

Don't jeer at good cheer

By Curtis Seltzer

BLUE GRASS, Va.—Good cheer is supposed to spread like the plague during the Holiday Season. One smile walking around loose might infect hundreds. All the social hugging and kissing that goes on lowers our resistance. No wonder the flu runs riot every December.

In the interest of public health, I offer four ultra-sound reasons why we, as a people, should stick to moderate grumpiness for the next several weeks.

1. Cheeriness leads to weight gain. It's well-known that Americans regardless of income, gender, race, religion, political affiliation or sexual origin gain an average of 25.6 pounds between December 15th and January 2nd. It's one of Nature's most remarkable redistributions of assets.

In a perfect world, these pounds would be deposited in a too-big-to-fail bank like Citi or BofA. But Americans no longer trust these institutions. So we tend to keep new Holiday assets close to our chests.

New research by Yale's Stanley Stufface in the Journal of Unexplainable Correlations shows that -- in layman's language -- the cheerier you are, the more pounds you gain over the Holidays.

Skinny minnies stay grim and trim at the end of the year.

2. Cheeriness promotes laryngitis and throat polyps.

Otorhinolaryngologists have preached for decades against boisterous and repetitive Ho-ho-hoing in late December. This year, they've suggested a total ban and are also campaigning against Merrys and Happys.

It's not winter vocalization itself that causes harm. No adverse effects, for instance, have ever been associated with the cymbal crash of a good "Bah, Humbug!"

Rather, it's the turbulence in regions behind the mouth from endless Ho-ho-hoing that stretches and weakens the vocal cards, allowing polyps to sprout like ornaments on a tree.

It is now widely accepted that even a single "Ho!" repeated once every year for 40 years is as bad for your vocal cords as 13,767 cigarettes smoked during one day when you were 14. Anyone who smokes and "Hos" in the same breath increases the risk of both dying and tooth decay by 96 percent.

Christmas-Party-Polyp-Syndrome (CPPS) spread years ago to Jews and atheists, and it's now on the rise in Muslims, pagans and heathens.

3. Cheeriness is highly correlated with casual sex. A small subset of women are attracted to dour men with faces like Basset Hounds and ears that drag on the floor. These women are wise, strong and emotionally healthy. They have large household incomes and big jewels. They easily resist male charm, such as it is. They are never seasonally seduced by white-bearded fat guys in red suits.

Most women, however, are inexplicably attracted to male *jovialistas* during the Holidays who display, what was called in high school, a “good personality.”

These men are cads in cheap clothing. They cloak their neediness in cheeriness. Many women can’t resist this combination of salt and sugar.

Women respond by baking 400,000 Christmas cookies to win the male good cheer they value so highly. Cookies, of course, lead to rum balls and then several other things, including undocumented premarital bliss.

Martha Stewart has introduced an improvised edible device that is guaranteed to blow up male purveyors of phony happiness under the mistletoe. It’s available as either a handmade covered dish or an organic fruitcake from local trees and nuts.

4. Cheeriness is negatively correlated with real wealth. A really complicated regression analysis done at MIT shows that people of good cheer earn less in their lifetimes than real SOB’s.

Every person in the top one percent of income was as unhappy as a shucked clam, according to a Gallup poll completed in 1932.

Scholars agree that unhappiness, not lower tax rates, powers the drive to obtain wealth. Therefore, the more unhappy we are, the wealthier we become. Not many people know this.

Once wealth is achieved, unhappiness is its own reward.

All kidding aside, cheerfulness takes work, especially when you have a genuine right to feel mean or morose. There are many days when the circumstances of our individual lives or the world in general don’t deserve a friendly greeting. I’m as good as the next guy at not putting on a stupid happy face that isn’t merited.

But I’m often persuaded that **C**heerfulness, when mustered, begets **C**ivility, which, when reciprocated, begets **C**ooperation. **C-C-C** leads to **A**ccomplishment. See. See. See.

I think Dickens was onto something when he said that he wanted to “increase the stock of harmless cheerfulness.”

I also assume that there's at least one small laugh buried in every dozen miseries. It's always hard to find, but worth the effort.

My quarrel with December holidays is that they consume our limited supply of good cheer when we should be building our stockpile for those bleak mornings in January and February when it's really needed.

Emerson, by the way, disagrees. He thinks that the more cheerfulness "...is spent, the more it remains."

Could consumption create supply?

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