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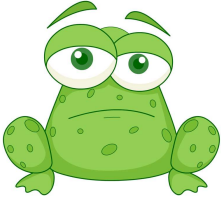


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"Analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog. Few people are interested, and the frog dies of it."

-- E. B. White

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Understanding Humor

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James Martin, SJ, says that a lighthearted spirit is “an essential element of a healthy spiritual life and a healthy life in general.”

Holy people are joyful “because holiness brings us closer to God, the source of all joy.”

-- Martin, James, SJ (2011). *Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor and Laughter are at the Heart of a Spiritual Life*. NY: Harper Collins.

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Understanding Humor

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Peter McGraw’s Human Research Lab – or HURL – studies humor.

They say what makes something funny is the result of a harmless violation of a social or moral norm.

-- McGraw, Peter (2010). “What Makes Things Funny.” TEDx Boulder.

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Understanding Humor

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Andrew Tarvin has done research on Humor. He says it...

- Brings people together
- Increases longterm memory
- Improves understanding
- Aids in learning
- Helps communicate messages
- Improves group cohesiveness

- Improves group cohesiveness
- Reduces status differentials
- Diffuses conflict
- Builds trust
- Brings people closer together
- Boosts overall brain power

-- Tarvin, Andrew (2017). The Skill of Humor. TEDx Tamu.

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Understanding Humor

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- “Those who use humor well are seen as attractive mates and desirable friends.” Communication Quarterly, v 57
- “Women with a sense of humor were found to live longer in spite of illness, especially cardiovascular disease and infection.” Scientific American, Sept 2016
- “The size of their bonuses correlated positively with their use of humor—in other words, the funnier the executives were, the bigger the bonuses.” Harvard Business Review, Sept. 2003.

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Understanding Humor

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Humor for those living under Nazi rule had three benefits:

1. It focused attention on what was wrong and sparked resistance,
2. It served a cohesive function, creating solidarity in those laughing together at the oppressors, and
3. It served as a coping function.

-- Clementi, Federica K. (2013). Holocaust Mothers & Daughters: Family, History, and Trauma. Brandeis University Press.

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Understanding Humor

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“Wit produced on the precipice of hell
was not frivolity,
but psychological necessity.”

-- Lipman, Steve (1991). Laughter in Hell: The Use of Humor during the Holocaust.
Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson

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Understanding Humor

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So, if humor can be so useful,
why aren't we using more of it
as we pursue our philanthropic goals?

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Understanding Humor


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There are so many ways to be humorous...

1. Tell Jokes
2. Share Anecdotes or Epigrams
3. Provide Ironic Comments
4. Parody or Imitate
5. Satirize

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Four Styles of Humor




- Rod Martin & Patricia Doris surveyed people to determine how they like to use humor and came up with the Four Styles of Humor people tend to employ.
- Of course, people can lean toward one style but employ several of them.

-- Martin, Rod; Patricia Puhlik-Doris; et. Al. (Feb. 2003). "Individual differences in uses of humor and their relation to psychological well-being." Journal of Research in Personality 37 (1): 48-75.

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Four Styles of Humor



1. Affiliative Humor
2. Aggressive Humor
3. Self-Enhancing Humor
4. Self-Defeating Humor

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Four Styles of Humor




1. Affiliative Humor

- Affiliative Humor creates a sense of fellowship, happiness, well-being and a connection among the participates. It can also charm and influence others, ease tension, and improve relationships. Think of comedian Jerry Seinfeld.
- Affiliative humor has been shown to increase group cohesiveness and promote creativity in the workplace.
- It is associated with increased levels of explicit self-esteem, psychological well-being, emotional stability and social intimacy, as well as decreased levels of depressive symptoms and anxiety.

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Four Styles of Humor




2. Aggressive Humor

- Aggressive Humor is characterized by the use of sarcasm, put-downs, teasing, criticism, ridicule and other humor at the expense of others. Some will laugh because it is funny; others may laugh out of discomfort. Think of Don Rickles or Joan Rivers.
- When it intends to harm or threaten others, it is the humor of bullies.
- Aggressive Humor is related to higher levels of neuroticism and lower levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness. Individuals who exhibit higher levels of aggressive humor tend to score higher on measures of hostility and aggression.

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Four Styles of Humor




3. Self-Enhancing Humor

- Self-Enhancing Humor finds the humor in everyday situations and make oneself the target in a good-natured way. Jon Stewart from the Daily Show often uses self-enhancing humor saying.
- Having a good-natured attitude toward life and laughing at the idiosyncrasies of life are key. It's a coping or emotion-regulating humor that finds the silver lining.
- Individuals who use self-enhancing humor are less likely to exhibit depressive symptoms and have increased levels of self-esteem, optimism, and well-being.

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Four Styles of Humor




4. Self-Defeating Humor

- Self-Defeating Humor includes putting oneself down in a "poor me" way – or being the "butt" of a joke –to gain approval from others. Rodney Dangerfield used it with his "I don't get no respect" lines.
- Laughter is often at the expense of the one sharing the humor. Targets of bullies may use it as a way to fend off attacks pre-emptively.
- Individuals who use self-defeating humor tend to show higher levels of neuroticism. It is also associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and psychiatric symptoms, and lower levels of self-esteem, well-being and intimacy.

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Four Styles of Humor



1. Affiliative Humor


2. Aggressive Humor

3. Self-Enhancing Humor

4. Self-Defeating Humor

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Using Humor with Colleagues



1. With Colleagues

• Teasing and Jokes

• Wry comments (Affiliative or Self-Enhancing)

• Avoid Aggressive Humor

• Using Self-Defeating Humor makes you look weak.

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Using Humor with Prospects



2. With Prospects

• Affiliative Humor strengthens relationships

• Teasing and Jokes – but at whose expense?


• Wry comments (Affiliative or Self-Enhancing)

• Avoid Aggressive Humor

• Using Self-Defeating Humor makes you look weak.

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Using Humor with Donors




3. With Donors

- Affiliative Humor strengthens relationships
- Teasing and Jokes – but at whose expense?
- Wry comments (Affiliative or Self-Enhancing) can suggest you appreciate their support and recognize the importance of their gift.

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Developing a Sense of Humor




Andrew Tarvin: Humor is a skill – which means that someone can learn it!

- Learn from standup comedy how to share your point of view. Use your perspective
 - As a way to connect with others, to show that we are alike,
 - To make a point.
- Use standup comedy to explore and expand and heighten reality. (If this is true, what else is true?). Use “yes and.”
- Practice, Perform, Repeat.

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Developing a Sense of Humor



- Learn to Laugh at Yourself
 - When you laugh at yourself, others will laugh with you.
 - Recall funny things in your life and tell stories about them – exaggerating details.
- Laugh at others jokes. People will feel a kinship with you.
- Spot humor in everyday life. Pick up things that happen and give them a twist.
- Learn some jokes. Even comedians write out jokes.
- Point out the irony in life. Try getting out of sticky situations with a funny line.
- Practice Your Timing.

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