

HUMOR

“Like a sudden bolt to lightening, a shot of humor can pierce the veil of automatic mundane consciousness and charge the moment with insight and energy. Laughter lifts our spirits and restores our vitality. Humor is often the result of looking at painful situations from a place of detachment. Since, as the Buddha tells us, life *is* suffering, there are plenty of opportunities for humor.

“We suffer because we lose. We lose respect and companions; we lose possessions and titles; we lose health and wealth; and ultimately, we lose life itself. Grief is the feeling associated with loss. Originally, our word *grief* meant “heavy.” If we are not careful, *we* can become heavy, weighed down, or ‘depressed,’ by the grief that attends every life. More than anything, grief has the capacity to separate or unite us. Humor lifts us above the isolation of our individual grief and reminds us that the pain is something we share with all sentient beings.

“Zen invites us in on the cosmic joke of existence, reminding us how silly we are to seek permanence in impermanence, how foolish to seek in the outside world that which resides within. In so doing, it helps us to keep a perspective on our personal dramas and not take them too seriously. If, as someone once said in jest, the best cure for hypochondria is to become interested in someone else’s body, then the best cure for self-important stuffiness is to see ourselves as others see us. We are all a little ridiculous--and all the more so when we forget it.”

Zen Soup by Laurence G. Boldt, 1997, pp. 79-80.