

IDEAS 49

**International Online Teachers Society
Debate
Educational Materials For
Advance and Upper Intermediate
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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Humor: Life's ultimate gift

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Humor is one of God's ultimate gifts to man. It causes various miracles which only the wise can comprehend. It solves misunderstandings, creates romances and uplifts pain. It improves the quality of education and the treatment in healthcare. It improves relationships between family members and it patches grudges between enemies. Laughter is indeed one of the best medicines and it has been used by healthcare professionals to remove pain and to establish rapport. It is also better to know someone and to interact with others through humor and as the Swiss Protestant Educator and Theologian Karl Barth quoted that laughter is actually the closest thing to the grace of God.

Humor is indeed a gift from God. It is a miracle that most people forget to cherish. Those who know the healing powers of laughter are the ones who have lesser hardships in life. Laughter not only uplifts a person and improves his health but he is also lucky when he takes things with a touch of humor. This is because the concept of laughter can be traced back to the theory known as Locus of control. Locus of Control is a theory which states that people have total control with the things that happen in their lives. People who take things lightly and smile daily will have more success and have better luck when it comes to plays. They have better relationships with friends and with lovers because they do not have a negative aura. People like to be with them since they have an optimistic look in life and they believe that everything is half full and not half empty. This is the concept behind the Locus of Control.

Men who know the magic of laughter are more interesting in women while women who laugh more look younger and more radiant. Lovers often tell jokes or share funny stories in order to lessen their tension. Teachers also use laughter in order to release the boredom inside the classroom while priests use it in order to enlighten the public. Indeed, the power of humor can be seen everywhere. Dr. Patch Adams, as portrayed by Robin Williams, also uses the power of laughter in order to alleviate the pain of patients and to help children who are sick. He believes that laughter improves the quality of life and it promotes healing. He also believes that laughter has a similar effect to a placebo in which it has a psychological effect to a patient.

In all beings under creation human beings are the only intellectual creatures who are given the gift of laughter. No other beast or life form has the capability to laugh and to share this life changing emotion.

Questions for discussion:

- 1) What is one of the best gifts from God?
- 2) What are the things that humor solves?
- 3) What theory is rooted to the concept of laughter?
- 4) Who are more interesting in women when they laugh?
- 5) Who uses laughter to release boredom inside the classroom?



HUMOR - LAUGHING YOUR HEART OUT

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Usually, people tend to be pessimistic in life that they become so problematic, but if we have humor, we can always have that attitude of laughing our heart out no matter what circumstances surround us. It is then that we need humor to ...balance and enlighten our life. Humor helps us keep a positive, optimistic outlook through difficult situations, disappointments and loss. Let us all admit that laughter makes us feel good and this good feeling that we get when we laugh remains with us even after the laughter subsides. Yes, the fact remains that laughter can help us relax and recharge. It definitely reduces our stress and increases our energy, enabling us to stay focused and be able to accomplish more things in our life.

As a matter of fact, laughter relaxes our whole body. Apparently, a good hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress. This actually leaves our muscles relaxed for the rest of the 45 minutes after. You cannot feel anything when you're laughing. You don't even feel anxious, angry or sad at all. All you want to do is laugh out loud and when you do that, you feel good inside. You have got that light feeling deep inside your heart that it empties everything which makes your heart ache.

There are times when you just feel like laughing, and sometimes it happens when you're plainly watching a television. With just a simple act that you see on screen, you will often find yourself amused at that particular scene. Then you start to smile and gradually it turns into laughter, which goes on and on and on and eventually it makes you laugh your heart out too. Humor shifts your perspective, which allows you to see situations in a more realistic less threatening light. Thus, a humorous perspective creates psychological distance, and this helps you avoid feeling overwhelmed.

To put it bluntly, humor gets you out of your head and away from all your troubles in life. Yes, it's true that laughter helps you forget judgments, criticisms and doubts. It also helps you release your inhibitions too, so that your fear of holding back and holding on are set aside. Then, that only means that humor helps you express your true feelings. More often than not, we become too serious in life that we even forget to smile.

Sometimes we become like that classic tight-jawed sourpuss who takes everything with deathly seriousness and never laughs at anything. We know very well that there is no fun being in this state and condition. One essential characteristic that will help us laugh is not to take ourselves seriously. It is about time that we should bring humor and laughter into our life. Let us try to develop our sense of humor and take ourselves less seriously. Try to see the brighter side of life and try to be witty and facetious, thereby developing that sense of humor by laughing our heart out.

Questions for discussion:

1. Do you have a sense of humor? Why or why not do you say so?
2. Do you believe that being humorous makes you witty? If yes, how is it so? If not, explain your answer.
3. How often do you laugh your heart out? Explain your answer.
4. What really makes you happy in life? Justify your answer.
5. Does being a humorous person make you feel young? Justify your answer.



A PERSPECTIVE ON HUMOR

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Humor can be a lot of different things to different people.

For many, it is a refreshing and ultimately fresher way of looking at things. It could serve as an ice-breaker, atmosphere-enhancer or boredom-dispeller. Can you just imagine an English class where the only comic relief you ever get is static (if you're in an online class) or the whirring of the fan blades? Or a TV program where the only respites you receive are from the show's host every time she thanks the sponsors for all the stuff she gets? (Some people have all the luck!) Or a live show where the only breaks you see are the ones between the stage curtains? Truly, anything would be rendered a total loss were it not for moments of comical humor that occasionally invade the most silent (and boring!) moments.

In addition, humor can also be culture-sensitive. What may be rollicking-funny in one country might prove to be disgusting or incomprehensible in another. For foreigners in my particular country, for instance, the native citizens' penchant for smiling and laughing even in the direst circumstances seems to evade reason. For foreign employers, too, the natives' party attitude is difficult to understand, much less give in to. I guess I can only agree with the downright observation and conclusion of one native host: my race is particularly resilient, so much so that we can still afford to smile at the camera, find a comic angle to anything, or inject humor in an otherwise tense situation, which can make other races look at us funny and say, "Are you so laidback and easygoing that you fail to see the seriousness in any given situation?" In fairness to my race, the reason why we still find humor in the most intense situations is because we see no point in crying over spilled milk. We do know how to take life seriously in our own little way, but we consider life to be too short to dwell on its pressures in a prolonged manner. Some might consider that a queer way of seeing things, but that's what makes us uniquely lovable.

For some, humor has its own place and time. I agree with such a concept. However, what makes humor funny is the fact that it can come in the most unexpected forms and the most unlikely situations. There was a time when toilet humor seemed to be a trend, but such types will always fall flat. Slapstick comedy hurts more than it humors, so those who prefer to poke fun at others by hurting them or pointing out their unique traits have a very limited time onstage and great potential to go on storage.

Humor, after all, also chooses its audience.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What would you consider as funny?
2. Give some examples of common jokes in your country.
3. What makes your race unique in humor? Why?
4. Have you ever been laughed at? Talk about that particular situation.
5. Do you feel that your country's humor is misunderstood by other races? Why or why not?



HUMOR IN MARRIAGE

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With the way the holy state of matrimony has been placed in jeopardy nowadays, one can only wonder why this is so. How many marriages have ended up in painful separations, divorces, or annulments? Does this prove that the institution of marriage has ceased to be considered a sacred union that no man can so readily break apart?

The many unfortunate people who have come out of messy marriage disintegrations seem to experience certain levels of disillusionment right after. They justify their decisions to break off from their marriages with certain reasons that seem to be a constant refrain for many failed relationships: we were too young to know better; we grew apart; we simply drifted away from each other; we were psychologically incompatible.

I used to be half of a pair before my husband died a few years ago. We had our ups and downs, our “You’re simply impossible” moments, and our moments of insanity. But what I would never exchange my marriage for anything in the world is the fact that despite our many issues and disparities, even in the darkest moments of our relationship, my late husband was the only man who could ever make me laugh out loud with his quirks and idiosyncrasies. Like one time when he got really mad at me for something I did that I no longer remember the root cause of, in his anger he kicked a house post and ended up with the webbing between his big toe and his first phalanx torn. And of course, like most males, he felt weak at the sight of blood and had to lie down for some moments and be given first aid for the bleeding. At the end of the day, he totally forgot what he had been mad about because of the pain. Or the time when he was incessantly probing on his big toe (again!) for an ingrown nail, and ended up having outpatient surgery in the hospital because his big toe had grown enormous. I told him much, much later that we would have spent a lot less had he gone for a pedicure service instead of trying to do it himself. The cleaning, I mean.

Now, my husband has lain in eternal rest for close to six years, but it is the moments of humor that he has given me that I shall never forget. Although he has left me, his humor stays.

My advice to other couples is: always find humor in your marriage, no matter how inconsequential or intrinsically unfunny. Who knows, that might go a long way in saving your relationship yet.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How can humor save a marriage? Be as specific as you need to be.
2. Why do marriages often fail?
3. Will you marry someone who makes you laugh? Why or why not?
4. How can issues be resolved using humor in marriage? Elaborate on your answer/s.
5. Can you name successfully-married couples? What do you think keeps their marriages strong?



WHAT'S FUNNY THERE?

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One of my daughters would often tell me stories when she comes home or while we hang up the laundry to dry every evening. She specially likes talking about the funny incidents that happen in their classroom. One time, she was telling me about the antics of a classmate who seemed to be their classroom's funny guy that I ended up teasing her, perhaps she liked this classmate. To which she vehemently replied OF COURSE NOT! We have not stopped the story-telling moments each and everyday. I must say that my daughter is a level-headed, responsible, serious girl. But I am really glad that every day she spends in school is peppered endlessly with amusement and humor from her classmates and great teachers.

I remember one time when my eldest son told me about an incident in their classroom when he was still in high school. Their teacher had been having a particularly bad day. It was totally ruined when one of my son's classmates made a funny rejoinder to something the pissed teacher had said. The unfortunate boy was sent out to stand outside the classroom for the remainder of the class period. Although the teacher's decision to give such a punishment was unquestionably his way of enforcing discipline (the school is a Catholic one for boys), I sometimes wonder whether the teacher would have found everything funny, too, had he not been steaming mad at the time.

As teachers to both young and adult students, we must never forget that humor is sometimes essential in making learning more enjoyable. The students we handle struggle to remember the lessons we impart to them, but they will definitely remember more those moments when we shared a laugh or two with them. Oceans might divide the countries we hail from, but it helps if we share with them, at least once in a while, what we consider as funny so they can understand our culture in the process. Let us allow our students to share the rationalizations to what constitutes humor for them so we can find common ground between us. If we continue to draw a decisively large dividing line, how else can we hope that what we teach them is well-understood?

I admit, several times during my online teaching career, I have been pissed at some students for trying to be funny. Only now do I realize that perhaps, those students were simply trying to draw me into their world so I can also draw them into mine. Humor, after all, is meant both to amuse and explain. Perhaps I was just too blind to see how.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What is humor to you?
2. What kinds of humor are not amusing to you? Why are they not humorous?
3. Share one particular humorous moment in your life. What makes that incident special?
4. Will you take the effort to explain to someone what makes something funny or will you just keep quiet about it? Why or why not?
5. Do you consider some things universally humorous? Name such things. What makes them so?



FINDING HUMOR IN MOTHERHOOD

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My life as a mother is filled with numerous funny moments that never fail to bring a smile to my lips when I go back to them in reverie. It just goes to show how much I love being a mother to seven unique children who can be funny and heartbreaking at the same time.

A few weeks ago, my fourth child had to go to school for two hours less than his usual daily schedule. He had to show up in school at 9 am. His lunch pack had already been prepared in the morning, and this was aside from an afternoon snack pack. Because it had been raining that morning, I reminded him to take an umbrella. He brought the umbrella, but forgot his lunch bag. Of course, not a few hours later, he came running back home to eat lunch with me. I knew he was saving his allowance for emergency expenses, so the transportation fare he had to spend going home for lunch was a loss. This particular son of mine is a very forgetful one, probably because of the fact that he had been operated on when he was just two or three years old.

My youngest daughter often fell asleep while eating when she was three to four years old. She still eats so slowly that I often get exasperated trying to get her to finish her breakfast before she goes off to school. She even has a video stored on my brother's cellular phone which shows her struggling for wakefulness while eating. She also has a video that shows her asleep with an ice cream in her hand on an amusement ride in a mall. There's another one showing her blowing the candles off her cake when she was about three years old. It took her a full minute to blow the candles off, and we were all laughing at her futile attempts in doing so. We made fun of how bursts of her saliva went in places while she was in the process of blowing the candles off.

My second child recently made a video of himself singing a pop song, which he has refused to post at his social networking page to this day. He was singing along to the popular song using an improvised microphone, an old, cloth-covered golf club. He also has a video showing him doing air boxing (he was an MMA fanatic), which made him look like a total dork aiming his blows and boxing no one in particular.

There are many more of such instances, and I can only wish that I could be able to retain them all in videos or photos. However, such moments are as unexpected as they are spontaneous. Thank God for such humorous moments. They are what make my life complete.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Can you recall a specific humorous moment in your life? Talk about it in class.
2. Your generation has multiple means of storing funny memories. Will you try to store your own family's humorous escapades whenever you can? Why or why not?
3. What makes humorous family moments extra special?
4. Why is humor necessary in life?
5. How can we continue to have humor in life? Elaborate your answer/s.



HUMOR - A POWERFUL TOOL

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There are a lot of things that a person with sense of humor can do for it is considered to be one of the most powerful tools that we could ever have and possess. Apparently, we cannot be productive if we have a deteriorating health so people need to have a sound mind and healthy body. As Paul E. McGhee, Ph.D puts it, "Your sense of humor is one of the most powerful tools you have to make certain that your daily mood and emotional state support good health." Amidst the surmounting troubles, worries and problems that a person could ever imagine, we need to unload these things that burden us. We could only do so if we have a sense of humor.

There are a thousand and one reasons why people need humor. As a matter of fact, humor is infectious. When you hear a roaring sound of laughter, it's impossible for you not to laugh too. Actually it is far more contagious than any cough, snuffle or sneeze. It would be inevitable not to share laughter and when we do, it increases our happiness and intimacy which leads to binding us together with other people around us. More importantly, laughter also triggers healthy physical changes in our body.

Humor and laughter can strengthen our immune system. More so, it can help you boost your energy and diminish pain that you feel. When we talk about pain, the first word that comes out of my mind is stress wherein a lot of people experience it. The best thing about it is that, humor and laughter can protect us from the damaging effects of stress and most of all it definitely serves as a priceless medicine which is fun, free and easy to use. In general, the saying that goes, "Laughter is the best medicine," really holds true.

Laughter can be a powerful antidote to stress, pain and conflict. It works out to bring our mind and body back to balance and makes us give ourselves a good laugh. Humor lightens our burdens, whatever they may be. It inspires hope, connects us to others, and it helps to keep us focused and alert too. It has much power to heal and renew because it can enhance relationships and it supports both our physical and emotional health.

Laughter is good for our health because it can relax our whole body. Try putting out a hearty laugh and you will feel the release of your tension and stress. It helps boost our immune system. Actually, laughter decreases the stress hormones and increases the immune cells and infection fighting anti-bodies, thus improving our resistance to diseases. Laughter triggers the release of the endorphins; these are the body's natural feel-good chemicals. FYI: endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and it can even temporarily relieve pain in our body.

Laughter protects the heart. It can improve the function of the blood vessels and it increases blood flow, which can help and protect us against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems. There are still a lot of good things that we can benefit from humor and laughter, that makes it a powerful tool and I could go on and on, and never stop but at least these things that I have mentioned will aide us to know that having a sense of humor can be very advantageous.

Questions for discussion:

1. What are the benefits that we can get out of humor? Elaborate further.
2. How can having a sense of humor help you? Explain your answer.
3. Do you believe in the saying, "Laughter is the best medicine"? Why or why not?
4. Have you developed that sense of humor you need to change your lifestyle? How?
5. What are the benefits that you reap now that you have some sense of humor? Justify your answer.



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