

**FIGHT FLIGHT FREEZE...**

**LAUGH**

**KELLI DUNHAM, RN, BSN**  
**Butch nonbinary stand up comic**  
**VSPWLOFS\***



**VSPWLOFS\***

**Very Sad Person With Lots  
Of Funny Stories**

**(courtesy Wes Garis, aka my  
nephew)**

**WHY AM I  
TALKING  
ABOUT  
THIS?**







**Kelli Dunham**

August 31, 2011 ·  ▼



Another "shit my therapist says" gem:

Therapist: Perhaps you have some things about Heather's death you haven't processed yet?

Me: Are you kidding? I wrote a fuckin' one person show about it!

Therapist: Hmmm. Do you think that most people believe that processing grief and writing a one person show about grief are the same things?

Me: Well, maybe not in your world, but definitely in mine.



39

17 Comments 1 Share



Like



Comment



Share

# EVERYONE CRIES ON THE A TRAIN

*What, ya never saw a bulldyke  
cry in public before?*

**- KELLI DUNHAM**  
*AUTHOR OF FREAK OF NURTURE*





**PUDDING DAY**

Kelli Dunham

ALL NATURAL  
PUDDING

0g  
Trans Fat

Ginger  
Pudding





**THAT'S MY EXCUSE.**



**Why  
are you here?**

# **STANDARD DISCLAIMER**

Is this standard?

Who even knows  
anymore.





**TRIGGER WARNING//**

**THE PERSON MOST  
IMPACTED BY THE  
SITUATION IS THE PERSON  
WHO GETS TO DECIDE IF  
HUMOR IS USED.**

**I'M A WHITE  
PERSON.  
I HAVE  
PRIVILEGE.  
THAT'S A THING.**

**IF USING HUMOR  
TO DEAL WITH  
TRAUMA ISN'T  
APPEALING TO  
YOU...I GET THAT.**

**“THERE'S MORE TO  
LIFE THAN BEING  
HAPPY YOU KNOW”**

**-KELLI'S MOM**





# HAPPINESS

There's a lot more to life than that



# HAPPINESS

Meh. Survival is plenty for me.

**WE ARE BUTCH/  
MOC FOLKS**

**WE CAN SURVIVE ANYTHING!  
BUT WE ARE MADE FOR MORE  
THAN SURVIVAL!**

**YES!**  
**AND IN MY OPINION**  
**(AND IN MY EXPERIENCE)**  
**HUMOR CAN BE A PART**  
**OF THAT EQUATION**



**THIS WORKSHOP IS  
ACTUALLY A  
LITTLE BULLSHIT...**

**BECAUSE YOU'RE  
ALREADY DOING  
IT, RIGHT?**

**BUT IT WOULD  
BE AWESOME TO  
GIVE YOURSELF  
PERMISSION**

**IT'S OKAY TO  
LAUGH AT THE  
FUNNY PARTS**

**IT'S OKAY TO  
CRY AT  
THE SAD  
PARTS**

**CAUTION**

**TOXIC  
MASCULINITY  
AHEAD**



mango & vanilla path mallow

Delicious mix of juicy mango scents and creamy vanilla, captured in the purest mallow and combined with grapefruit and orange pure essential oils to uplift...

Bath Mallows  
£2.29



Man Grenade bath plaster

Drop in and enjoy the bath of hero's with its explosive bath of black pepper and pure essential oil help to refresh and invigorate this soul.

Man Grenade Blaster  
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allows  
.29





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MANSIZE

the original big tissue

2  
PACKS

Kleenex  
MANSIZE

the original big tissue

MANSIZE

Kleenex Mansize  
Cloths 300  
sheets  
£2  
2.00 per 300 sheets

**TELL US ABOUT A  
NEGATIVE  
EXPERIENCE YOU HAD  
WITH  
HUMOR  
COMEDY  
LAUGHTER**

**MORE CAUTIONS**

**FIRST CAUTION  
TO PREP FOR THIS I  
GOOGLED  
HUMOR + TOXIC  
MASCULINITY**

**NEVER DO THAT.**

**WHEN WE TALK ABOUT  
USING TRAUMA TO HELP  
MANAGE TRAUMA RESPONSE  
WE DON'T MEAN WHEN  
YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A  
FULL BLOWN FLASHBACK OR  
ACTUAL TRAUMA CRISIS**

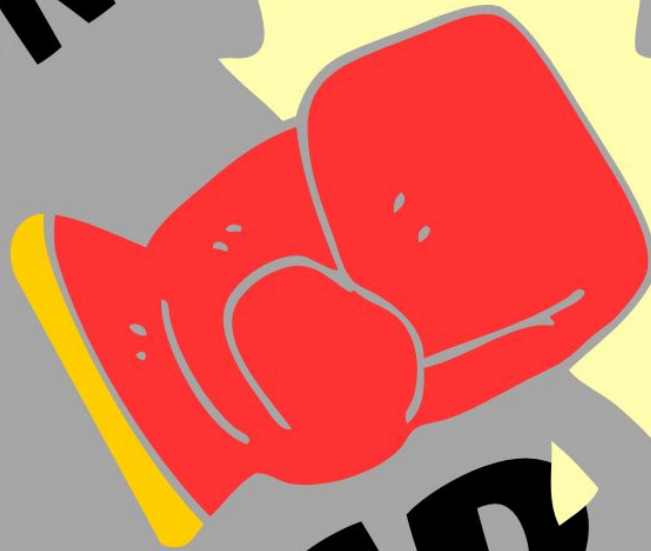
**IT'S MORE LIKE A  
VITAMIN THAN AN  
ANTIBIOTIC.**

**OKAY OKAY LET ME  
EXPLAIN...**

**HUMOR THAT HELPS  
VERSUS  
HUMOR THAT  
HURTS.  
(AND OTHER  
PITFALLS)**



**PUNCHING**



**UP**

**PUNCHING**



**PITFALLS: FORCED  
CHEERFULNESS/ POSITIVITY  
C'mon, everyone sing...**

**“Are you humbly grateful or  
grumbly hateful, what's  
your attitude...”**

**WHAT ABOUT  
GLOSSING  
OVER TRAUMA?**

All my friends are your friends

What Saturdays are you free?

Seriously tho. I don't have these cool ass friends.

I'm around this Saturday.

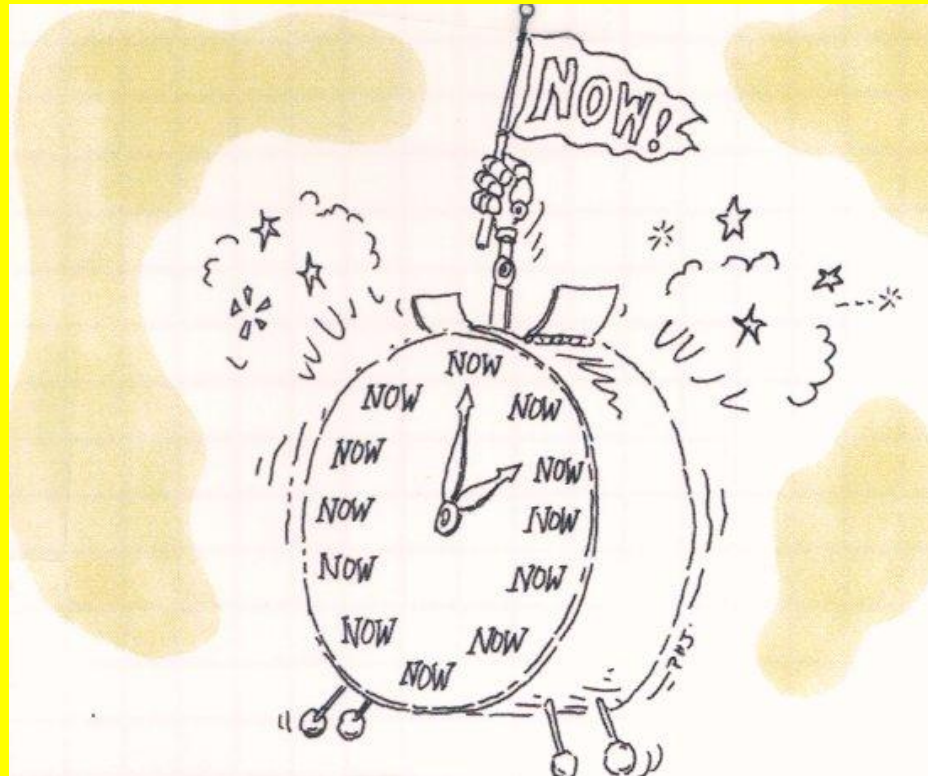
I am in Florida

Please don't get your feet chopped off by an alligator. It ain't fun bro.

Okay I will remember that

**HOW CAN HUMOR  
SUPPORT  
"BETTER"  
TRAUMA  
RESPONSE?**

**Not everything is an  
emergency!  
Humor helps us prioritize.**





**AS TRAUMA SURVIVORS  
KNOWING OUR LIMITS  
IS ONE OF THE FEW  
LIFEBOATS WE CAN OFFER  
TO OURSELVES.**



**It's more fun to be  
a good  
girlfriend, boyfriend,  
boyfriend,  
friend, lover,  
community member,  
human  
than an inadequate  
superhero.**

**Humor helps us come up with  
win/win solutions instead of  
win/lose solutions**





**Humor helps us say “I was wrong and you were right.”**





**A good laugh  
helps promote relaxation**



# Humor helps our baggage feel lighter



FINDING HUMOR IN  
THE EVERY DAY

(THE GROUNDWORK)



**BUT I CAN'T  
USE HUMOR...**

**I'M NOT  
FUNNY”**

# **Humor**

**Laughter helps us be truly  
present.**

**Yes.**

**Yes.**

**Yes.**

**You have one.**

**Do not let anyone tell  
you differently.**

**We're all  
EXPERTS  
ON OUR OWN**

**SENSE OF HUMOR**

**LOWER YOUR  
LAUGHTER  
THRESHOLD**

\

**LOOK FOR  
FOUND HUMOR  
(AND YOU'LL  
FIND IT)**

**DELIBERATELY  
ADD HUMOR TO  
YOUR  
PHYSICAL  
SPACE**

**"MY DAD TOOK  
AWAY MY  
IPHONE AND I  
ALMOST DIED..."**



**DELIBERATELY  
ADD HUMOR TO  
YOUR DAILY  
ROUTINE**

**STOP LISTENING TO NPR.  
AT LEAST BEFORE  
BREAKFAST.**

**THE WORLD WILL STILL BE  
ON FIRE AFTER YOU'VE  
HAD YOUR COFFEE**



**CONGRATULATIONS**

**YOU CAME BACK**

**FROM THE POST**

**OFFICE!!!**



# Take time to play



**WRITE ABOUT/TELL US  
ABOUT**

**SOMETHING THAT MADE  
YOU LAUGH AS A KID.**

**AND MORE  
SPECIFIC  
TRAUMA  
TIPS...**



# SELF SOOTHING.....

IS THE WAY TO LOWER THE VOLUME THROUGH OUR FIVE SENSES

MAKE YOURSELF A TINY LITTLE SELF SOOTHING BOX TO TAKE WITH YOU ON HEALTHCARE EXCURSIONS. YOU CAN INCLUDE...

MAYBE A PICTURE OF RIIS BEACH?



A SYMBOL OF THE SUPPORT OF PEOPLE WHO LOVE YOU. A FRIEND GAVE ME THIS LITTLE LION TO REMIND ME HOW BRAVE I AM....EVEN WHEN I DON'T FEEL BRAVE!

SOMETHING SOFT TO FEEL, LIKE YOUR FAVORITE HOODIE



(QUEER ARMOR COMES IN ALL GENDERS...)



HEADPHONE AND MUSIC OR MEDITATION APP...ALSO USEFUL FOR BLOCKING OUT OTHER PEOPLE'S CONVERSATIONS

BLOCKING OUT HEALTHCARE SMELLS IS NO JOKE. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: CITRUS ESSENTIAL OIL, YOU CAN DAB A TINY LITTLE BIT UNDER YOUR NOSE AND MAYBE IT WILL BE CONVINCED YOU ARE ON VACATION! EVEN IF THE REST OF YOUR BODY IS NOT.



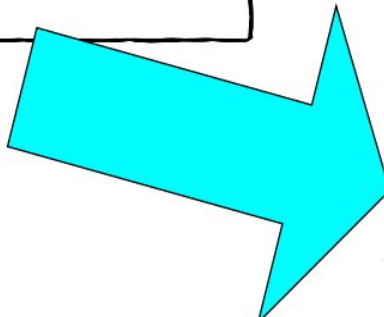
HOW ABOUT A LITTLE PAPER JOURNAL TO VENT ALL THE FEELINGS YOU CAN'T EXPRESS ALOUD?



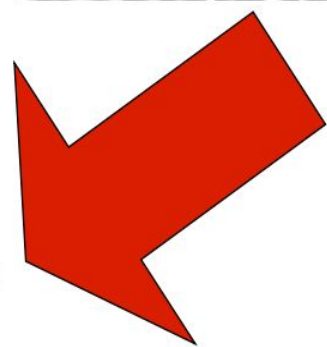


SOMETIMES PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAUMATIZED HAVE TROUBLE MODULATING THEIR AFFECT (IN OTHER WORDS WE STRUGGLE WITH SELF SOOTHING)

WHEN WE'RE IN A POST TRAUMATIC STATE SOMETIMES WE MIGHT FEEL LIKE THE VOLUME ON OUR EMOTIONS IS ALL THE WAY OFF



AND SOMETIMES IT MIGHT FEEL LIKE THE VOLUME IS WAY UP





**What a  
perfect  
place to  
make camp...**

**HUMOR CAN  
HELP US SEE  
THE "UH OH"**

**BEFORE  
THE  
"OUCH"**



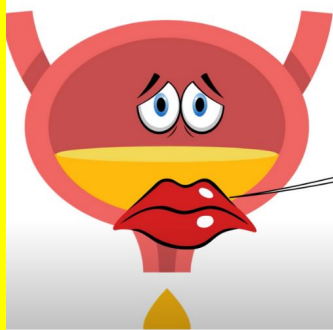




**What a  
perfect  
place to  
make camp...**

**Huh.  
IS IT  
THOUGH?**

**HUMOR CAN ALSO HELP  
US RECOGNIZE  
WHEN  
OUR FRIENDS ARE  
SEEING THE "UH OH"  
WE'RE MISSING**



I FEEL SAD AND  
HURT WHEN YOU ONLY  
MENTION MY  
WEAKNESSES ON  
STAGE

MY  
BLADDER IS  
SOOOOOO  
SENSITIVE



**ALMOST  
ANYTHING CAN BE  
FUNNY...**

**IF YOU LET THE  
RIGHT PERSON  
LEAD.**

**LOOK FOR PLACES  
WHERE HUMOR CAN...**

**ACKNOWLEDGE THE  
UNSPOKEN**



**AT THE  
GROCERY  
STORE...**

25%

DISCOUNT  
COUPON



*Show this coupon and get the discount*


Get 25% off THE WILL TO LIVE

**Mostly, Heather was the  
pitcher &  
I was the catcher.**

**Once in a while, it made  
sense for me to pitch**

**But Heather threw all the  
fast balls.**

OR...



COME TO MY  
SURPRISE  
PARTY!

***"...OK so you've never seen that sentence before, right? I mean, who can throw a surprise party for themselves? Well, the theme is not that I'M surprised, it's 'Surprise! I'm having another birthday!' Give it a minute to sink in, you'll get the gallows humor..."***

**Heather's post to Lovetroopers,  
Jan 2006**

# **LOOK FOR THE PLACES WHERE HUMOR CAN...**

**SOFTEN THE FEEDBACK LOOP IN  
HELPER/HELPEE INTERACTIONS  
(OR REALLY ANY INTERACTIONS)**

**“I am shaving my head this week. I keep losing my hair from the chemo, so it's time again. *Please please don't tell me how good I look bald. I appreciate the compliment, and I agree :),* But I am not making a fashion choice and when people say that I feel like people don't understand all the difficulty and illness that the hair loss represents. I know that everyone on lovetroopers wants to (and has been!) very supportive of me so I know that you would want to know if something a person might say would be supportive or feel supportive or not. “**  
**–Heather to Lovetroopers, November 2006**



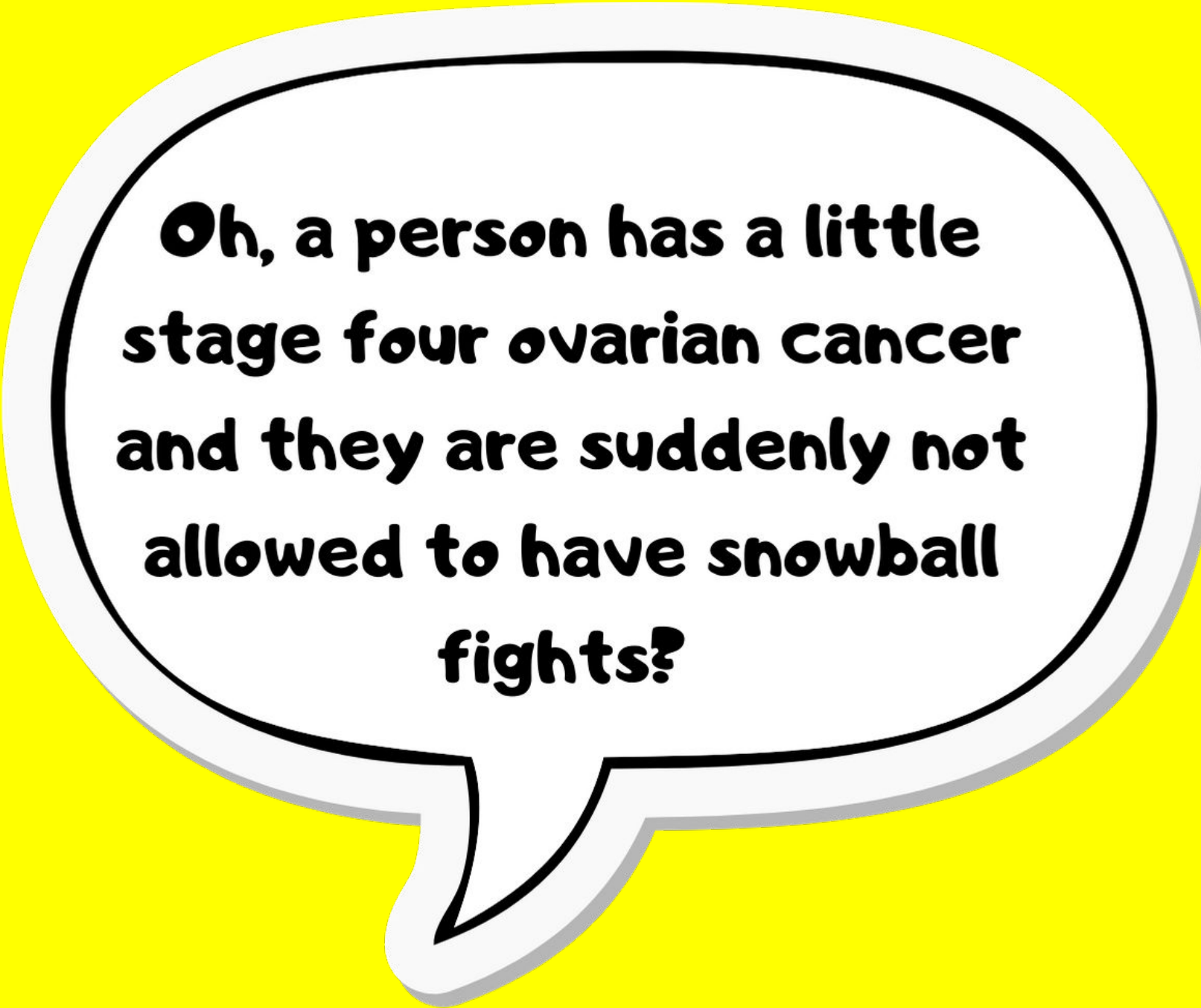
**LOOK FOR PLACES  
WHERE HUMOR  
COULD...**

**REINFORCE A PATIENT'S  
HUMANITY TO  
HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**


**Hospice nurse:**

**Are you all...were you...I mean...was this? Are you guys having a snowball fight?**





**Oh, a person has a little  
stage four ovarian cancer  
and they are suddenly not  
allowed to have snowball  
fights?**



**What  
will it do?  
KILL ME?**



**Um. Well.  
That's a good point.**

**BUT  
THE NEXT VISIT  
FROM THE  
HOSPICE  
NURSE.....**









**LOOK FOR PLACES WHERE  
HUMOR CAN...  
COMFORT.**

**EVEN A MOMENT OF  
LAUGHTER CAN BE A  
BEAUTIFUL BREAK**

*"Rough rough days lately, emotionally wise. So Saturday night I put on my tux and served as waiter with a sock puppet (called Sock-rates) as wine steward. Because sometimes there is just nothing nothing nothing else to do...."*



*But dress up as a waiter  
with a sock puppet as a wine steward "*


**LOOK FOR PLACES  
WHERE HUMOR CAN  
FACILITATE  
DIFFICULT  
CONVERSATIONS**



A close-up photograph of a campfire at night. The fire is burning brightly, with yellow and orange flames rising from a pile of logs. The background is dark, suggesting a nighttime setting. The fire is the central focus of the image.

WIDOW  
CAMP?!?

WHAT ARE  
THE  
CAMPFIRE  
ICEBREAKERS  
LIKE?



**TURN  
→ TO ←  
THE  
PERSON ON  
YOUR LEFT  
AND TELL  
THEM HOW  
YOUR  
SPOUSE  
DIED...**



TURN TO THE PERSON  
ON YOUR RIGHT AND TELL  
THEM YOUR BIGGEST  
**REGRET...**



TURN TO THE PERSON  
ON YOUR RIGHT AND TELL  
THEM YOUR BIGGEST  
**REGRET...**





# **JUDY CARTER'S FIND THE FUNNY FORMULA**

**I'm [INSERT DEFECT] Woohoo!"**

**Hey there are advantages to being**

**[INSERT DEFECT] [INSERT**

**ADVANTAGE] [INSERT**

**ADVANTAGE] [INSERT**

**ADVANTAGE]**

# USING EMOTIONS TO FIND THE FUNNY:

Four basic attitudes for writing jokes

1. 'weird'
2. 'scary'
3. 'hard'
4. 'Stupid'

WHAT IS WEIRD/SCARY/HARD OR STUPID ABOUT YOUR BODY/  
YOUR TRAUMA HISTORY



**THE VERY NOT  
HILARIOUS  
BUTCH/  
MASC/  
MOC  
BATHROOM  
DILEMMA**



**BUT...  
I'VE BET YOU  
USED HUMOR  
TO GET  
YOURSELF  
OUT OF THESE  
SITUATION,  
YES?**

**MANAGING**

**“HECKLERS”**

**Make it so you don't have to  
respond in the moment...think of  
the comeback beforehand!**

**Anticipate hard spots and look for  
the setup.**

**If all else fails, just repeat the  
statement back verrrrryyy slowly.**

# **CALL THE MOMENT**

**Sometimes the funniest thing to do is just to call the moment.**

**“Well, this is certainly awkward”**

**Even if you never do anything else funny in your life, people will love you for that.**

**Make a humor  
commitment**



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