

BUILDING FAMILY STRENGTHS

HUMOR

Humor changes our brain chemistry. It releases endorphins that increase our sense of well-being, improve our reasoning powers and make us less sensitive to pain. Families who have a sense of humor are more likely to feel good about themselves. It also seems fairly obvious that having a sense of humor helps families cope with life's stressors and crises.

How many laughs have you had today? Researchers suggest that the average American needs to laugh 15 times or more a day for health maintenance. If you are a serious person, who does not take time out for pleasure and always looks at things in a negative way, you are likely to have health problems in the future. If you are a serious workaholic and don't take time to laugh, you may find yourself less productive and effective than if you take time out for a little laughter.

WHAT IS HUMOR?

Humor can be defined as that which brings laughter into our lives. It can have positive effects for us physiologically, emotionally, psychologically, socially, intellectually and spiritually. The following are some benefits of laughter.

- ***Laughter can make you feel better.***

It is a tool to lighten your mood and help you laugh at yourself and not take things too seriously. Good laughter can help break the ice and ease social tension which makes you feel better and confident in communicating sensitive information.



- ***Laughter is good for reducing stress.***

Some physicians report that laughter can produce muscle relaxation which make an important contribution to stress reduction. Laughter can also release pent-up feelings of fear, anger and anxiety.

- ***Laughter is good exercise.***

Laughter is like "internal jogging." When you laugh, your muscles are activated, oxygen floods the blood and the cardiovascular system dilates. Laughter can stimulate the production of endorphins — the body's natural pain-reducing enzymes — in the brain.

- ***Laughter is free.***

Laughter is fat-free, salt-free, non-taxable, no cost, environmentally safe, constantly renewable, and does not require batteries and special assembly.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HUMOR WITHIN FAMILIES

Humor is very beneficial in strengthening families. It gives families perspective and a sense of power. Families that 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. Humor can be a very effective tool in helping families cope during good and bad times. Here are some of the benefits of laughter and joy to the family unit.

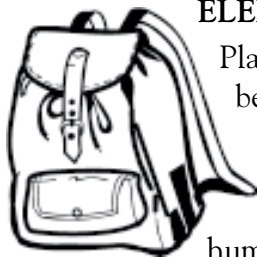
- Humor makes life fun.
- Humor helps us cope with problems.
- Humor and playfulness are a safety valve for the expression of anger and other strong feelings.

- Humor offers perspective and balance.
- Humor is a means of communication and creative expression.
- Humor provides temporary relief from the world's restrictive regulations.
- Humor is a way to express the truth even when the truth is feared.
- Humor is mentally and physically good for you.
- Humor affirms life and brings people together.
- Humor often succeeds where other methods have failed.



PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

FUN is the name of the game for very young children. The playful attitude and carefree approach to life provide many opportunities for them to give and receive laughter. Through humor, preschool children begin to explore the world based upon what they see around them. If they see humor displayed they are more likely to model this attitude as they interact with others.



ELEMENTARY CHILDREN

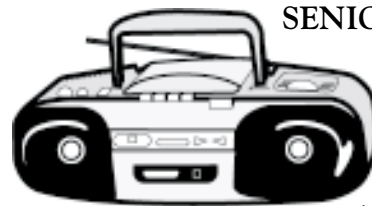
Play and interaction with others become important to school-age children. This takes place at home, in school and in the community. A child's sense of humor will begin to surface and be acted out as they interact and form relationships. This is also a very good time for children to experience laughter in a healthy and positive manner.



MIDDLE/JUNIOR HIGH ADOLESCENTS

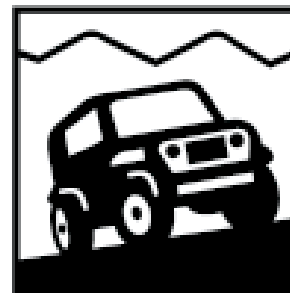
Adolescents are at a pivotal point in their growth and development. They are also very much in the stage of acceptance and approval. A positive approach to humor is

important as they deal with the everyday aspects of adolescence. Laughter provides a healthy way to deal with issues and situations that might otherwise be very stressful.



SENIOR HIGH TEENS

Teenagers are usually looking for situations to add FUN and enjoyment to their lives. The many media sources provide much of this entertainment. But even teens have to be aware and practice daily humorous encounters that do not include laughing at others. A constant effort to laugh at oneself and with others is important to a healthy view about humor during the teen years.



ADULTS

Adults tend to take themselves too seriously. As a result, many have lost touch with the importance of fun at home, on the job and in other aspects of their lives.

Human beings by nature are spontaneous and playful. Yet the older we become, the less appropriate it seems for us to allow laughter to be expressed. In today's fast pace of life, it is critical that adults experience the benefits of laughter on a regular basis. We do not have to be humorists to enjoy the joy of laughter. But we do have to seek ways to bring humor into our lives and those around us.

SUMMARY

Humor has many benefits that can strengthen and maintain healthy family relationships. Skills in humor can be developed if you are willing to become more playful; surround yourself with humor you enjoy; begin telling a few jokes or funny stories; look for humor in everyday situations; laugh more often and more heartily; laugh at yourself; and find the light side of stressful situations.

WHAT IS YOUR HUMOR

LEVEL?

Read the statements and circle the number where you feel you belong. If you circle a 7, you are saying the statement is “very characteristic of you.” If you circle a 1, the statement is “very uncharacteristic of you.” Be honest — no one is watching!

| | High <—————> Low |
|---|------------------|
| 1. My family would describe me as a “humorist.” | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 2. My family would say that humor is one of my strengths. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 3. I avoid sarcasm or negative humor. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 4. I can laugh at my own mistakes. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 5. I laugh alone when I feel something is funny. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 6. I easily laugh and enjoy laughing at funny jokes and stories. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 7. I seek out cartoons, comedy shows, etc., that make me laugh. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 8. I keep humorous information around to make me laugh. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 9. My sense of humor helps me relieve stress. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 10. I look for the funny side of life and share it with others. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 11. I send humorous notes and cartoons to others. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 12. My sense of humor makes it hard for people to stay mad at me. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 13. I enjoy telling humorous stories. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 14. I sometimes act silly at unexpected times. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 15. I am not uncomfortable laughing out loud with others. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 16. I use humor to help me remember important things. | 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 |

TOTAL SCORE: _____

TO GET YOUR TOTAL SCORE, ADD THE NUMBERS CIRCLED FOR EACH ITEM.

If you score 100-112, your Humor Level is unbelievable.

A score between 90-99 indicates “Humor Pro.”

A score of 70-90 means minor adjustments may be in order.

A score of 45-70 suggest a major adjustment is needed.

A score below 45 may require a “humor transplant.”

If you did not laugh or smile at this scoring, give yourself a zero!

Source: “*Making Humor Work*,” by Terry Paulson, Crisp Publications, Menlo Park, CA, 1989.

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