

THE EXCHANGE

HUMOR DEFIES GRAVITY

It has been said, "You should not take life too seriously- nobody gets out alive anyway!" Yet the gravity (seriousness) of the daily events of our lives often creates stress that decreases the effectiveness and enjoyment of our jobs and our lives. We need a way of getting above all of that, and humor is a great way for us to defy that which holds us back. So, we *can* defy gravity!

What is humor? Ask most people what humor is and they may tell you it's something funny. Ask them what funny is and they might say it's whatever makes you laugh. So, what makes you laugh? My American Heritage dictionary doesn't say! Trying to define humor has also been very difficult for researchers.

The Humor Experience

Steven M. Sultanoff, Ph.D., is a Clinical Psychologist and "Mirthologist" who has written a number of articles on the forms and functions of humor. He distinguishes between three experience levels of humor:

- *Thought-oriented experience* is the intellectual side of humor. Word plays, secondary meanings, puns, and dry humor can fall into this category.
- *The emotional experience* we have as a reaction to humor is a lightening of our attitude. It is hard to be depressed, anxious, or angry when we're laughing!
- *The physiological experience* includes the physical and chemical changes in our bodies that occur from laughing, chuckling, chortling, guffawing, snickering, snorting, tittering or cackling. There are other unidentified noises that people make when they're amused. Dogs make them. Those must have physical effects too!

Functions of Humor

Some of the benefits of the lighter side of communication include:



- **Reduces Stress.** The "fight or flight" response that results from perceived threats in the environment is short-circuited. Humor gives us a break when we need it the most.
- **Provides Health Benefits.** Boosting our immune systems, loosening our musculature, opening our lungs, increasing cardiovascular output, and increasing our tolerance for physical pain are just a few of the reported health benefits of humor. Norman Cousins called laughter "a jogging of the soul." In his book *Anatomy of an Illness*, he attributes laughter and positive attitude to his recovery from an "incurable" illness.
- **Uplifts Attitude.** It's easier to be an optimist when you laugh. We are what we think, and if we tend to think positive thoughts, that's what we'll see in the world. That is what becomes our attitude.
- **Facilitates Communication.** Entertainer Victor Borge once said, "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people." People with a sense of humor are more approachable because they give the impression that they are more open to conversation.
- **Increases Perceptions of Likability.** Have you ever noticed that a well-balanced sense of humor is common to almost all people who are popular and successful in business and relationships? We want to be around people who are smart and mature enough to see the big picture and keep it all in perspective.

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What Our Clients Are Saying

"I was most impressed with the (newsletter) content. I've found your tips to be right on the money. I hate to keep yet another piece of paper around my office or home, but I'm inclined to keep this one. Good work!"

Michael Warren, Atlanta GA

"Every day I think about something I learned in this course."

Don Huffman, Chattanooga TN



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There's no fun in medicine, but there's a lot of medicine in fun.

Unknown

LOOKING AHEAD:

- ◆ **Interviewing skills are the focus of June's newsletter**
- ◆ **Go whitewater rafting with TLC**



QUICK TIPS:

- **Motion changes emotion.** Laughter is “jogging of the soul” and a cure for depression.
- **Look for humor and you’re sure to find it.**

The joyfulness of a man
prolongeth his days.

Psalms



To learn more about
it, click here!

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- **Opens Your Mind.** It makes sense that we open up more easily when we are relaxed. Creativity flows when you are able to look at things from different angles. When we are defensive we are closed to alternatives, so opening up with a little humor can really expand your horizon!
- **Creates a Manageable Perspective.** Something that is humorous often highlights the discrepancies, contradictions, and paradoxes that otherwise can create stress. Even though things may be bad, it’s usually not the end of the world. We’re still here so we know the end of the world doesn’t happen very often. Finding humor gives us more control of our lives.

Recommendations:

- Look for opportunities to use humor to encourage people and dispel anxiety. Build people up with your communication. Use humor as a tool to shorten the distance between people.
- Keep the theme of your humor relevant to what is going on. It’s hard to relate to something in a conversation that doesn’t fit or make sense.
- If you are sharing jokes, match the length and pace of your jokes to those that other people make. This will keep the conversation flowing smoothly. A long joke after others have shared a few one-liners is a bore!
- Keep a file of jokes and stories for the right occasions. Remember them by punch line and subject. Weave your humor into natural conversation instead of making a stage play of it. It’s great to be prepared, yet look spontaneous!
- Detrimental humor puts other people down and makes them feel foolish, inferior, or stupid. People with limited social or interpersonal skills often use sarcasm or derogatory humor against other people or groups to feel superior or legitimate. It’s sad that something that can do so much good can also be used as a weapon to wound, or as a wall to keep people away!
- Use humor with caution. Always respect the feelings and experiences of other people. If you are not sure how someone else will react, follow the old adage, “If in doubt, DON’T.” Another technique is to use the “respect rule.” If you wouldn’t say a particular thing to someone you truly admire and respect, don’t say it to anyone else.
- Avoid jokes about sex, politics, ethnicity, or religion. The only exception is self-deprecating humor. For example, it’s OK to make a joke about Jews if you are Jewish.

Jerry Seinfeld and Woody Allen do this very well; it sort of lets the rest of us in on the punch line.

- Avoid using humor about subjects where the person you are talking to may have had a serious experience. Joking about suicide, for example, could be devastating to someone whose son committed suicide. Researchers and counselors consider a well-balanced sense of humor as an indicator of communicative and emotional competence. In order to be humorous, a person must be aware of the world and how others will build their perceptions based on what is said and done. If you incorporate positive humor into your life you’ll find that you are happy and that people enjoy being around you. Have a good time in life; defy gravity!

SMELL THE ROSES

By Ben Cairns, M.A.

A long time ago, in a state far away, I served for several years as a rehabilitation case manager. It was work that often involved litigated worker’s compensation cases. The work was serious, and I was a serious young man. I took things so seriously that a coworker pulled me aside one day to give me some ‘life counseling.’



“Young man, you should remain professional and learn how to take time to smell the roses!” This was advice that was hard to take. I responded “When would I possibly have time to smell the roses?” He said, “The time will present itself, or you just have to make it.”

A month later I got an emergency call regarding a catastrophic case that needed evaluation and consultation that day. It was in a city almost three hours away. I left immediately and was running ahead of schedule by more than an hour when I saw a beautiful river. “This is perfect!” I thought. “I’ll go take a look and then get back on the road.”

What I did not expect was that the riverbank was steep and obscured by some innocent looking flowers. As I took a closer step to look, the bank gave way and I fell down the muddy twenty-foot bank... right into the river. I was covered head to toe with mud and small rocks, suit and all!

I had to rush back to town, get cleaned up and then get to my appointment. Although I made it in time, I was winded from the rush. The life lesson I learned was that while it is important to take time to smell the roses. Remember that roses have thorns!

FUNNY BONE



Where is your funny bone? Can a funny bone be removed? Is it possible to hit your funny bone? The answers to these questions, although mysterious, are still interesting to discuss.

For some of us, laughing is therapeutic and quite enjoyable. Others seem to lack zany, gut-busting, humor in their life. For these types of people, we say they have lost their funny bone. But is this anatomically possible? Anatomically, no; figuratively, yes!

There is not really a bone in your body that makes you laugh (or not laugh). There is, however, a bone in your upper-arm called the humerus. A nerve in the elbow at the end of the humerus is vulnerable to impact. When the elbow is bumped or banged, that nerve causes the arm and fingers to go numb, tingle, burn, or feel "funny." So when someone says, "Ouch, right on my funny bone!" something really hit a nerve! If you have ever hit your funny bone you know there is nothing to laugh at!

Researchers have proven that when you **do** laugh, it can stimulate the release of brain chemicals called "endorphins," which in addition to making you feel better, have actual healing effects. Rarely is there bad laughter. Life will bring about so many unforeseen events, the healing power of humor can work wonders! So if you have a negative situation in your life or if you have a "bone to pick with someone," make sure that it is the **funny bone!**

Laugh often and the world will laugh with you. Cry often and people will wonder if you ran out of medication!

You need your sense of humor to learn the English language.

- Polish the Polish furniture.
- He could lead if he could get the lead out.
- A farm can produce produce.
- The dump was so full it had to refuse refuse.
- A soldier decided to desert in the desert.

ONE DAY THIS WILL MAKE A FUNNY STORY!

By Vincent Ivan Phipps, B.S.

Have you ever been in a situation that at the time was anything but funny? If you have, perhaps you might find the humor in what happened to me when I was in Brazil.

When I told people who had never been to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, that I was going, they said, "Wow, I hear it's beautiful!" When I told people who had been to Rio that I was going, they said, "You're going to love it, but be careful!"

Because my visit was during Carnival (what Americans call Mardi Gras), the city's most festive and populated season, theft was very high. While sitting on Copacabana Beach, my best friend and I were taking pictures and video taping the wonderful distractions from perhaps the most popular beach in the world! Some friends from California who joined us hinted to me, "There is a guy looking at your camera. Make sure you keep up with it." I was so confident that I would never be a victim that I forgot the advice. When I reached under my chair for my camera, it was gone!

Everyone at our table jumped up and began looking for anyone who looked suspicious. Hundreds of people were everywhere and all were carrying bags. After patrolling the beach, we saw my camera in the hands of a local riding on a bike. I began chasing him, shouting, In Portuguese, "Hey, stop that thief!" Being a student in Spanish, I assumed the verb conjugation was the same in Portuguese. I was really shouting, "Hey **I'm** a thief!" and the beach police starting chasing **me!**

After a furious footrace the camera was successfully recovered! When I returned to my office, I found out my co-workers had a bet on how long it would take for me to have the camera stolen. But no one wagered if I would actually get it back!

I learned two things from this experience:

- 1) Big cities are the same all over the world. Travel with a friend and stay alert.
- 2) If a story is going to be funny some day, you might as well laugh now!

Be smart. Be safe. Laugh often!



Remember to . . .

- Know your audience before you share a joke.
- Look for laughter every day.
- Notify your face that humor is welcome.

When you sit with a nice girl for two hours, you think it's only a minute. But when you sit on a hot stove for a minute, you think it's two hours. That's relativity.

Albert Einstein



"All animals except man know that the principle business of life is to enjoy it."

Samuel Butler

ACTUAL AD:

For sale: An antique desk, suitable for lady with thick legs and large drawers.

A multitude of small delights constitutes happiness.

Charles Baudelaire

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WHEN YOU'RE NOT ON THE SAME PAGE

By Beverly Inman-Ebel, CEO



My clients frequently tell me that I'm really good at role-playing situations. They exclaim, "That's exactly the way that person acts! Do you know them?" What is my secret? Quite simply, I am a frustrated actress.

I suppose I am too practical an individual to have considered acting as a full time job, so I have dabbled in it throughout my life, from grade school plays through being the current Director of Drama at my church. Impersonating a fictional character for a moment in time is fun – a release from reality.

Many years ago, I was a member of a local amateur thespian group. Each month we would gather at a clubhouse & performed plays. While we used costumes, props and the works of well known playwrights, we did not memorize the lines. With dinner and a few drinks, the event made for a delightful evening.

Once, my best friend and I were doing a Noel Coward comedy that included a scene in a restaurant with two women having a conversation over drinks. I was a few months pregnant so our wine glasses (at least mine) contained water. Evidently, I had mistakingly turned several pages in the play book, so during the drunk scene I was reading far ahead of my fellow actress. Because we took our task seriously, both of us stayed in character using the typical slurred speech of the drunks while we tried to proceed with the play. Of course, with me being several pages ahead, our dialogue was making no sense. The audience simply thought it was the ramblings of two drunks. My cohort in this crime finally said in drunken enunciation, "You thskipped thum pages I think." I denied the error, stating that she was "a wee bit too tipshy to wead the lines!"

The minor character in this comedy, a waitress, kept entering when I read my lines on page 29 and again when my friend read her's on page 26, as if in a revolving door. The director finally boomed out with, "Beverly, you did skip 3 pages!" The audience roared. I accused the waitress, in typical adlib form, of slipping something extra in my drink. Later, no one would believe that water was in my wine glass.

I took a lot of ribbing for that for years. Fortunately, I took my father's advice given to me when I was still a child: If you laugh at yourself, others can only laugh with you, not at you. Let's face it. We're going to make mistakes. If it is going to make a funny story next year, go ahead and enjoy it by laughing now.

What have you done lately that has made you laugh? Quick! Think! Laugh! Live your dreams.

THINGS ACTUALLY SAID IN COURT:

Q: All your responses must be oral, OK?
What school did you go to?

A: Oral

Q: Sir, what is your IQ?

A: Well, I can see pretty well, I think.

Q: The youngest son, the twenty-year old, how old is he?

Q: So the date of conception (of the baby) was August eighth?

A: Yes

Q: And what were you doing at that time?

Q: She had three children, right?

A: Yes

Q: How many were boys?

A: None

Q: Were there any girls?

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