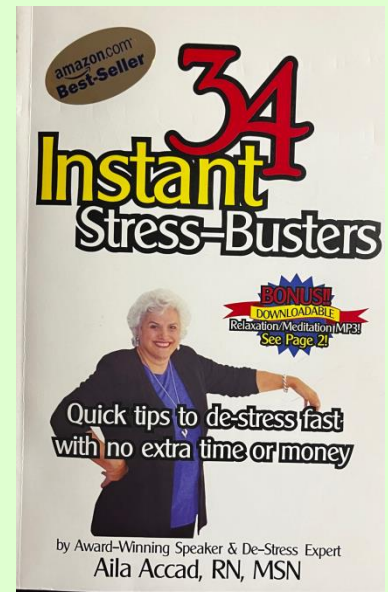
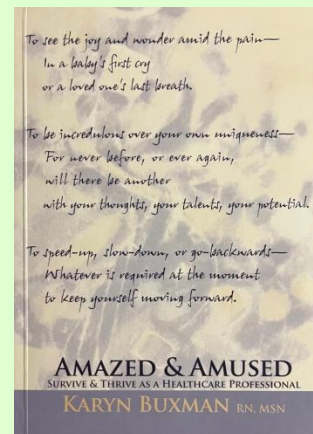
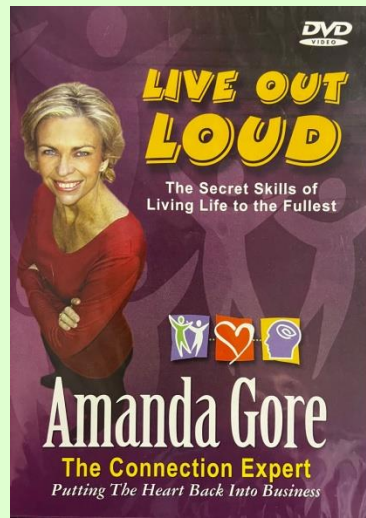
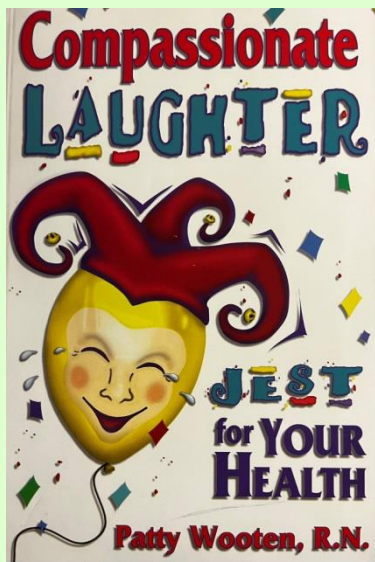
# Therapeutic lifestyle changes (TLC) applicable in all ranges





# Application of Gelotology in NN

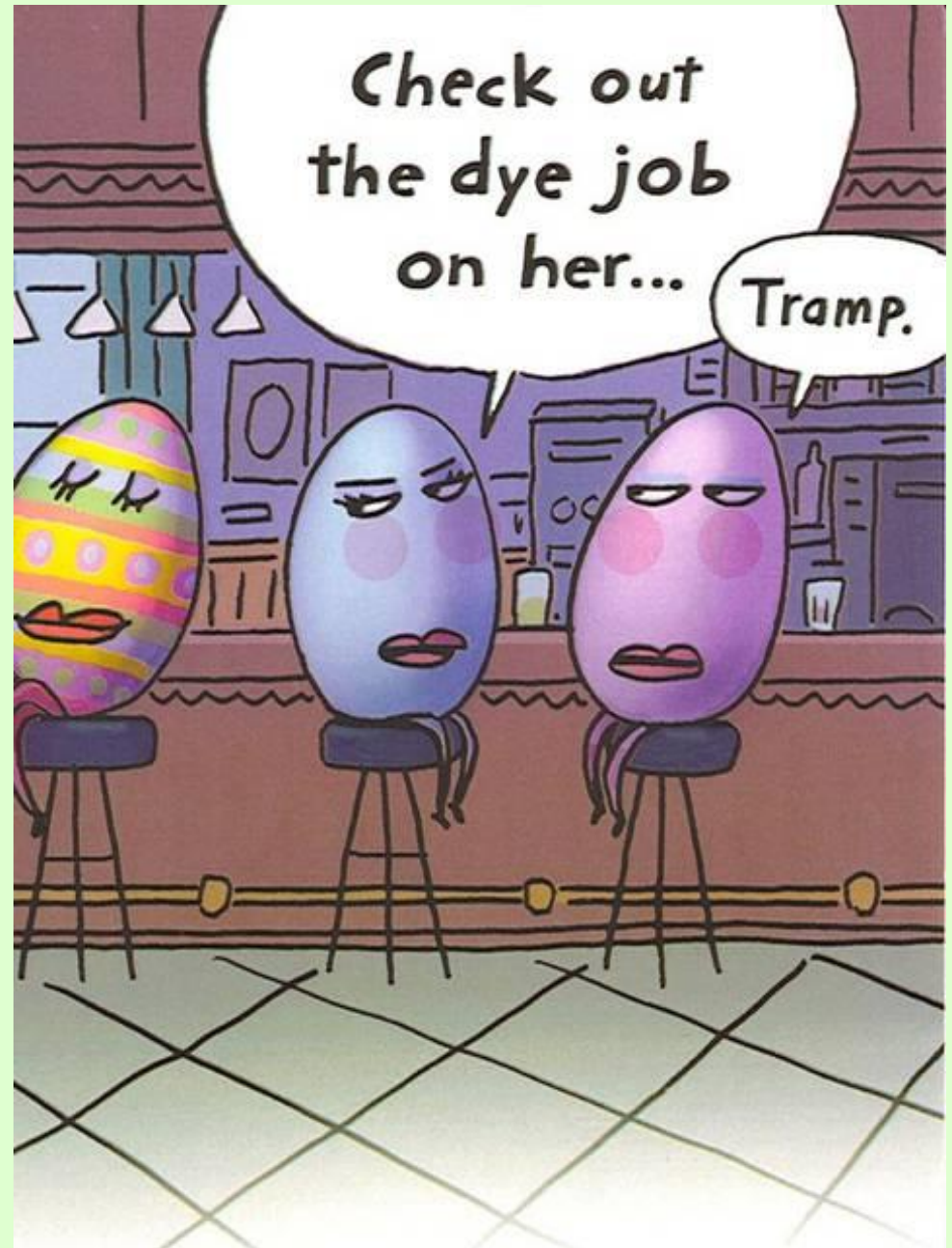
- Professional socialization and education:
  - \* team bonding - positive collaboration
  - \* encourage staff to attend gelotological presentations
  - \* incorporate cartoons/humor into presentations/classes



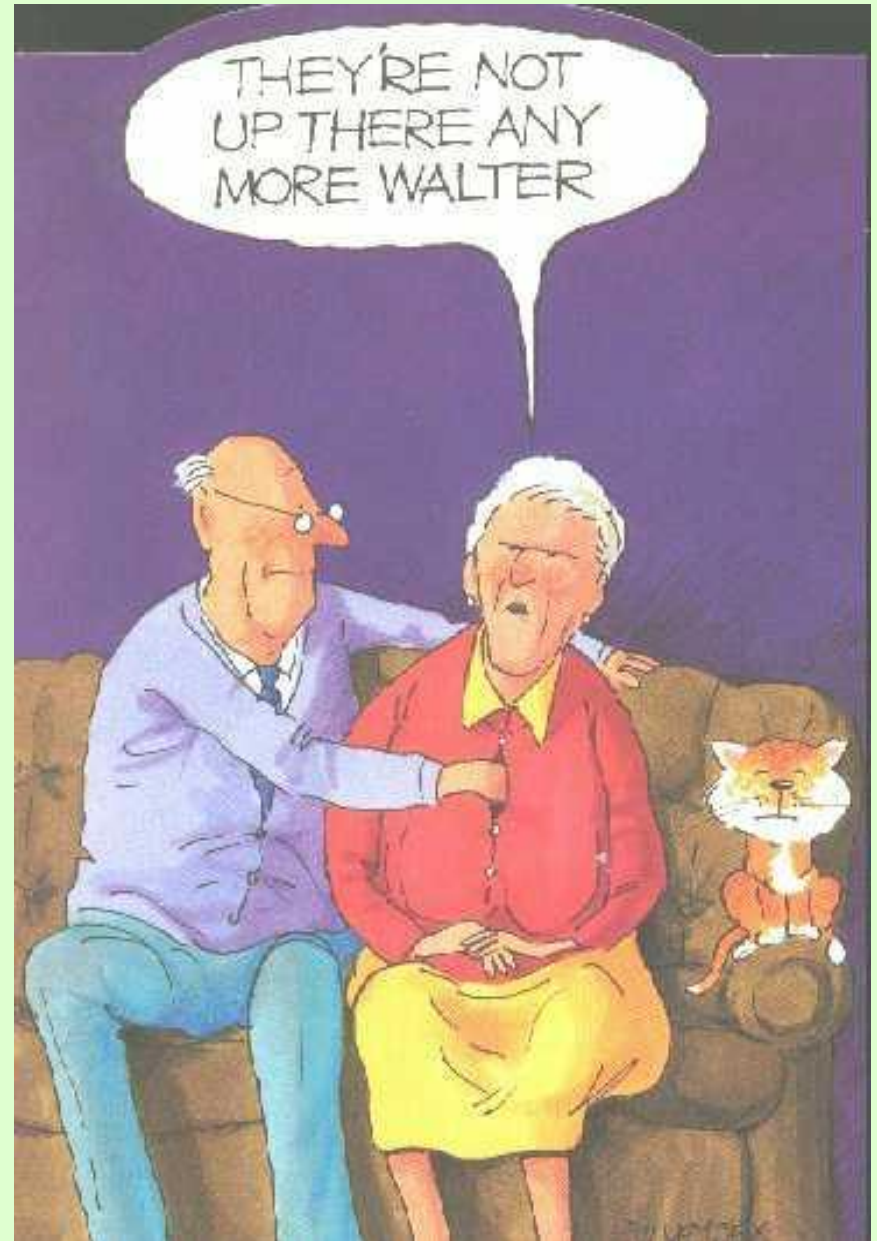


**Assessment or  
observation,  
or something  
else?**

**Check it out!**



Critical thinking of  
assessment –  
expect the  
unexpected but  
know what you're  
looking for!



You've got  
to have the  
necessary  
equipment!



# What are the Variables associated with Weight?

The scale  
The observer  
Clothing  
Food ingestion  
Fluid ingestion  
Weather  
Last dialysis  
etc





# Application of Gelotology in Patient Care

Patient education both verbal and print/videos:

- \*using funny analogies/cartoons
- \*having laughter therapy/laughter yoga in HD units

“Episodes of intradialytic hypotension decreased from 19 pre and 19 during Laughter Yoga to 4 post Laughter Yoga. “



Patient assessment - what makes them laugh?

- \*evaluates mood and memory
- \*trip down memory lane if necessary

# Identify YOUR Personal Favorite Funny Stories from Nephrology Nursing

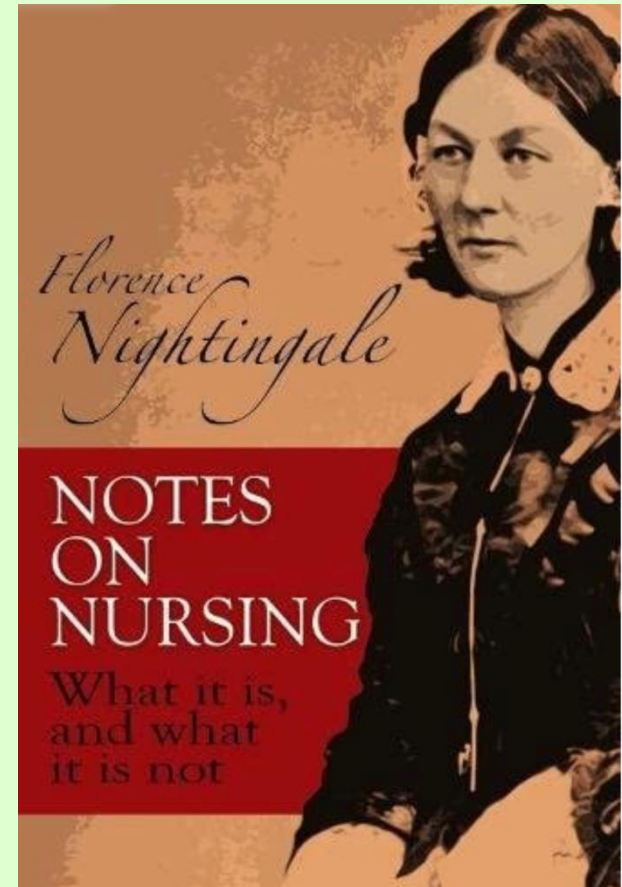
- write them down
- and email them to me?  
(lesleydinwiddie@gmail.com)

AND/OR

- intentionally share them with your friends/colleagues whenever possible but on a ***regular basis***

# The Last Word .....

“It is a matter of painful wonder to the sick themselves, how much painful ideas predominate over pleasurable ones in their impressions; they reason with themselves; they think themselves ungrateful; it is all of no use. The fact is, that these painful impressions are far better dismissed by ***a real laugh*** .....



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# Thank You!

Email me - [lesleydinwiddie@gmail.com](mailto:lesleydinwiddie@gmail.com)



Thank you! [lesleydinwiddie@gmail.com](mailto:lesleydinwiddie@gmail.com)





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