

MDS Alert

Staffing Management: Humor Can Boost Your Team's Creativity, Reduce Conflict

2 exercises can get the good ideas rolling.

If you're not laughing enough at work, your team may be in a slump. That's the view of **Karyn Buxman, MSN, RN**, who is often on the stump discussing how long-term care providers can tap the healing and helpful properties of humor.

So how can a facility jumpstart the humor process and get its creativity flowing?

One way is to ask staff to bring in some kind of prop and hold a contest for who can think of the most uses for the item, says Buxman, founder of **The HumorLab** in La Jolla, CA.

"Ask people to exaggerate and be playful," she says. Staff can use that same playful, creative process to come up with novel, sometimes simple solutions to difficult workplace or clinical problems.

Another exercise is to have staff take turns relaying "hostile questions" they have heard from others. Buxman is talking about the kind of "questions to which people don't want an answer but rather to vent and let you know they are upset."

Examples include: "Whose budget is this coming out of? How long have you worked here?"

Options for dealing with hostile questions run the gamut from ignoring them, pretending to answer, answering seriously or defusing the situation with a bit of humor and then attending to the person's needs, Buxman says.

"Brainstorm about humorous ways to respond" to such questions, she advises. The initial responses will likely be hilarious but then persist until you get some potential answers that use humor to defuse the situation and address the underlying issue, Buxman tells **Eli**.

Editor's note: Karyn Buxman provided the keynote address at the American Association of Nurse Assessment Coordinators fall 2007 meeting in Las Vegas, and speaks often at national nursing and healthcare conferences.