

Banana Nose Fun Times

special edition
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Above all else, be kind.

Maya Angelou said recently that we all need to develop "the courage to be kind." It sounds so simple, so easy, but the truth is we don't usually put kindness above all else. It does take courage to replace our harsh words with gentler ones. Kindness is acknowledging the possibility that we don't have all the answers - that we could be wrong. That's a hard one for me. I learned growing up that being right was important. If I studied hard, I would come up with the right answers. Being right was rewarded. I liked being the one with the right answer to the question, whether in a classroom, in an argument, or in Trivial Pursuit. Being right was so important in the first 50 years of my life. In the second fifty years, I am trying hard to choose being kind over being right. I am not very skilled at it yet (as my family would attest), but I am a work in progress.... sometimes painfully slow progress. I know in my heart and in my head that when I can keep my words gentle and kind, that my world is more peaceful. I hate to think of all the hurt feelings I have caused in my intense desire to be right. I am not saying that there are not times when we need to stand up for what is right, but that is different than needing to be right. Take a few minutes to think about how choosing to be kind over being right could impact your life and the lives of those you love.



Kindness is taking the time to stop by to visit an elderly neighbor. Kindness is taking the time to stop to play with a child. In both of those sentences the common word is "stop." I think kindness and stopping often go together. Have you noticed that people in a hurry are not very kind? We are often in such a hurry that simple things like a sincere "thank you" fall by the wayside. Kindness is a smile. It takes a few seconds to smile at someone. Simple things like a smile are often casualties of our hurried lifestyle. As gentle reminders, an "elf" is putting the "Smile-Enjoy Life" signs around the Big Island of Hawaii. Stopping or at least slowing down can lead to greater kindness. Slowing down is another of the hard ones for me. The dominant message seems to be: "Do more and do it faster." (and these days, do it with less, right?) In the March 2001 *Banana Nose Fun Times*, there are some tips and resources on slowing down if you think your life is moving too fast. Previous issues of the newsletter are available free on my web site at:

www.banananose.com

I wish you the time and the courage to be kind and, for those still in your first 50 years, a head start on me in choosing being kind over being right.

In love
Mark

Stories from You!

I love the funny stories from your lives that you tell me after my talks or email to me.

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A physician in Peoria, Dr. Mike, told me that my "lipstick story" reminded him of one of his most embarrassing moments. "I was at home on Saturday, but on call. I was walking around the house trying to pick things up. In the kitchen I found my daughter's pink headband. My hands were pretty full, so I stuck the band on my head and started up the stairs to distribute the various belongings to their respective owners. Before I was halfway up the stairs, the phone rang calling me to the hospital. I dropped everything and left for the hospital. In the Emergency Room, I saw the young boy I was called in to see, and then decided to pop in on a few other patients. I did notice that everyone seemed to be smiling more and in especially good humor. It wasn't until I got home when my wife said, 'Mike, what are you doing with that pink headband on your head?!' that I realized why people were smiling more!"

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"I coach girls' softball, and at the time was coaching Little League; 9,10 and 11 year old girls. It was a crucial game, and I needed something up my sleeve to pull out a win. The third baseman was playing way deep, so to catch them off guard, I gave Andrea, who was up to bat, the "bunt" signal. Andrea looked at me. I gave her the signal again, and then from home plate, at the top of her lungs, she yelled to me: "BUNT????? YOU WANT ME TO BUNT?????" I replied, "Not any more!!" The crowd roared! I love coaching girls!" Nancy Mattke

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"When my son was still two and in diapers, he kept pestering me to take him to Disney World. I told him that when he was out of diapers I would take him. A minute later, he appeared in the doorway completely naked, 'I'm ready!'"

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"My three-year-old son had a lot of problems with potty training and I was on him constantly. One day we stopped at Taco Bell for a quick lunch between errands. It was very busy, with a full dining room. While enjoying my taco, I smelled something funny, so of course I checked my seven-month-old daughter, and she was clean. Then I realized that Matt had not asked to go

potty in a while, so I asked, and he said 'No.' I kept thinking, 'Oh, that child has had an accident and I don't have any clothes with me.' Then I said, 'Matt, are you sure you did not have an accident?' 'No,' he replied."

"I just knew that he must have had one, because the smell was getting worse! I asked one more time, 'Matt, did you have an accident?' This time he jumped up, yanked down his pants, bent over and spread his cheeks and yelled, 'SEE, MOM, IT'S JUST FARTS!'" (Sorry, misplaced name, but they may prefer anonymity anyway.)

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"Last fall driving home, I saw an orange cat very dead on the shoulder of the road near the end of my driveway. Since I have an orange cat, I raced into the house to make sure it wasn't mine. WHEW!!! It wasn't. But then I felt bad about the dead cat, and wondered who its owner was, and if they knew. I called all the neighbors; no one knew who owned a cat of that description. I still felt bad about the cat lying there, so I went and picked him up to give him a proper burial. (I've found out since then that the correct "country" thing to do is to throw it into the ditch.) Once I got home, I said, "OK, now what do I do with it?" I don't know why I didn't just dig a hole and bury it, but at the time it seemed like a good idea to throw it in my pond. Well, much to my amazement, it didn't sink. I now had a FLOATING dead cat. And until the pond froze in December, I had a bright orange weather vane, as I could look out to see which end of the pond the cat was, and determine the wind direction! I have had people in stitches over this story - hope you enjoy it, too!" Marcia Brown

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Linda Voit of Appleton tells this supper-time story. "My husband got up to get something from the refrigerator. "While I'm up, can I get anything for anyone?" The four year old responded, "Yes, could you get me a puppy, Dad?"

**Do you have a funny story?
Email me at:
mark@banananose.com**



My daughter, Kate, took this photo in Winnipeg, Canada

Laughing out loud is good for you

(even if you are by yourself)!

One very cold Wisconsin February day I was driving to a speech and listening to the radio. The weather came on.

"It'll be sunny and about 85 degrees today..... somewhere in the Hawaiian Islands."

It is OK to laugh out loud, even in your car!

Laugh out loud movies:

All of Me
 Legally Blonde
 An Everlasting Piece...
 a very funny Irish film
 Galaxy Quest
 Waking Ned Devine
 Patch Adams
 Life is Beautiful
 Full Monty
 Planes, Trains, and Automobiles
 Father of the Bride
 Sister Act
 King of Hearts
 Mrs. Doubtfire
 Anger Management
 Full Monty

These are such difficult times in our world. I find myself deliberately looking for laughter in movies. If you come across movies that make you laugh out loud, drop me an email.

Whether wearing a fish hat, banana nose, or just his regular smiling face you can count on Mark to....

- care about and have fun with your group. Mark does the work to know your group.
- provide practical, powerful strategies for creating joyful and energized organizations so staff and customers feel valued and appreciated.
- encourage your group to engage their hearts as well as their minds so they provide exceptional, memorable customer service
- be very funny.
 ... all as one meeting planner wrote "with wit, wisdom, and whimsy."



Topics:

- Positive Insanity... Harnessing the Power of Laughter in Life & Work
- Living Well in a Speeded-up World... Balancing a rich work life with a rich personal life.
- Embracing Change with a Sense of Humor
- Creating Team in Unusual (fun!) Ways.. great opening ice breaker or break out.

If you know of an organization that could benefit from one of my presentations, call me at 1-800-373-3112

Favorite web sites:

Astounding views of the earth lit up at night taken from the shuttle. Use side scroll bar to rotate all around the earth. Worth typing the long address. Fantastic:

www.antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/image/0011/earthlights_dmsp_big.jpg

There is so much truly dreadful stuff on the web, but every once in a while, I find a gem. This gem's name is INTERVIEW WITH GOD. It has breathtaking photographic images and an inspiring, hopeful, loving message. It will take a few minutes to load, but it is worth the wait.

www.getinspirednow.com/

My wife, Rae, took some spectacular footage of Kilauea volcano on the Big island of Hawaii. We have a snippet of it posted on my site:

www.banananose.com/la va2002.mov

What are your all time favorite, awesome, uplifting sites? Email me at: mark@banananose.com

I will share them in future newsletters.

I recently discovered these cool little 4" glass kaleidoscopes at an art fair in St Louis. The wheel spins dried flowers and what you see is always different depending on the background and the light. Very cool toy for the kid in you. I liked them so much I bought a bunch. Color of glass varies. To order, send \$29 plus \$5 shipping to Mark at InnerPlay. (address on back page of this newsletter)



An idea if you have little ones:

Dream Glasses

When our first child was born over 20 years ago, I remembered something my friend Carol had told me about a special tradition in her early years... dream glasses. Her dad, as he tucked her in, would "draw" dream glasses with his fingers around her eyes and hook them behind her ears and wish her "Sweet dreams!" I did this with my children for many years. I would make stars, triangles, hexagons, etc., and they would guess the kind of dream glasses I had given them. When I would go on the road, I would leave them notes with dream glasses on them. Your kids will love them.



Doesn't this photo just make you want to rush to this St. Louis restaurant for a lunch of fried pig noses?

Creating Raving Fans

Years ago Steve Haegerty came up to me after a presentation and asked if I would like to see his driver's license. Odd question, but "OK, Why not?" He proceeded to show me this very nice smiling photo of himself. He reminded me that most driver's license photos look like mug shots, and you have to keep it for years and show it to perfect strangers in grocery stores and car rental counters,

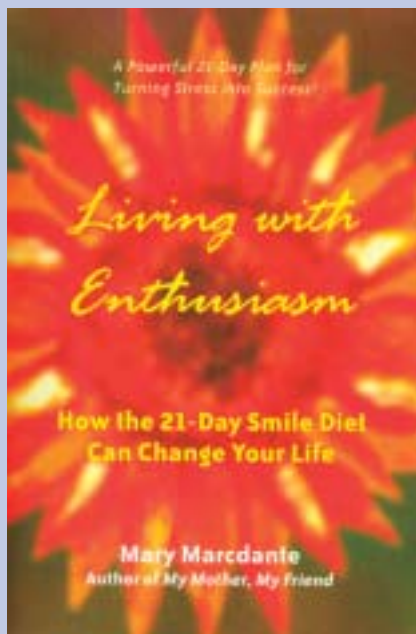
and watch them look at you and then the picture and try not to smirk too much.

Steve told me that when he went to renew his license at the DMV in Massachusetts, the woman taking the picture came on like a drill sergeant. "Now listen up! I only do this once. No re-takes. You got that?" Then she bent over and came up wearing a big ugly witch nose.

Of course, Steve smiled, and she took the photo.

Now there's a woman not just "doing her job." She's having fun, providing great customer service, and has people telling wonderful stories about her and the DMV.

What could you do to add some PIZZAZZ to your job? Think about it; then do it!



Living with Enthusiasm

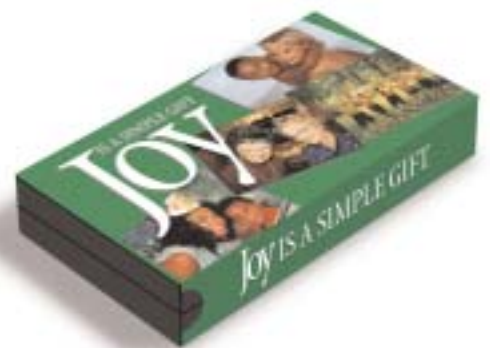
is a great book written by my friend, Mary Marcdante. It is not just a book to read; it is a book to "do." It will challenge and delight you into action. If you would like to be more enthusiastic and joy-filled, I highly recommend this book. Available at: www.marymarcdante.com.

"I know now deep in my soul that enthusiasm is at the heart of any positive change in the world. Each of us has something to offer to uplift the spirits of others, whether through achieving a life long goal that inspires children to make better choices, influencing friends to a healthier way of life, creating a joyful workplace and home, or connecting more deeply with family, nature, or a cause. In all its expressions, enthusiasm is a gift to be shared with the world."

Mary Marcdante

Joy Video...

This 5 minute video catches real people in joy. A quick "pick-me-up" to begin a staff meeting or watch after a hard day. Available at www.banananose.com.



"Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God."

Teilhard de Chardin

The Teddy Bear

A few years ago, I was listening to a radio show on NPR called This American Life. On the show, a dad told about his small son, who a few years before, had been critically ill... childhood cancer. During his illness, the boy had been given a teddy bear to which he had developed a very special attachment. Have any of your children ever developed an attachment like this? I know mine have. My oldest, Mari, loved her doll, Pinky; my second daughter, Kate, was attached to a small receiving blanket that over the years became so thin as to be transparent; my son, Matt had an attachment to a terry cloth towel that he brought from Thailand when we adopted him at age 2. This towel has shredded into many pieces. These precious things don't sleep with them any longer, but they still know just where the remnants are!

Back to the story. On returning home from a vacation, the parents realized in the unpacking that the child's teddy bear must have been left in the hotel. The dad called the hotel, but no one could tell him anything. Gathering up his courage, the dad went in to tell his young son about the loss. The boy cried and said, "I feel like I've lost my spirit."

The next day the dad flew back to the city where they had been vacationing (What a dad!) and went to the hotel. The manager asked him to have a seat in the lobby while he tried to find out about the bear. A short while later, the manager came

out saying, "We do know where the bear is, but it is not good news. The maid remembers finding the bear and putting it into the trash." The dad grew excited and asked to be taken to the trash. The manager took him behind the hotel to this huge semi-truck-sized container of trash. The dad asked how to get started. He was told that the container unfortunately was sealed, and the recycling company that picks up the container would not be coming until the next day. At that very moment, the truck for the container arrived. The dad said he would follow the truck to the recycling center. The hotel manager assigned 5 staff to go with him. On arriving at the center, the dad encountered opposition from the supervisor who didn't want to get behind schedule. He finally agreed to give them, "Ten minutes, that's it!" The garbage from the huge bin was dumped. The 5 hotel staff, the dad, and a worker from the recycling center were overwhelmed by how many bags of garbage there were. The hotel food waste squished throughout the hundreds and hundreds of bags. But they had precious little time, so they all began tearing into the bags. After 8 futile minutes, the dad stopped and said looking upward, "Teddy, this is hopeless. If we are going to find you, you are going to have to appear." The next bag he opened, there was the bear protected from the food waste by the plastic bag from their hotel room. One for the good guys!

The story touched me. When I got home, during lunch, I was re-

telling the story to my daughter, Kate, then 17 and my son, Matt, 12. I said, "Wouldn't it be great if there was a hotel chain somewhere that took such care and concern for left-behind kid things (or left-behind adult things too!) It seemed to me that there could be a simple system for bagging teddy bears (not in garbage bags!) and "blankies" with the room number; and someone would call the people who had been in that room. Kate suggested that the maids do it. She said they might like to have a nice conversation with people who would be so thankful to them. She pointed out that it might make their job more rewarding. Sure it would cost the hotel a few bucks in postage and a few long distance calls, but think about how "dazzled and delighted" the parents and children would be. They would become raving fans of that hotel chain. They would tell friends and people they work with, 'You won't believe....'"

This is at its core what good business is about. It is about making a life, not just a living. It is not just what you do that counts, but how you do what you do. Every parent has known the fear of what it would be like to tell their child that their favorite possession was left behind. But every day teddy bears are routinely thrown into the trash bags. So many missed opportunities to create great good will. What could you do in your work or family that would create this kind of "memorable, outstanding" good will?

THE THERRIEN HOMES ON THE BIG ISLAND OF HAWAII

In need of a relaxing vacation? Try our homes on the Big Island. Both the larger house and the guest cottage have great lanais to sit on for hours looking at an unobstructed view of the ocean, whales in the winter, and occasionally double rainbows. They are nestled about 500 feet above sea level on the slopes of Mauna Kea, the magnificent 13,796 foot mountain that in the winter is actually snow capped. But at 500 feet, you won't feel the cold. Waipunalei (easy and beautiful to say... "why poona lay") is just 2 miles out of the old style sleepy town of Laupahoehoe. Laupahoehoe Point, a mile down the road to the ocean from the house, is one of the most beautiful miles you will ever walk or drive...vistas of green cliffs, often with waterfalls dropping to blue green ocean. When you get to the Point, there is some of the most spectacular rugged coastline and pounding surf you will ever see.

Each house has two bedrooms and one bath. They are furnished as our homes...not like rental properties. Each has a well-stocked kitchen, linens, washer and dryer. Banana, papaya, lime, orange, guava and pineapple plants are on the property. The gardens are full of tropical flowers planted by Mark and cared for lovingly by Bobby, a man who has rarely left Waipunalei. He says, "It is so beautiful in



Waipunalei, why would I want to go anywhere else?" Bobby is very respectful of privacy and he is a wonderful man to "talk story" with if you have the chance. He will more than likely leave bananas, papayas, or some other surprise on your lanai. Beautiful bamboo and ti plants provide sight and sound privacy between the houses. Large windows continually remind you to look at the marvelous ocean. Just sit with a mai tai or a glass of juice on the lanai, and you'll know Bobby is right... Waipunalei is heaven. You'll enjoy exploring this beautiful island...the way other parts of Hawaii used to be. But when you go home late in the afternoon, you'll be glad to be home. Just sit, relax, and enjoy. Beach chairs and

umbrellas, boogie boards and charcoal grills are there for your use. People are expected to leave the houses in nice condition for the next people. This is reflected in our reasonable rates: Larger house \$750 plus tax a week; Guest house \$650 plus tax a week. Big group? Rent both houses.

To read more and to see more photos, go to my website: www.banananose.com.

For more information on these relaxing Hawaiian vacation homes, go to www.banananose.com or call Rae or Mark at 1-800-373-3112. We delight in sharing this piece of paradise with others.

Pain and Pleasure

Who among us has not known pain? Maybe for a day, a week, perhaps a month? In getting ready for a speech to the Michigan Chronic Illness Coalition I remembered an article I had read in Andrew Weil's Self Healing Newsletter (March 2001) about Margaret Caudill, a physician, who has developed a multidisciplinary pain-management program for Dartmouth and Harvard.

Dr. Caudill says that the most difficult task for many patients is getting proactive about pleasure. People who experience chronic pain sometimes feel that they have no right to feel good. Dr. Caudill says people need to make happiness happen, not wait for it to drop into their laps.

How are you making happiness happen for you? Are you making happiness happen in your relationship? I think that is one reason the divorce rate is so high; we forget to have fun and laugh together. We get so busy that we lose sight of what's most important. So go on dates whether you're 20 or 80!



Sign outside a Boston church



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