

HUMOR SMOOTHES THE WAY

Humor smoothes the way with friends, family members and coworkers. Here are some tips for using humor as a positive tool in potentially uncomfortable situations:

1. Make fun of your own imperfections. When people know you don't take yourself too seriously, they are more comfortable and relaxed around you, and more likely to open up.
2. Whenever appropriate, use humor to defuse anger, provided the humor is not directed at the person who is angry.
3. Use humor as a memory aid. Incorporating the information you want to remember into a joke or silly rhyme helps you remember it.
4. Humor and creativity go hand in hand. Give people permission to come up with silly ideas or solutions to problems. Some of these evolve into very good solutions, or defuse tension so that good solutions can be found.

Take a few moments and think about humor in your own life:

Describe a time when you laughed so hard you cried: _____

Think of a favorite comedian or comic actor. What is it about that person that makes you laugh? _____

It's okay to laugh at yourself. Choose two of your imperfections and say something funny about them: _____

Recall a time when an unpleasant situation was turned around through humor: _____

Almost nothing immunizes you from day-to-day frustration more than a healthy sense of humor, particularly the ability to laugh at yourself.

Look on the Light Side

Laughter is a proven stress reducer. A good belly laugh improves breathing and reduces muscle tension. Humor even changes brain chemistry by releasing endorphins that increase our sense of well being, and improve our reasoning powers and make us less sensitive to pain.

All of us can laugh at a good joke, but what about real-life situations? Those who learn to find humor even in some of the grim realities and emotion-packed challenges of daily life have an edge on peace of mind. But this mindset takes practice. The following situations range from minor annoyances to life crises. How could humor ease you through?

Situation:

You have a flat tire in rush-hour traffic.

The Light Side:

I've always wanted to change a tire in front of an audience.

Situation:

Someone spills coffee on your new hand-painted silk tie/dress.

The Light Side:

Now it's really a "hand painted" original.

Situation:

You lost your job.

The Light Side:

Oh boy? Now I have time to fix those leaky faucets.



When Humor is NOT the Answer

Humor is a wonderful tool for setting people at ease and reducing stress. But humor can sometimes do serious damage.

Unacceptable forms of humor include the following:

1. Ethnic Humor.

Making fun of people's ethnic, racial, religious or cultural background is insulting and can lead to violence.

2. Cruel humor.

Practical jokes can be dangerous and almost always result in hurt feelings on some level. People who laugh at others are often trying to boost themselves at someone else's expense. Even when you're laughing because you did the exact same thing once, it can hurt someone's feelings.

3. Sarcastic humor.

This often involves putting others down. Even when it is directed at oneself, it is a joyless form of humor.

4. Nonstop humor.

Humor is a matter of balance. People who make a joke out of everything are tiresome and hard to get to know.

5. Humor as distraction.

It's not okay to use humor to avoid facing a serious issue.

*If everyone can join the laughter
—or would if they were present—
then it's probably "good humor."*

What is Humor?

by Dr. Chaya Ostrower

What is the purpose of humor? Why do we laugh? Humor is a complex phenomenon. There is no general theory of humor or even an agreed definition. When we try to define exactly what counts as humor and what does not, or how humor operates, we find it quite difficult.

Humor is comprised of three components: wit, mirth, and laughter. Wit is the cognitive experience, mirth the emotional experience, and laughter the physiological experience. We often equate laughter with humor, but there are many instances of laughter (tickling, nervousness, etc.) that clearly have little to do with humor. Similarly, there are many instances of humor that do not result in laughter (due to the mood of the person, the social context, etc.).

Humor is a quality of perception that enables us to experience joy even when faced with adversity. Stress is an adverse condition during which we may experience tension or fatigue, feel unpleasant emotions and sometimes develop a sense of hopelessness or futility. You cannot be stressed, angry, depressed, anxious, guilty, or resentful and experience humor at the same time. Like beauty being in the eyes of the beholder, humor is in the funny bone of the receiver of the experience.

For more information or to schedule an appointment contact:



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