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July 2011 Newsletter

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J. Val Hastings, MCC, is the Founder and President of Coaching4Clergy, which empowers today's spiritual leaders through coaching, consulting and coach training. Val has a global vision of providing coaching and coach training to all of today's spiritual leaders.

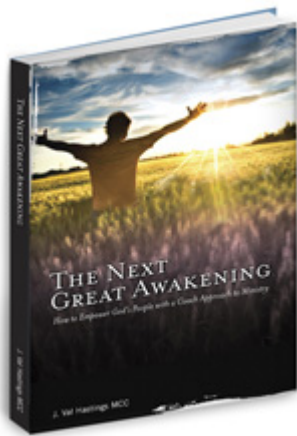
**Val's New Book**

## The Power of Play

Churches, faith communities and other organizations are all looking to cut corners and costs these days. So when it comes to staff development, they're squeezing out the fun events where people can play and be creative in favor of more concrete and serious activities.

Why is that a mistake?

1. Play is rejuvenating and gives us more energy and focus for our work – while the absence of play can lead to burnout and higher turnover.
2. Play has the power to transform our perspectives and open our minds to new possibilities – while too much structure and seriousness can lead to missed opportunities.
3. Play can connect team members to each other instantly and deeply – while traditional training or group work can reinforce hierarchies and inhibit participation.
4. Play releases mood-boosting endorphins into the brain – while intensive training can overload people so that no information is absorbed.
5. Laughter strengthens the immune system and has [other health benefits](#) – while stress and overwork can tax the immune system and lead to serious physical, emotional and mental illness. .



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Here's an example from one group I worked with: After spending the whole day with the team, knee-deep in all kinds of serious stuff, we came up with what seemed like a really good plan – at least on paper. It addressed their concerns, it was realistic and doable. Yet when I asked [the key question](#), "What is your belief about this plan?" before they even answered I could see it in their faces. They didn't think it was going to work.

Since the plan was about re-aligning their efforts as a whole staff, it was absolutely crucial for them to be connected as people and as a team, and they weren't feeling that. What was the next step, they decided? Bowling! And the following week, "We'll go for ice cream sundaes!" We could all feel the energy shift in the room, just by talking about doing something fun together.

I was recently in Asheville, North Carolina for [Conversation Among Masters](#) (CAM), an invitation-only event for Master-Level Coaches. It was the best "un-conference" conference I've ever been to; three days of pure lightness, play and fun with an extraordinary group of people.

Coming back to real life, my radar was up and searching for play. Yet what I heard from groups in my coaching and training sessions was an absence of play; heaviness instead of lightness; the feeling and confession, "it's been so long since we've had any fun."

Fun and play can bring a team together more quickly and effectively than anything else I've seen. So if you find yourself thinking that a fun team-building event would be a waste of time or money, [it's time for a mind shift!](#)

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Ph: 610-385-8034 | Fax: 484-944-1520 | [val@coaching4clergy.com](mailto:val@coaching4clergy.com) | [www.coaching4clergy.com](http://www.coaching4clergy.com)

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