

Humour is Serious Business



The Power of Humour to Transform

1

What's on the menu?

PART 1

- Origins, History, Unique Selling Points & Research
- Health Benefits
- Quiz: Types of Humour
- Energiser
- Benefits for Youth Work / Non-Formal Practice
- Tips for using humour
- Theories
- Research
- Humour: Why is innovative?
- Humour: Why is responsive?
- What kind of practitioner are you?
- Comfort Break

PART 2

- Humour is Serious Business Training Course, The Humour Alliance & Humour Festival
- Humour: The Power to Explore
- Humour: The Power to Transform
- Developing your Humour Lens
- Humour – the power to explore
- Secrets of Humour: The Four E's
- Conclusions
- Further Reading
- Feedback
- My Details
- Questions / Discussion
- Finnish Disco Dancing

2

Origins, History, USPs & Research



This picture was given to a grade 1 class and the children were asked to suggest a headline. The winning entry was:

'Never swallow your bubblegum.'

3

Origins

Comedy is only one form of humour

Comedy derives from the word **Komoidia**, (which comes from **komos** meaning revel), which roughly translates as 'village festival'.

Two key elements: **Festivity & Performance**

Festivity: Comedy stood for 'rejoicing, festivity, merry-making and anyone in cheerful spirits'

Performance: Theatre which pits two 'societies' against each other in an amusing conflict to highlight irony

4

Some Key Historical Moments

Early Native Americans: The Clown (3rd most important person in the tribe)

Middle Ages: "comedy" became synonymous with satire

Medieval Kings & Queens: court jesters (court fools)

Clowns: long history dating from the 15th century

Christian scholars: linked humour to insincerity and idleness

Victorian age: laughing was thought to be sinful

5

Unique Selling Points

- Free
- It's natural
- Everybody has it
- Good for your health
- Nurtures creative thinking & productivity
- It's one of the most-studied and evidence-based areas
- Contagious
- Durable
- Stimulates and provokes
- In Demand
- Promotes Connection
- It encourages a playful mindset
- Promotes Attraction & Learning
- Fun

6

Study of Humour - Seminal Moments

- 1972: *The Psychology of Humour*
(Goldstein & McGhee)
- 1978: *The Comic Encyclopaedia* - 1st terminology of the science 'Humourology' was published
(Evan Esar)
- 1979: *Anatomy of an Illness*
(Dr. Norman Cousins)
- 1983: *Handbook of Humour Research*
(Paul E. McGee & Jeffrey H. Goldstein)
- 1986: *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humour*
(John Morreal)

7

Health Benefits



8

Fun Fact!

Humour in medieval times referred to:
'the fluids in the body that stimulated a pleasant attitude and healthy disposition

Humour	Emotion
Phlegm	Calm
Blood	Optimistic/Confident
Choler (Yellow Bile)	Anger
Melancholy (Black Bile)	Sadness

9

Context

Greek physicians: prescribed visits to the Hall of Comedians (modern equivalent of Social Prescribing)

Biblical References: *'A merry heart does good like medicine'* Proverbs (17:22)

16th-18th Century: humour used to address depression, release tension and restore equilibrium

1930's: clowns were brought into U.S. hospitals

1972: The Gesundheit Institute - founded by U.S. Doctor Hunter 'Patch' Adams.

10

Physical Benefits

- increases **blood circulation** - reduces blood pressure / prevents heart disease
- increases **ventilation** in the lungs
- increases **oxygen intake**
- **relaxes** muscles
- **massages** internal organs
- **reduces** water vapor and carbon dioxide in the lungs
- **decreases** the risk of pulmonary infection
- **decreases** pain
- **lowers the level of stress hormones** in the brain - triggers the release of endorphins, the brain's natural opiates (happy chemicals)
- Boosts **immunity**

11

Emotional Benefits

- Increases **resilience**
- Reduces **anxiety and fear**
- Improves **mood**
- Increases **energy**
- You're **in the moment** – you don't think of anything else when laughing
- Humour is a way to **deal with Triggers and Stressors**
- Character trait associated with the **positive emotions** used in the **broaden-and-build theory of cognitive development**
- **Strong relationship between good health and good humour** (research investigating the psychoneuroimmunological effects)

12

Quiz Time

What types of humour do you know?

Graffiti removal guy comes back to discover image of himself.



13

Different types of humour

Parody	Police Squad
Satire	Monty Python
Hostility	The Thick of it
Slapstick comedy	The Three Stooges
Absurd / Nonsense	Emo Phillips
Double entendre	'Carry On' Movies
Dark Humour	South Park
Irony	The Office
Dry Humour / Sarcasm	Derry Girls
Quick wit and puns	Tim Vine / Stewart Francis
Seaside Humour	Benny Hill
Toilet humor	Bottom
Word Play	Big Bang Theory
Exaggeration	Father Ted
Story Telling	Billy Connolly / Ronnie Corbett
Self-Deprecating	Sarah Milligan
The Clown	Mr Bean

14

Energiser

Very simple Task!
Together you're going to count to 25...

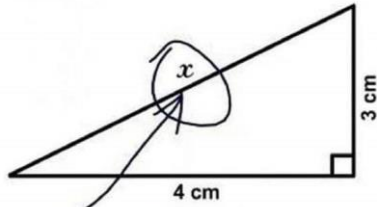
... without interrupting or speaking over one another...

... but with your eyes closed. 😊

15

Benefits for Youth Work / Non-Formal Practice

3. Find x .



Here it is

16

Sense of Being Openings Created The Outcome

1	2	3
Be silly together	Daydream with them	Notice them
Laugh at their jokes	Hang out together	Include them in conversation
Giggle together	Make time	Be sincere
Smile a lot	Unwind together	Talk directly together
Be relaxed	Be yourself	Tell them you like being with them
Enjoy your time together	Accept them	Look in their eyes when talking
Do what they like to do	Trust them	Create a safe, open environment
Be spontaneous	Play with them	Talk openly with them
Have fun together	Let them act their age	Help them learn something new
Be happy	Surprise them	Inspire their creativity

17

Tips for using Humour

- Always be prepared to laugh at and make fun of yourself –people appreciate someone who is prepared to do this – they tend to think this person is ok!
- Always greet people with a smile – it can set the tone for them and you!
- Make sure the humour you use is equal to the relationship you have with the person you are engaging with – the person you are engaging with must understand where you are going with it and that they are ok with it.
- Don't interpret that every act of humour is an attempt to get at you – for some it's a defence mechanism and is all they know.
- When people try to use humour to belittle or put you down, 'embrace' and use it to your advantage – by taking ownership of their humour you can turn the situation around and create a new situation which leads to a better outcome

18

- **Don't always make people the joke just because you can and / or it's easy for you**
- **Remember when you are using humour, you are making it ok for others to use it and thus inadvertently inviting them to join you with humour, but it might be the kind of humour you do not expect or respect, so prepare yourself as to how to respond – not react but respond. Your response will be key, particularly for any person that might not understand your boundaries or expectations.**
- **Be prepared to challenge certain kinds of humour** if it crosses ethical boundaries but explain why you are challenging it and what the issue with it is.
- **Help people to explore humour** and understand the implications of it if it is misused
- **Your humour should only be used to care for the person you're trying work with** – it's designed to lighten the moment, put a smile on their face, will be enjoyed by them, can offer perspective they might not yet have thought about and is based around the relationship you already have with them.

19

Theories

Mansplaining: The Statue™



20

Superiority Theory

made famous by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who is probably the originator of this theory.



.....also dates back to the time of Plato and Aristotle

21

Incongruity Theory

made famous by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).



What kind of tea is that???
I don't know, I found it in my
grandson's room.

...also dates back to the time of Aristotle, Cicero (and others)

22

Relief Theory

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Herbert Spencer are
the two most prominent relief theorists



.....no Greeks were involved or harmed in the making of this theory....

23

Recent Research



"Close another tab. You can do it. Be
strong. I'm here for you. Close that tab.
You don't need 290 tabs open."

24



- ✓ **PHYSICAL:** *'Laughter's great for you, and it may even compare to a proper diet and exercise when it comes to keeping you healthy and disease free'* (Dr Lee Berk)
- ✓ **MENTAL:** *'The use of humour by social workers and their colleagues are cited as **one of their most common coping mechanisms'*** (Moran and Hughes, 2006)
- ✓ **RESILIENCE:** *Several studies found that humour and the sharing of **humour can build resilience** in social work teams'* Siporin, (1984); Witkin (1999); Sullivan (2000); Moran and Hughes (2006) and Gilgun and Sharma (2011)



- ✓ *'Many studies have identified the **hippocampal region as taking on a central role during humour experiences*** (Vrticka & Sambanis, 'Humour – An Important Spice to teaching?')
- ✓ *'Humour comes from expectations and logic being disrupted, **which engage our higher executive functions'*** (Dean Burnett, The Idiot Brain)
- ✓ *'Humour is by far the **most significant behaviour of the brain'*** (Edward de Bono, Serious Creativity)
- ✓ **Others that have written about humour:** Salvatore Attardo; Rod Martin; Nagler and Ridd; Aju Basil James, Mora, Weaver and Lindo



Humour: Why is it innovative?

**SOMEONE JUST HONKED
TO GET ME OUT OF MY
PARKING SPOT FASTER.
SO NOW
I HAVE TO SIT HERE UNTIL
BOTH OF US ARE DEAD.**

It's innovative because...

- **it's free** – it costs nothing and everyone has it
- **It provides a way in** - more often than not it provides a sure-fire 'way in' to engage young people
- **very few focus on humour** – has little or no recognition or established practice in youth work
- **practitioners are constantly on the 'look out' for something new or 'magical'** but they fail to notice or appreciate the very thing they possess can support delivery
- **the practitioner is the resource** rather than developing a reliance on 'tools'

28

It's innovative because...

- **it brings a change in practitioner mindset** – it nurtures a humour mindset through the development of their 'humour lens.'
- **everyone has a sense of humour but they lose most of it over time, so it reawakens or increases it** - adults on average laugh 15 times per day, whilst children on average laugh between 300 and 500 times per day.
- **few realise the power of humour as a means of creating transformation** - you don't have to be a comedian to create change
- **practitioners come to appreciate the power of humour** – it's just not a spontaneous reaction to a funny situation or moment
- **Humour is Serious Business training programme provides a 'humour journey'** which leads practitioners to become better equipped to use humour in their practice

29

Humour: Why is it responsive?

10 FUN FACTS

1. You can't see your ears without mirror.
2. You can't count your hair.
3. You can't breathe through nose, with your tongue out.
4. You just tried No. 3
6. When you did No. 3 you realized that it is possible, only you look like dog.
7. You are smiling right now, because you were fooled.
8. You skipped No. 5
9. You just checked to see if there's a No. 5.
10. I want my "Like"

30

It's responsive because it...

- **is free** and an efficient way to respond to an identified issue
- **can identify, address and respond to any issue** therefore providing endless opportunities to engage learn
- **nurtures creative and imaginative responses** therefore making learning engaging
- **Focuses on practitioners becoming 'the resource'** rather being reliant on tools and in doing so become more competent and better equipped to respond to identified issues

31

It's responsive because it...

- **allows users have complete ownership of the process** and help shape and mould responses
- **provides opportunities for anyone can take on roles that explore any given issue** yet remain 'unconnected' or 'disconnected' from the issue being dealt with
- **makes learning fun** – and evidence shows people learn / remember more when they're having fun

32

Personality Test

What kind of Practitioner are you?

professor: you're currently failing your ethics class
me: *slides a \$20 across the desk*
how about now

33

The Simpsons (Myers Briggs) Test

- You must select one letter from each of 4 pairs of opposing personality type indicators
- This will result in a 4-letter code
- The code will be cross matched to one of 16 Simpsons characters with whom your personality is most closely aligned

34

The first pair – Direction of your Energy Force

E or **I**

You prefer to direct your energy to deal with people, things, situations.

You prefer to direct your energy to study ideas, information, explanations or beliefs.

35

The second pair – Information Processing

S or **N**

You prefer to deal with facts, what you know, to have clarity, a realist in the here & now

You prefer to deal with ideas, look into the unknown, to generate new possibilities or to anticipate what isn't obvious

36

The third pair –
Making Decisions

T or F

You prefer to decide on the basis of logic, using an analytic and detached approach.

You prefer to decide using values and/or personal beliefs,

37

The fourth pair –
Organizing your Life

J or P

You prefer your life to be planned in a stable and organised way

You prefer to go with the flow, to maintain flexibility and respond to events

38

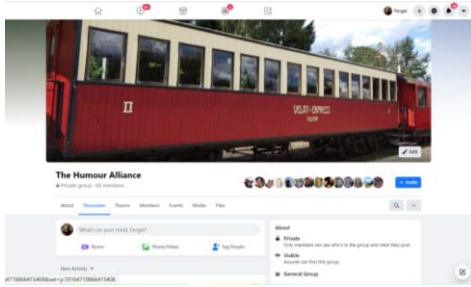
The Cross Match



You Should have a 4 letter code, e.g., ENTP - Find your Simpson character in the next 4 slides

39

The Humour Alliance



[The Humour Alliance | Facebook](#)

Humour Festival

<https://thekingisalive.wixsite.com/humourfestival>

49

Humour: the power to explore



50

Humour: The Power to transform – Possibility, Perception & Perspective



51



55

This is Wilson. He is now working from home 😊



56



57



58



59



60



61

"Why do you charge for your art?
Being an artist is a gift, and you
should share it with others as a
free service."

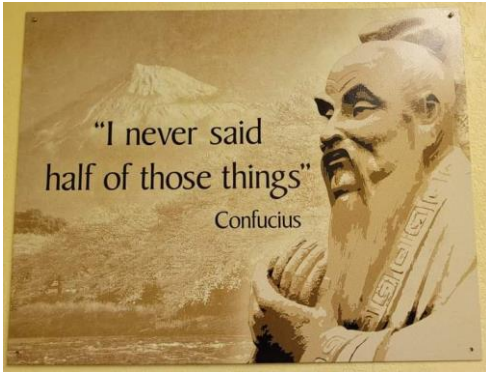
Me:



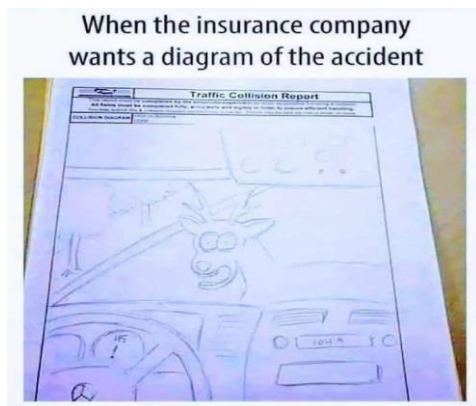
62



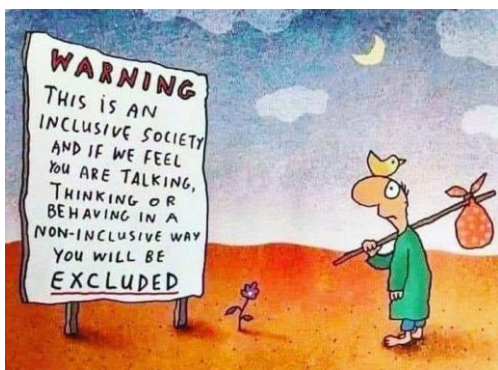
63



64



65



66



67

"I'm allergic to gluten, dairy, nuts and I'm vegan. What can I get?"

Waiter: The fuck out of here



68

I need to start carrying some chalk around 😂



69



70



71

Developing your Humour Lens...



72



73



74



75



76

Secrets of Humour: The 4 E's

"Things may be tough now, but there's always a light at the end of the tunnel."

The light at the end of the tunnel:



77

Expectation



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63rcdLeXIU8>

78

Exaggeration



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLTnacYvvg4>

79

Exposure



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nohGiQmOxc&t=46s>

80

Extremity



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30DcHyi-hZE>

81

Conclusions

-Humour can serve **multiple psychological functions**, whether it is conceptualized as a personality trait, a strength of character, a coping mechanism, a world view, an attitude, an emotion-based temperament, an aesthetic preference, an ability and competence, or a virtue.

-It has a **historical context and theoretical basis** and much of the understanding around it is based on research

-There are **many benefits** from humour including physiological, psychological, emotional and social and there is a wide variety of different humours

- **There are differences in meaning between funny, laughter, humour and comedy:** "funny" is an internal reaction to humour; it produces pleasure. Smile and laughter are social expressions of pleasure - but not just from humour. We smile or laugh when we see little kids play, or win lottery, or think of something nice, or are just happy. Humour is just one of the inputs for this reaction. Comedy is an act or performance (of sorts) with the aim of creating laughter.

82

"Humour is no longer just an escape from economic bad times but a resource capable of generating economic good times. With this massive demand for humour comedy and laughter, it is quite possible that in the future, humour and humorous products, services and expressions will be key parts of our planets economic base."

"Laughter created by humour, zaps straight into the subconscious, hooks emotions, and makes it possible to change people's ideas, opinions. Laughter, as a brain washing device, replaces what is on the mind with the message of the humour. Humour enhances persuasion, by interfering with the process of argument, thereby reducing resistance to sales or ideas."

83

Further Reading



84



- 9 Ways Humour Heals, Borchard T
- A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor, John Morreall
- Humour and Laughter, Theory, Research and Applications, Anthony J. Chapman Hugh C. Foot
- Humour & Resilience
<http://www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/topic/humor/humor-and-resilience>
- Laughter is the Best Medicine
http://www.helpguide.org/life/humor_laughter_health.htm
- Laugh your way to Happiness, Lesley Lyle L., 2014
- Laughing our Way to Peace or War: Humour and Peacebuilding, Zelizer C., 2010
- Redeeming laughter: the comic dimension of human experience, Berger P., (1997)



- Taking Laughter Seriously, John Morreall
- The Humour Code, Peter Mc Graw and Joel Warner
- The Nature of Laughing at ourselves
https://philosophynow.org/issues/111/The_Nature_of_Laughing_at_Ourselves
- The Psychology of Humour, An Integrative Approach, Rod A.Martin
- The science of comedy: can humour make the world a better place? Jeffries S., The Guardian, Tuesday 11 February 2014
<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/feb/11/science-comedy-academics-social>
- Why Laughter is a sign of learning
<https://www.parents.com/baby/development/laughing/why-laughter-is-a-sign-of-learning/>



- Leadership: <https://www.inc.com/kevin-daum/8-ways-using-humor-will-make-you-a-better-leader.html>
- Relationships: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/articles/200304/the-benefits-laughter>
- Social Interaction: <https://www.laughteronlineuniversity.com/social-benefits-laughter/>
- Critical Thinking, Creativity and Communication: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/how-humor-stimulates-critical-thinking-creativity-and-communication-skills>
- Conflict Resolution: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/humor-but-not-humiliation-finding-sweet-spot-in-nonviolent-/>

- **Social awareness and critical consciousness:** [https://www.academia.edu/17547217/Editorial for special issue on education and humour Education and humour as tools for social awareness and critical consciousness in contemporary classrooms](https://www.academia.edu/17547217/Editorial_for_special_issue_on_education_and_humour_Education_and_humour_as_tools_for_social_awareness_and_critical_consciousness_in_contemporary_classrooms)
- **Health:** <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/laughter-is-the-best-medicine.htm>
- **Laughter:** <https://cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0803-humour.html>
- **Workplace:** <https://www.humorthatworks.com/benefits/30-benefits-of-humor-at-work/>
- **Teaching:** https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/we06/engdid/A_ressourcen/pdfs/hausarbeiten/Humour-in-EFL-Classrooms--Rebekka-Krause-.pdf

Fergal Barr

www.thekingisalive.wixsite.com/humour

www.thekingisalive.wixsite.com/fergalbarr

thekingisalive@hotmail.com

Facebook: Fergal Martin Barr

Humour:
*The shortest distance
 between people*

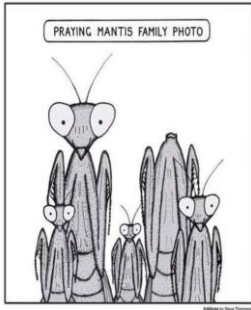
Google Florida Man followed by the date and month you were born:

For example, 'Florida Man 22 May'

Let's see what you get... 😊

Feedback

Scan now but please complete this short evaluation at the end of the session



EAYW The Power of Humour

91

What do you think now?



92

Questions for you to consider... please take a picture of them

- (i) How does (or how can) humour support youth workers and non-formal educators in their everyday practice?
- (ii) What might help humour achieve greater recognition as an effective tool to engage young people?
- (iii) What needs to happen for humour to become recognised as a competence?
- (iv) What can you do to develop your humour lens?

93

And now.....some Finnish Disco Dancing....