

The Kindness Curriculum Educators notes

Humour/Humor

Humour from the Latin word umor means to be fluid and flexible. Defined, humour is a quality in something that makes you laugh - it could be a situation, someone's words or actions, something that is heard or seen. If you are in good humour, you feel cheerful and happy, and are pleasant to people. Humour is considered a character strength because it can be used to make others feel good, to build relationships, and to help buffer stress resulting in increased feelings of emotional wellbeing, cohesion and optimism. Humour encourages enjoyment, increased engagement and communication, teamwork and enthusiasm.

Research also suggests that humour reduces negativity and depression. However, if humour is used divisively or to disparage others it can have negative impacts on self-esteem and confidence. The activities sourced and designed provide opportunities for people to comprehend, appreciate, and produce humour. A happy environment where laughing together is prioritised will promote a warm, secure space where individuals are valued.

Kind people experience more happiness and humour and laughter are reported to enhance happiness! The Cambridge Dictionary defines humour as the ability to find things funny, the way in which people see that some things are funny, or the quality of being funny. It is the ability or quality of people, objects, or situations to evoke feelings of amusement in other people. There has been a significant body of research conducted to illustrate why and how humour works. Specifically, laughter activates the "happy hormones" and subdues the stress hormone cortisol. A sense of humour is the ability to experience humour. A sense of humour is influenced by a range of variables including context, age and maturity, culture, location and context. For example, satire appeals to mature audiences, young children favour slapstick and young adults are likely to smirk at self-deprecating humour. Aaker and Bagdonas (2021) surveyed 1.4 million people in 166 countries and found that rates of laughter plunge at the age of 23 – as we "grow up". It has been found that a four-year-old laughs 300 times a day; whereas a 40-year-old only laughs 300 times every 10 weeks. Humour has many benefits including the capacity to make criticism more palatable; make difficult and heavy conversations lighter; and explore challenging topics in a very gentle and subtle way.

Humour in the classroom has many benefits. It can promote an open and safe environment supporting classroom management. It can also reduce anxiety in testing conditions lightening mood. Garner (2011) cites numerous studies that show the positive effects of using humour in the classroom. He suggests that humour is a powerful teaching tool that can create a positive "emotional and social environment" in which students can lower their defences and retain focus. Garner also says that humour can "initiate and sustain student interest" as well as improve students' divergent thinking and memory of the topic presented. Humour in the classroom has the potential to increase creativity, reduce stress and negative talk, build relationships in the classroom and with families and support team work.



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Humour is a common element of human interaction and has also been described as an important component of organisational culture. Humour in the workplace can create a positive environment in which knowledge and ideas are shared liberally and interpersonal relationships can thrive. Some reasons why humour is a key to success:

- Reduces stress
- People enjoy working together
- Builds trust between colleagues
- Makes peers more approachable
- Reduces tension and conflict in the workplace
- Increases productivity
- Promotes creativity and divergent thinking
- Boosts morale and team connections

Laughter a key outcome of humour is powerful and is good for individual's health!

References

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