

A Sample Chapter from

WAKE UP

LAUGHING:

An Insider's Guide to the  
Cosmic Comedy  
By Steve Bhaerman

*with special uncommontary by*  
Swami Beyondananda

# Introduction: Why Wake Up Laughing?

*“There are two kinds of mystics in the world -- the optimystics, and the pessimystics. The pessimystics are telling us, ‘The sky is falling!’ The optimystics say, ‘No, it only looks that way because we are ascending.’”*

*--Swami Beyondananda*

There is an ancient Chinese blessing (or curse, depending on one’s perspective):  
May you live in interesting times.

Well, here we are.

Depending which eye we see with, the multiple crises we face are either signs of impending doom ... or impending breakthrough. Fear or excitement, it’s the same chemistry only a different interpretation. And it turns out, that in our interpretation lies our destiny.

For the past three years, I have immersed myself in writing a “serious” book with cellular biologist Bruce Lipton. The book, [\*Spontaneous Evolution: Our Positive Future and a Way to Get there From Here\*](#), offers an encouraging view of humanity’s future based on modern science, and -- not surprisingly -- ancient spiritual wisdom. That view is that we humans are each and all cells in a new super-organism called Humanity. In other words, love thy neighbor because if we don’t -- well, there goes the Neighborhood.

[Bruce Lipton's](#) work as an evolutionary biologist reveals that every evolutionary phase -- whether it’s single cell organisms becoming multi-cell ones, or human society evolving from brutal to compassionate -- is characterized by two things: Expanding awareness, and growing community.

Laughter -- and the appreciation of life as a “cosmic comedy” -- is one of the easiest, most enjoyable ways to awaken awareness and connect community. It is also one of the most underrated. There is a classic cartoon where a clown is on the psychiatrist’s couch, saying, “Nobody takes me seriously.”

It is precisely that -- our tendency to not take humor seriously -- that gives it its power. As we will discover later on in this book, humor is a magical interface between the logical and intuitive minds. Consequently, it has the power to bypass the left-brain's linear gatekeepers and allow outside-the-box ideas to come in under the radar.

Which is not to say that all comedy awakens. We've all experienced brutality thinly disguised as "humor," usually with the unfunny disclaimer, "What's the matter? Can't take a joke?"

Some kinds of humor perpetuate prejudice, misunderstanding, denial, separation. They are merely reflecting the prejudice, misunderstanding, denial and separation that now exist. The best kind of humor is a vehicle for love that not only leaves 'em laughing, it leaves 'em smiling.

By understanding, embracing and practicing humor at its best, we can add to the "laugh force" on the planet, and allow enlightening humor to strike more frequently.

### **Laughter Is Medicine ... and More**

"Laughter is medicine." We've heard it so often, it's almost a cliché. To go a bit deeper, laughter is "medicine" in the Native American sense ... a form of magic that can transmute suffering into insight, rigidity into flexibility, separation into connection. As an alchemical (or we might say, all-comical) tool, humor has the power to heal the heart and free the mind. Wholehearted hearty laughter naturally kindles joy. Simply laughing -- even if there's nothing funny to laugh at -- actually creates healthier brain chemistry.

In other words, laughing for no reason gives us reason to smile ... and smiling also alters our brain chemistry for the better. As Marci Shimoff reports in her book [\*Happy for No Reason\*](#), we don't smile because we are happy ... we are happy because we smile.

Laughter also frees the mind from judgment, from limited thinking, from the boundaries of what has been done or thought before. The word "healing" has the same root as "wholeness." Fundamentally, healing is that which restores wholeness.

- Physical healing restores the body's coherence as a whole system.
- Emotional healing likewise integrates the "whole picture," by first feeling and then releasing repressed emotions.
- Mental healing integrates polarizing opposites so we transform "assaholistic" positionality into holistic functionality.
- Spiritual healing, the most profound of all, gives us a "God's eye view" of our situation, allowing us to step outside the matrix of belief and personality.

## A Joke That Changed the World

On rare occasions, a joke fires on all cylinders. One such story, purported to be true, is something that happened during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. As you may or may not remember, this is the closest we as a world have come to nuclear holocaust. When it was discovered that there were Soviet missiles in Cuba, just 90 miles from American shores, the crisis quickly escalated into a colossal game of chicken that could have turned us all into fryers. Fortunately, wiser heads and hearts prevailed on both sides.

However, in the midst of the crisis there were some American and Soviet delegates meeting to discuss possible trade between the two countries. When news of the missile crisis hit, there was tremendous tension and the room fell silent. Finally, one of the Soviet delegates stood up and proposed that they take turns telling jokes. He volunteered to start. "What's the difference between capitalism and communism?"

"In capitalism, man exploits man. In communism, it's the other way around." The room erupted in laughter, the kind of explosion that heals. When the laughter died down, they were able to continue their business in peace and equanimity.

Ever since I heard this story many, many years ago I have held it as the highest octave of humor -- a joke that offered physical and emotional release, and mental and spiritual insight. Instantly, the room was transformed as each individual recognized him or herself -- as well as everyone else -- as humans, united at the heart.

I was privileged to experience something similar back in the 1970s when I was a freelancer for a newspaper in Michigan. I went to hear comedian and social activist [Dick Gregory](#) speak at Oakland University. As it turned out, the auditorium was packed, and was equally divided between white folks and black folks. Gregory took out his comic cudgel and proceeded to deconstruct white men. Then he went after white women. This pleased the black folks to no end, but they were next. Off he went on black men, and then finally, black women.

It was one of the most masterful shamanic performances I have ever seen. In each case, he walked the delicate line between love and truth, always able to tell the great (if uncomfortable) truth because of his great love. By the end, each of the four quadrants -- black and white, male and female -- had been at once busted, and elevated. In some magical way, Dick Gregory had been able to lay bare human foibles, while celebrating our glorious best at the same time.

As we filed out of the auditorium, it was one of the first and only times I saw whites and African Americans looking one another in the eye with both love and understanding. The veils of illusion that keep us separate were parted, as we all bathed in the sunshine of true, unconditional love.

Speaking of veils, the root definition of “apocalypse” is “the lifting of the veils.” So perhaps the feared disasters associated with the word can be averted if we lift the veils together. And when we do, what will enable us to “metabolize” the accumulated toxins of our inhuman nature (which we have been wrongly taught is our immutable human nature) is love. Love and laughter.

And so, back to wake up laughing. Why wake up? And, why laugh? According to the teachings, Buddha defined himself as “awake.” What was he awakened to? First and foremost, that we humans impose our own suffering through our attachments, and that love, forgiveness and compassion release us from our self-imposed bondage.

### **Inner Space: The Final Frontier?**

Meanwhile, biologists tell us that our planet is in the throes of the sixth great extinction. The other five episodes involved collisions with large chunks of debris from outer space. Currently, the planetary ecosystem is threatened by the human ego system. It is the debris from “inner space,” the collective emotional toxins, culturally-inherited misperceptions, and largely invisible beliefs, that have put humans on top of the “endangering species list.” And, of course -- because the planet has many more resources for survival than we do -- at the top of the endangered species list as well.

Regardless of how fit or unfit you and I may be as individuals, the planet is now reckoning our fitness as a species. Folks, humanity is now on the verge of flunking third dimension.

The gateway to our evolution is our awakening -- to those same things Buddha awakened to when he got struck by enlightening. Perhaps in these dire times, we need to simplify greatly. Maybe instead of Ten Commandments, we need One Suggestion: “We are all one with the same One.” In other words, love thy neighbor as thyself because thy neighbor *is* thyself.

That is another function of evolution -- the efficiency of working as a functional whole that benefits all involved. Or, as the Swami has said, “We must use our energy to fruitfully re-grow the Garden rather than fruitlessly scrapping over the scraps.”

### **How’s This for a Joke: Reality Is Make-Believe!**

So, how do we “get there from here?” How do we activate our true human potential -- what Swami calls Humanifest Destiny -- to create, or at least allow, this spontaneous evolution to take place? Once again, I refer to my friend and colleague Bruce Lipton’s transformational work. In his book [\*The Biology of Belief\*](#), Bruce offers biochemical evidence that our perceptions and beliefs become our reality.

Consequently, so much of what we think of as “reality” is no more than beliefs that are so invisible and pervasive that we don’t recognize them as such. As we will see when we explore more deeply “the cosmic joke,” life is a lot less grim than we’ve come to believe, and in large part the reason the world is in such serious condition is because of our serious conditioning ... to be serious. Seriously.

Enlightening humor and hearty laughter can awaken us to a more enduring reality. The burst of laughter can instantly restore joy and aliveness. Equally important, the flash of insight that often follows a paradoxical joke can dislodge illogical logic that culture and habit have convinced us is “reality.” And speaking of paradoxical jokes ...

We are living in a world of make-believe. We make what we believe.

That’s great news because it means we can choose what we believe. And based on awakened awareness, we begin to use our intelligence more intelligently. Kevin Danaher, director of Global Exchange and convener of the [Green Festival](#), offers this all-too-apt analogy: We’re all in the same boat, and that boat is the Titanic, and the Titanic is sinking. We have several choices. We can ignore and deny the impending disaster, and “re-arrange the deck chairs.” We can loudly protest to the captain. Or, we can jump to the party boat that has pulled up alongside.

In [Spontaneous Evolution](#), Bruce and I use another familiar analogy -- the caterpillar to butterfly. To put it simply, the caterpillar is falling apart, and the butterfly is emerging. There is no “fixing” the caterpillar ... it must necessarily transform. The “too big to fail” caterpillar structure of “lowest common dominator” is a lot like that “too big to fail” mega-boat called the Titanic.

Now here’s something else very interesting about the butterfly and the caterpillar. They both have the exact same DNA. They are simply receiving different signals.

In human society as well, both the caterpillar of obsolete structure and the butterfly of evolutionary emergence are receiving different signals. Quite simply, those signals are either predominantly love, or predominantly fear. Those who fear change are more likely to stick with familiar structures that have “outlived their usefulness.” Those more willing to embrace lovingly the connection the vast majority of humans share beyond their individual and cultural beliefs, are strengthening the butterfly field.

In this world of “make-believe,” we can choose to believe in and make love ... or, we can go the way of the dinosaurs. While this contingency isn’t all that funny, humor that illuminates the human comedy and evokes love will help us through this passage.

## **The Human Condition and the Humorin' Condition**

In what Tom Paine would have called “soul-trying” times, we can choose the evolutionary path of connected community -- or the devolutionary path of dissonance and separation. Or, to paraphrase another American evolutionary Benjamin Franklin, we can either laugh together ... or cry separately.

The purpose of this Wake Up Laughing e-book is to help us illuminate the darkness by making light of it. Because it is now an evolutionary necessity, we must also face our individual foibles and shadow parts, and celebrate together our shared foolishness ... and our magnificent love.

Part I of this book, *The Way of the Foo Ling Master*, offers humor as a tool for spiritual understanding, and enlightenment. It includes a provocative and “third eye-opening” view of the Cosmic Joke, and the awakening that comes in the wake of “getting it” and laughing wholeheartedly at the punch line. Next, we take the Fool’s Journey, and see how “self-facing” humor accompanies every hero and heroine on their path. Then we look at the Alchemy of Humor and see how to turn the base elements of life into the healing brew of love and laughter.

In Part II, *Humoring Yourself and Others*, we take a look at what Swami calls Ho-Ho-Holy Hee-Hee-Healing and how laughter heals physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Next, we see how the alchemy of humor can help us Transform the Trances we live, personally and globally. Finally, we offer guidelines for writing our own Laugh Story, and using loving laughter to liberate ourselves from our old stories ... leaving us free to write a new one.

Part III, *Humor Resources*, offers Zen Cohens -- jokes that brighten and enlighten, that leave awakening in the wake of laughter. Then, to dispel any semblance of seriousness in the book, we have Swami Beyondananda’s FUNdamentalist (accent on “fun”) Humanifesto with guidelines for his new “non-dominational” non-religion. Finally, we present the Wake Up Laughing Co-Hearts, individuals, organizations and businesses whose work (or play) adds to global and local happiness.

Thank you in advance for signing on to this cosmic comic voyage to the heart of the human soul. May it help us through this next evolutionary portal. May we wake up laughing ... and leave laughter in our wake.

To order the full e-book [Wake Up Laughing: An Insider’s Guide to the Cosmic Comedy](#), please click on this link.