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Go Ahead — It's OK to Allow Yourself to be Silly Sometimes

By Lillian M. Hernandez Caraballo
UCF Forum columnist
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(Photo by Rémi Jacquaint at Unsplash)

Waiting in line at the movies, I saw a young woman do the “airplane run” over to the concession stand. You know, when you stretch out your arms to your sides and run forward, as if flying.

She was running back to the counter after an employee called her back to get her popcorn that she had forgotten. She rolled her eyes and laughed, as if she felt silly for forgetting, then started airplane running, making an engine sound.

The man with her had a look of utter embarrassment on his face. He looked around the room to see who was watching. I admit that I thought she looked ridiculous, too, but she also looked happy.

As silly as it seemed, she was clearly enjoying herself as she did it. At that point, I felt wrong for judging her, and I realized that my expectation of seriousness on her part is but a product of some arbitrary social standard. It seems that at some point in our crossover to adulthood, we are no longer allowed to freely enjoy ourselves.

At the risk of being ostracized from social circles, we conform to stifle our emotions and live blandly.

We all know this. Nobody knows why we know it, but we do. We all learned this. At some point, we either did or said something “stupid,” and someone became angry with us for embarrassing them, or maybe they specifically excluded us. Somehow, however, we learned that full control is expected of us.

The irony in this is that this set expectation of behavior is self-ordained. It isn't natural law, and there are no known set precedents for it. It is merely a made-up passing of judgment by the grumpy and, therefore, completely unnecessary. At the risk of being ostracized from social circles, we conform to stifle our emotions and live blandly.

But I get to see pure, unadulterated joy every day.

I have an 8-year-old daughter, and whenever she receives good news or something makes her happy, she shrieks! She jumps up in the air, runs around, or closes her fists and puts them close to her face in anticipation or extreme excitement. There is no need for containment. She feels no shame and allows herself to feel and outwardly express a fullness of joy.

And I fail to see how something so full of splendor can be deemed as “undignified.”

I recently decided to put my own words to the test. Studying late one night, I was headed to the UCF Student Union to grab some dinner. As I was walking, I remembered the girl at the movie theater. I felt a little jealous, and wanted to try the airplane run, too. Why not?

I looked around. When the coast was clear, I stretched out my arms, leaned forward, and with determination and full abandonment I ran like an airplane. I was elated! I couldn't stop laughing afterwards and wondered why I did not act silly more often.

It was invigorating, and it felt good to allow myself to be silly. I want to do it more.

We should all be allowed to get wildly excited, blow bubbles, let the rain get us wet occasionally, and jump in puddles.

Or even be an airplane.

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