



COVER STORY

Judy Carter on Comedy

Don't get mad- get funny!

by Cindy Hall

Funny girl Judy Carter has a talent for turning lemons into sweet success, and in this tumultuous day and age, she must be making a fortune.

As a motivational speaker, the comedian of the corporate world has made a career of turning “problems into punchlines” and has inspired thousands of people to use humor to deal with change. Judy has been profiled on CNN, ABC World News and Oprah, and her humor has been featured in the Wall Street Journal, LA Times, New York Times and Success Magazine.

She helps Fortune 500 companies such as Boeing, Lucent Technologies, Fedex, Blue Cross and Pacific Bell reach out to employees over sensitive issues like downsizing, layoffs, and dealing with diversity. But she’s not all business — she makes women laugh at themselves and is able to make everyone laugh at health issues, tickling your funny bone and proving laughter is the best medicine. She is the author of “Standup Comedy: The Book,” and “The Comedy Bible.” Judy takes time out to tell Bella what she really thinks:

BELLA: Can you tell Pensacola women a little bit about yourself, and what you hope to share with women during our annual Gulf Coast Women’s Expo?

JUDY: I was born into a crazy-making dysfunctional family with alcoholism and manic depression. And that was just the cat. I found at an early age that making people laugh made me feel better as well as making them feel better. I do the same thing today. I show women that, no matter how scary life gets, it pays to look for the “funny.” And there is funny stuff going around them all the time. I was in a mall and saw a sign, “Ears pierced while you wait.” Really? As opposed to what? Leaving them there? I show people how to make a humor choice when they get stressed. When the stress hits the fan, they have a choice. They can choose to get stressed and drink. Or laugh. . . . And drink.

BELLA: You are known for catering your seminars to specific audiences, and Pensacola-area women also are no strangers to stress. Between the poor economy, falling real estate prices, fast-paced family life and day-to-day obligations, we’ve seen it all. And every now and then, a hurricane comes to really shake things up and test our strength. What humorous advice and encouragement will you offer a Gulf Coast audience?

JUDY: That when going to a hurricane shelter, be sure to take a coat as well as your sense of humor. Life is scary now: Falling real estate prices, wars, and Britney Spears is a mother. Scary. But it’s not what happens to you that creates happiness — it’s how you choose to look at it. I choose finding the funny.

BELLA: Talking about stress, women all over America bear the brunt of stress today, juggling family and work, and your seminars focus on teaching women how to “take power.” How is this done?

JUDY: We are all stressed now. You know you’re stressed if you’re up at 3 a.m. to go to the bathroom, and you check your e-mail on the way back to bed. Sometimes, we women just end up whining. Even powerful women can sometimes get whiney when they get stressed. And that is not attractive. No one says: “Look at that desperate whiney woman, wow is she hot!” Once we can have a good laugh at our defects, then we can have power over whatever problem is facing us. When we can laugh at a problem, it becomes smaller and more manageable. (Don’t try it in bed though). When you can laugh at a problem, it doesn’t mean that you don’t take it seriously; it just helps you to have a sense of power over the problem. I will show women, “Don’t get mad . . . get funny.” I will show them how using something as simple as their sense of humor can get them out of traffic tickets (I’ve been stopped eight times, and they won’t give me a ticket), give them snappy comebacks to the stupid things people say to them, and lose weight. That’s right, I’m going to lighten up the entire audience. I imagine that they will each lose 5 pounds. Because stress and negativity does weigh you down, and we are going to be laughing . . . a lot. Can anyone remember the last time they have a really good laugh? It’s going to be fun.

BELLA: How does women’s humor differ from men’s humor, and are there any topics that you would never find funny for women?

JUDY: When was the last time you heard a good menopause joke from Letterman? Let’s say . . . never! Male comics don’t have our experiences, and when women get together and share funny stories, they really bond. So for my show, leave your husbands at home, because I’m going to be getting down and getting real and joking about topics no male comic would touch: going through puberty, stupid female products, mammograms, menopause. You’re not going to hear about that on “Letterman.”

BELLA: You have been called America’s top Motivational Humorist. Wall Street Journal says companies are turning to comedy “to help employees deal with downsizing and other wrenching changes in the workplace.” But in today’s economic turmoil, how can you find humor in a sometimes devastated workplace?

JUDY: You can’t wait for good things to happen to you in order to find happiness. The challenge is to enjoy life no matter what gets thrown at you. We all know that “bad” stuff can give birth to good stuff. Some people get fired, and then that frees them up to find their perfect job. It’s not what happens to you, it’s how you choose to react to it. It’s about finding happiness when you’re fat, broke and surrounded by idiots.

BELLA: In your motivational seminars, you teach people how to “turn problems into punchlines” . . . is it really that easy? Can you give a few examples from your funniest experiences?

JUDY: It starts with having a sense of humor about yourself. Joke about yourself, because everyone else probably is already. If you’re overweight, making a humor choice might be bragging about it. “Isn’t my weight gain great! All that late-night snacking has finally paid off! Thank you for noticing.” Once you can laugh at a problem, then you’ll be able to deal with it from joy rather than self hate.

BELLA: How can people use humor to deal with stress on the job?

JUDY: By looking at the things that go right. Catch people doing things right, and give them appreciation.

BELLA: What advice can you offer women who are out there looking for a job today or trying to find their career niche?

JUDY: I learned a long time ago: If you commit to something you are passionate about, money does come. Find what you love doing, find a way to do it, and do it well. Nothing is impossible. After all, I just built a new home, and it cost me 2,300,874 jokes. Who would have thought that that was possible?

BELLA: When did you realize that you had a funny bone, and where do you draw your inspiration for humor?

JUDY: My disabled older sister, Marsha. She couldn’t walk or talk, and it was my joy to tell her jokes and make her laugh.

BELLA: What makes you laugh the most?

JUDY: When someone calls to my attention the stupid things that I do. I love it when I start taking myself too seriously, that someone will point out what an idiot I am, and that’s how I get the biggest laugh. That and my Pomeranian Roxie, who let’s me live with her.

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW

The 2009 Gulf Coast Women’s Expo, presented by Baptist Health Care and Bella Magazine and organized by the Pensacola News Journal, will offer a wide range of activities including nationally recognized speakers, food and wine tasting, health screenings, workshops and vendors that will appeal to women of all ages and lifestyles.

This year’s speaker line-up includes millionaire entrepreneur Paul Martinelli, comedian and author of “The Comedy Bible” Judy Carter, “Glam Squad” fashion stylist from TLC’s “Look Ten Years Younger” Andy Paige and author/wine consultant Leslie Sbrocco.

- *When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, April 17; and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 18.*
- *Where: Pensacola Junior College and WSRE Jean and Paul Amos Performance Studio.*
- *Keynote speaker: Judy Carter will be the keynote speaker at this year’s Gulf Coast Women’s Expo, performing two shows on the main stage. For more information on Judy, go to www.judycarter.com.*
- *Advance tickets: \$7 for one day; \$10 for both days, \$12 for both days plus a Judy Carter performance.*
- *Details: www.GulfCoastWomensExpo.com.*

