

Becoming a better lawyer with laughter

IMAGINE GIVING A CLOSING argument in a criminal case and while you're speaking, the jurors get to tell you how you're doing. Visualize them raising signs that read, "guilty" or "not guilty." Your job is to make sure most of them hold up "not guilty" signs—not just at the end of your argument—but every fifteen or twenty seconds while you're speaking. Oh, by the way, if they hold up the signs that say "guilty" three or four times in a row, you've lost your case.



by Alan R. Nye

If you can picture this situation, you have a glimpse into what it's like to perform a seven-minute stand-up routine. The most obvious question is: Why would I—or anyone for that matter—want to perform stand-up? For me, I just thought it would be fun: a diversion from the everyday practice of law.

As a kid, I was the class clown—one of those jokers who could always make my friends laugh. When I grew up, I continued to pass along jokes whenever possible. It's a time-honored tradition. Some of our most beloved leaders had a great sense of humor.

If I were two-faced, would I be wearing this one?—Abraham Lincoln

Making people laugh makes them feel good—it's also good for them. Laughter helps to:

- Reduce stress and promote relaxation
- Lower your blood pressure
- Improve your mood
- Boost your immune system
- Improve brain functioning, and
- Protect your heart

I discovered long ago that making others laugh also made me feel good. Doing stand-up seemed like a natural extension of what I'd been doing all my life.

Besides, I thought, how hard could it be to do a few minutes of stand-up?

Another reason for trying comedy was something I read about from a lawyer in South Carolina: David Swanner (www.sctriallaw.com). Dave blogged about taking a comedy class and his belief that it helped him become a better trial lawyer. I'd also read about Karen Morgan (www.karenmorgan.com).