

# The Psychology of Humour - Improving Wellbeing

## Description

April Fool's Day (also known as All Fools Day) is celebrated by playing practical jokes and spreading hoaxes. It's a day that brings about laughter. All that mirth, teasing, warm feelings, banter and puns comprise a complex social and psychological phenomenon, known as humour. Psychology has been interested in humour for about 100 years now. To find out why educational psychologists think humour is important, carry on reading to find out what the research shows.

As everyday life and some of the hardships involved in it take over, many of us have lost the ability to unselfconsciously roar with laughter like we used to when we were young children. Read this feature to find out some ways to incorporate more laughter and joy in your life so that you can express pure bliss without inhibitions and improve your wellbeing.

"What soap is to the body, laughter is to the soul." (An Old Yiddish Proverb)

April Fool's Day (also known as All Fools Day) is celebrated by playing practical jokes and spreading hoaxes. It's a day that brings about laughter. All that mirth, teasing, warm feelings, banter and puns comprise a complex social and psychological phenomenon, known as humour. Psychology has been interested in humour for about 100 years now. Why is humour important? This is what the research tells us:

- Smiling and laughing are contagious so you end up smiling / laughing when others are.
- Positive emotions make the brain feel good by releasing a 'feel good' chemical.
- Humour and laughter block out negative emotions as it is almost impossible to feel sad or angry whilst laughing.
- Laughter increases social connection as it makes you perceive the other person as more similar to yourself.
- Inside jokes help to establish group belonging and this is how groups differentiate themselves. The understanding of the inside humour can be a gateway for new members to quickly join the group.
- Humour reduces the importance of situations and problems as it is an immediate tension-release mechanism as well as a part of a broader strategy for coping with stress.
- Humour boosts the immune system and improves sleeping patterns.
- Humour has been used to reduce anxiety and help people adjust to new situations.
- Humour can also boost morale.
- Humour allows things to be said that are otherwise too 'heavy' or difficult for the conversation, because they can be said more lightly. A joke can often tell a difficult truth when said in the right way at the right time without being offensive.

As everyday life and some of the hardships involved in it take over, many of us have lost the ability to unselfconsciously roar with laughter like we used to when we were young children. The following are some ways to incorporate more laughter and joy in your life so that you can express pure bliss without inhibitions:

- Try not to take life too seriously. If you can laugh light-heartedly at your own quirks and imperfections, you may be able to give yourself that extra happiness and confidence boost that can get you over any obstacle.
- Find the humour in tough or bad situations. There are some situations that are genuinely sad and laughing is not appropriate. However, most situations in life have a mocking or comical aspect. The next time you feel overwhelmed, take a minute to think about the irony of the situation and allow yourself to laugh over the things you cannot control. This will decrease the amount of cortisol that your body produces due to stress.
- Remind yourself of funny moments from the past. Perhaps a great joke or something amusing that you saw happen.
- Watch a funny film or comedy as this can increase laughter and the release of happy chemicals called endorphins which act as natural painkillers and mood boosters.
- Surround yourself with fun people who like to laugh a lot.
- Join a laughter workshop or go to a laughter yoga course (yes, these really do exist).
- Brighton and the surrounding areas are full of comedy events and these can be great to attend.
- And finally,

Q: What did the duck say when he bought lipstick?

A: "Put it on my bill."