

The Power of Laughter

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In today's world where multitasking has become an art form, the demand for personal energy has increased tenfold, and like anything else in demand, with it comes a host of products and philosophies created to capture your hard-earned dollars.

Ironically, after going in search of the most inexpensive and renewable sources to cure my middle age humdrums, I discovered the answer was not only close at hand – but downright funny.

I've often thought it would be easier if we could simply plug ourselves into an outlet and recharge like some sort of creature from a sci-fi novel. This would certainly require less thought and time than eating well, exercising, and getting enough sleep -- three things mother's, doctors, and the media remind us we need on a regular basis. But according to the basic rule of physics, energy can neither be created nor destroyed, it can only be transformed.

Feng shui was built on this knowledge. It's all about making a harmonious, positive environment by manipulating existing energy - such as moving objects around in a room, changing paint colors, opening windows, or letting the light into an otherwise drab space. I recently did my own mini Feng shui makeover at home by replacing dark bedroom curtains with billowy white sheers and slippery dismal bedding with downy soft white cotton. The results were indeed positive, only now it's so tranquil I want to sleep all the time, which takes me right back to square one –needing more energy.

My grandmother, the true Energizer Bunny at 105, thinks cucumbers on your eyelids may be the secret source of renewable energy. "My friend," she said recently, "the one who still drives because she is so young, gets me cucumbers at the grocery store every week. You know, she's only 89. Anyway, I don't like to waste things," she said, "but I still won't eat them when I'm done. I just put them back in the refrigerator. That way, when I use them again, they're really cold. Cold cucumbers. You know, that makes me cool as a cucumber. Whoever made up that saying up must have put cucumbers on their eyelids."

"How long do you keep them there?" I asked.

"Oh, really only a minute or two," she answered. "It's pretty boring keeping your eyes closed any longer. Besides, the smell makes me want to eat a salad and I'm watching my weight."

If cucumbers aren't your thing, there's always coffee, tea and a host of aptly named caffeinated beverages that promise to jolt you into productiveness. Of course they're not considered healthy for more than the occasional pick-me-up. Personally, I'm still going through withdrawal after cutting my once-daily caffeinated soda intake down to once every seven days. Let's just say I live for Thursday's and sometimes Thursday happens more than once a week.

There are other options of course: energy bars, sprinting, weight-lifting, standing on your head, meditation, chicken soup, watching reruns of *I Love Lucy*, and chocolate -- my all-time favorite -- until last week when much to my surprise I discovered something better, and infinitely less caloric. It happened when I was watching a movie at home, a comedy made in the 90s when everyone had big hair and times were slower and dialogue slower still, and I began to laugh. The kind of laugh that comes from your belly and works its way up to the top of your head, and your face begins to hurt because you're smiling so much. The kind of laugh that makes you cry and squeak and snort and you don't actually care who hears you because it feels so good and you don't want it to stop. And when it was over, I wished I could have bottled the feeling.

Turns out experts say we can. The memory is ours to keep and we only need to draw on it – much like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz – just click your heels together and remember. Then go deeper into the memory still, until it's rekindled. Let yourself laugh and re-experience the feelings just as you did the first time.

Whether it's a funny line from a movie or from real-life, create a personal comedy play list in your mind, and draw from it regularly, so every day feels like a Thursday.