

For Permanent & Positive Change

The Exchange

FEATURED TOPIC: HEALTHY HUMOR

Humor in Communication

About 28% of the population in the United States naturally insert humor into their communication. They find it easy to play with words and turn a potentially negative situation into a lighter one. Lucky them. What about the rest of us?

You can lighten the mood, even without the quick humor. Here are some suggestions:

- » Instead of telling people something, ask them what they think.
- » Open up your body's posture by leaning back in your chair and tilting your head.
- » Nod your head slowly as you listen.
- » Listen more than you talk.
- » Notify your face that you and the situation are okay.
- » Put tone into your face as you walk down the halls.
- » Put some pep into your step.
- » Hum an uplifting tune softly as you work.
- » Ask people how they are and use an inflection in your voice so they know you really want to know.
- » Compliment someone on a job well done.
- » Give credit to others.
- » Read something funny each day and laugh out loud.
- » Collect positive quotes and share them via notes, emails, or bulletin boards.
- » Find at least four things each day that you are looking forward to.

You will find that as you set your own attitude towards positive, you will find humor around you that you never noticed before. Before you go home, take inventory and make sure you have laughed today. ❖

What Our Clients Are Saying

"The TLC class was truly a life changing experience. Immediately I began benefiting both professionally and personally by using my new communication skills. The trainers were incredible. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to take the class."

Laurie Sacchetto, Interface Specialist

Humor on Health

For those of you who watch what you eat, here is the final word on nutrition and health. It is a relief to know the truth after all of those conflicting nutritional studies.

The Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.

The Mexicans eat a lot of fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.

The Chinese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.

The Italians drink a lot of red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.

The Germans drink a lot of beers and eat lots of sausages and fats and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.

CONCLUSION: Eat and drink what you like. Speaking English is apparently what kills you.

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Looking Forward

Our next issue will focus on Leadership Styles.

Looking Back

You might also be interested in our March 2007 edition: [Presentations](#) or read other [previous issues of The Exchange](#).

"And we should consider every day lost on which we have not danced at least once. And we should call every truth false which was not accompanied by at least one laugh."

Friedrich Nietzsche

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Busting a Gut

Have you ever laughed so hard you felt like you were going to bust a gut! I sincerely hope so! But what is a gut? How is it busted? Can a busted gut be unbusted?

The earliest documentation for this saying dates back to around 15th century Rome. As a means of entertainment, rulers would order commoners (regular people like us) to spontaneously entertain. Those selected who were not entertaining met an unfortunate fate. But those who got a positive reaction from humor had a better chance to survive. To ensure their safety, the commoner would intensify whatever they were doing to get an even stronger humorous reaction. If the commoner made a ruler laugh hard enough, it caused laughter so excessive it literally exercised the diaphragm.

The diaphragm is a muscle in our bodies that controls breathing. Like any muscle, the more it is worked the sorer and, ultimately, the stronger it becomes. If you were not used to laughing hard, then were exposed to continuously, hard laughter, you would feel a physical pain in your stomach or gut! To really laugh hard, you could bust a gut (well not really but you get the point)!

Having a sore stomach from laughing too hard may be one of the most rewarding pains we can have. Life is short, so laugh hard and enjoy the pain! ❖

Facing The Funny

Vincent Ivan Phipps

All my life, I've had the ability to make people laugh. This is a gift that as a youth often got me in trouble. Once I learned when and how to use it, it became an awesome communication tool.

What does laughter have to do with communication? If you ask me; everything! As many of you may know, my professional motto is:

If I can make you laugh, I can help you listen. If I can help you listen, I can help you learn. If I can help you learn, I can help you change.

Here is an example of how my mother communicated to me at an early age the importance of finding a healthy self-esteem through humor. As a child, I had a large, round head. I had very curly hair, which made my head look even bigger. One day I came home from school angry that all the kids nicknamed me "Big-Head." My mother told me to consider my big head as having a big brain and that means I'm smart. Although I hated being called big head she felt she'd take my mind off of my new nickname and asked

me to go to the store for a gallon of milk, a bag of potatoes, and a pound of sugar. I asked her, how am I going to carry all of that stuff. She said, "Carry it in your hat."

Now I use humor in my career. As a professional speaker, it can be challenging to hold people's attention for 45, 30, even 15 minutes. Telling funny stories (usually pointing fun at myself) and giving humorous analogies can help.

For example, whenever I teach listening, I always mention how listening is a situational skill. I share a story of how I was humbled when I accused my 10-year daughter that she never listens to me. She asked, "**Daddy, if you teach listening and I'm a bad listener, then does that mean you are a bad teacher?**"

Even in a group workshop or interactive seminar, I use humor to neutralize sensitive or heated topics. For example, one company sent me to work with 10 of their managers. Everyone in the group was to complete a short questionnaire about how they like to communicate. One of the most vocal and argumentative managers refused to complete the form, which caused dissention in the group. After several members challenged him saying, "he HAD to fill it out", it only made him angrier. After banging on the table and shouting, "It's no one's business if I'm not a people person. No one needs to know that!" He then asked me, "Vincent, do I have to tell people I'm not a touchy-feely person softy?" I answered, "No, you don't have to tell us you are not a people person. And from this point on no one will have to ask."

The group had a good laugh and the argumentative manager even broke a smile. I could have challenged him. I could have said, "Your boss said you have to." I could have told him to leave. But any of those would have killed the rapport. Making light and moving on worked.

There is a balance between being funny and being mean. Strive to keep the funny neutral, positive, and moving forward toward the goal. Timing, wit, intelligence, rhythm, and context are some of the major dynamics with being funny. Regardless of our age, race, religion, gender, or education, we all laugh. Since we see funny things differently, use humor less as a divider and more as a connector.

Face the funny and lead by example! ❖

Helpful Hints

- ✓ Know your audience if you are using humor in a speech.
- ✓ Timing is critical when using humor.
- ✓ Notify your face and smile when using humor.

"Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly; devils fall because of their gravity."

G.K. Chesterton

"Imagination was given to man to compensate him for what he is not; a sense of humor to console him for what he is."

Francis Bacon

"Laughter rises out of tragedy, when you need it the most, and rewards you for your courage."

Erma Bombeck

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Dear TLC

I work at an accounting office where everyone is pretty stuffy. No one has any fun here. The desks are boring, the dress is boring, and even our meetings are boring. Every time I make a suggestion, I'm told that's unrealistic and we need to stick to mainstream. I know accountants can be fun people because I was transferred from an office where everyone always went out afterwards and we even had an office party after tax season. But here, it's sleepy-ville. I like the money and the job and don't want to leave but I'm not having fun here. What can I do to wake these folks up?

Signed,
Party Pooped

Dear Party,

Remember that we have different levels of showing our joy and enthusiasm. Instead of assuming your office is boring because they have different levels of emotion, listen to them. Ask them what they like about their jobs. Meet with your manager and ask what has been that office's culture prior to your arrival. Also, if it is really important to you, ask everyone in your office to list their idea of what they consider fun. Make a suggestion that once a week (when possible), an idea will be anonymously selected. Everyone agrees to try it. Make the suggestions simple at first such as: casual Friday or Crazy Shirt Tuesday, group lunches at a new location, etc. This will help you identify what others like and eventually, you might get two people to agree on something enjoyable.

Featured Service

Therese Padgett

TLC Fun Day

One of the best ways to learn anything is when the process is fun and engaging. Some say the subject of study must be interesting for us to engage in it. However, I recently read a headline in a national publication that indicated the word "interesting" really describes things that are boring. When was the last time you were having fun and actually thought you were bored?

TLC has a team-building workshop called, "Fun Day." A variety of fun and engaging activities are introduced with minimum instructions. After each activity, the participants are lead in a discussion of what lessons were learned. You would be surprised at the knowledge gained from a relay game or even from musical chairs! Lest you shy away from competitive sports, let us assure you that many of the activities are individual pursuits. At least, they start out that way. You will need to become one of our participants in Fun Day to find out the real lessons that can be learned!

Call TLC today to schedule a Fun Day for your team. You can reach us at 1-888-BECAUSE – because you always communicate! ❖

Remember To

- ✓ Point the brunt of your jokes at yourself instead of others.
- ✓ Keep the humor neutral to avoid offending.
- ✓ Use humor to lighten the tone instead of antagonizing.

"Humor is the affectionate communication of insight."

Leo Rosten

"Humor is perhaps a sense of intellectual perspective: an awareness that some things are really important, others not; and that the two kinds are most oddly jumbled in everyday affairs."

Christopher Morley

"Humor is something that thrives between man's aspirations and his limitations. There is more logic in humor than in anything else. Because, you see, humor is truth."

Victor Borge

"This I conceive to be the chemical function of humor: to change the character of our thought."

Lin Yutang

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Chief Officer's Opinion

Beverly Inman-Ebel

"Laugh Now"

I learned a long time ago that if I do something goofy and it is going to make a good story some day, go ahead and laugh now.

Many of you know that I spend quite a bit of time in foreign countries. I go, not as a tourist, rather, as a speaker or on a business mission trip. I was scheduled to be in The Islamic Republic of Mauritania on the western shores of Africa from April 11 - 18, 2007. One of my dear friends expressed concern that I might come into harm's way in my unusual trips. I gave her a hug and told her that if anything ever happened to me to remember that I chose adventure. It is one of those adventures that I hope will bring you some humor today.

I was asked to be a keynote speaker in Libya in September 2005. At this time, our governments were not having relations with one another. On my last day there, I had an opportunity to go shopping in the old town of Tripoli. It was 104 degrees even at 9:00 a.m. yet I still honored their customs and wore long pants and long sleeves. My only concession to the heat was my flip-flops.

I had brought cash to Libya to exchange for their currency because their dictator, Kadafi, did not allow credit cards. On the last purchase, I did not have enough cash and was ready to leave without the purchase when the store merchant informed me in broken English that the jewelry store around the corner had, "first ever credit card machine." I handed him my Visa card and he said two simple words, "Follow me."

The streets in the old town are made of uneven cobble stones and I tripped over one of them. I looked up and saw that the merchant, dressed in a short sleeved white shirt and white turban, was walking quickly ahead. I picked up speed as my flip flops echoed through the narrow and twisting canyons of streets. He turned to see if I was following, and then he increased his speed. As he turned left by the hanging dead chickens, I was sweating bullets in the heat. It became apparent to me as I chased him and

he ducked to the right by the storefront with hanging baskets that he was definitely trying to loose me. No chance! He had my credit card!

As my toes dig into my rubber flip flops, I chastised myself for being so gullible, handing over my credit card to a total stranger in such a strange land. I did not speak Arabic and was not sure what I would do when I caught him, but I did manage to match his stride even when another merchant tried to divert my attention.

Finally, the man turned into a jewelry store. He immediately went behind the counter as I approached, laying a plastic bag filled with local currency on the counter top. I gawked at the overflowing sack of money, then my eyes slowly raised to the man's face...it was not the face of the man I had given my credit card to! I had been chasing a total stranger through the streets of old town Tripoli, Libya as he apparently was returning from his bank with his bag of money!

I asked if he spoke English and he and the other two men in the small store looked at me like I was a crazy woman. I held up my hands in the universal "I give up" signal as I backed out of the store. Then I started laughing. I laughed so hard that my eyes watered and my stomach tightened as only it can with a good belly laugh. I laughed as I turned left by the baskets and right by the dead chickens and finally found my way back to the original store where I found the merchant with my credit card. Apparently, at the very moment that I tripped, he turned into the store around the corner that had the credit card machine and the poor man with the bag of cash entered from a side street. They both were wearing white shirts and white turbans.

If I can to go Libya, chase a stranger who has a bag of cash, and cannot defend myself because of the language barrier and still can laugh, what have you done today that is getting you down? Find the humor in the worst situation and release the tension with laughter. It is called life and sometimes crazy things happen. Experience. Laugh. Live your dreams! ❖

"A sense of humor... is needed armor. Joy in one's heart and some laughter on one's lips is a sign that the person down deep has a pretty good grasp of life."

Hugh Sidey

"A person without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs. It's jolted by every pebble on the road."

Henry Ward Beecher

"Humor is mankind's greatest blessing."

Mark Twain

TLC establishes long-term relationships with our clients. If we have helped you or if you believe our approach to change would work for someone you know, please communicate with us by e-mail tlc@talklisten.com or phone 1-888-232-2873. We work with individuals and groups on the following subject areas: attitude, listening, body language, voice, leadership, compliments and corrections, behavioral style, teamwork, effective meetings, public speaking, accent reduction and much more!

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