

## Nurses use laughter as medicine

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2TrIY862kw&feature=youtu.be>

*Clown:* This is the worst case of **chickenpox** we have ever seen.

*Journalist:* If **laughter** can **heal**, these clowns are delivering some strong **medicine**.

*Clown:* OK if we come in?

*Journalist:* For more than 20 years, Michael Christensen, or Doctor Stubs as he is known here, has brought **smiles** to desperately ill children in hospitals across the country. Now, Michael and his clown colleague, Deborah Coffin, from the Big Apple Circus, are teaching students at New York University's College of Nursing. But it's not about **turning** nurses **into** clowns.

*Michael Christensen:* They don't have to divorce any part of themselves, particularly their joy. They can bring all of their humanity into the work place. We will change the room.

*Journalist:* Nursing professor Betty Leef, a clinical instructor at the school saw a need for her students to learn **coping skills**.

*Betty Leef:* These are very ill children, and a lot of students became **incredibly** frightened, and that would translate when they would go into the rooms, and to be with the children, they just would **freeze up**.

*Journalist:* What exactly can a clown teach a nurse? Take a look. In this exercise, they learn to take the emotional temperature of the room.

*Nurse:* People seem really perturbed, annoyed.

*Journalist:* They are making the patients more comfortable. Part of the idea here is making the nurses themselves more comfortable as they confront the difficulty of treating seriously-ill children.

*Michael Christensen:* Before you know it, the child is healthy for that time. They are engaged in play, wonder, awe, joy.

*Journalist:* The nursing students get to see the clown in action on this day, at Morgon Stanley Children's Hospital in Manhattan. What did you think of that clown?

*Journalist:* What did you think of those clowns?

*Child:* They are funny...

*Journalist:* **Ultimately**, the nurses learn that inside even very sick children lies a healthy sense of humour.

*Michael Christensen:* You get that room **shimmering** with that wonderful healthy vital feeling of joy, by simply being present and comfortable. Children sense that, and are much...feel **safe**

*Journalist:* And the lesson? Sometimes the cure for what **ails** us can't be found in a medical textbook.

*Michael Christensen:* Goodbye.

*Journalist:* Carol Ann Riddell, NBC, New York.