

full tilt living newsletter

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It's come to my attention that smiling for no apparent reason is in short supply these days. Plenty of smiling with handshakes and smiling and waving and some polite smiling accompanied by a nod and of course, smiling and hugging. Not too many inner types of smiles. Not generated by social grace. Simple, sunny, for no intended target. And, don't you know, our autonomic nervous system begs for these.

I take a moment to get technical: our autonomic nervous system (ANS if you like) rules all those automatic (big surprise—starts with “auto” does it not?) functions that keep us running without a hitch. That's where we get the strong even heartbeats, the low blood pressure, the healthy digestive system, the ease of falling asleep. That is, when our ANS is getting messages that all is well. If it's picking up signals that contain stressful messages, all that good stuff is out the window.

Back to the smile—so we give our ANS these little smile treats off and on during the day and it more or less goes, “Ahhh, all is well.” It chills. Our bodies feel great and since we are in them, we do too.

There's endless ways to generate smiles-for-no-apparent-reason. I'm sure you've come up with several yourself now that you know there's benefit in what you might have previously considered plain idiotic grinning. If you haven't, here are a few to get you started:

- Silly Pictures in Your Head: Replay an event that had you in stitches. I've got this scene that keeps popping up which is, in a way, not funny at all. The animal control officer and I are trying to run down this chicken that came over the fence from the neighbor's yard. Miss Chicken is streaking madly across my garden while we try to herd her into a corner. We are no match for her slick moves. She runs through our legs, tearing back and forth across the yard screeching and flapping her little chicken wings. I said it wasn't really funny. Pretty darn silly, though.
- Remember Someone: It's easy. It's quick. Just let their image flash in front of you for a moment.
- Recall The Best Day in Your Life: With any luck, this one will change every time you do it.

- The Tongue on The Roof of The Mouth Trick: Let your jaw drop slightly, touch the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth where it meets the back of your front teeth, close your eyes, breathe deeply and slowly.
- Read Yourself A Joke: If things have been seriously glum and your usually trusty imagination seems to be on the fritz, go ahead and get a joke book. A smile is a smile.

There you go. If you've got some you'd like to share, I'd be pleased to post them in the next newsletter.

*And know that I'm behind you all the way--
Maureen*