

# *Building Strong Families through Humor*

## *What is Humor?*

Humor can be defined as that which brings laughter into our lives. It can have positive effects for us physiologically, emotionally, socially, intellectually and spiritually. On average, a child laughs 300 times a day while an adult laughs only 17 times a day. Researchers suggest that the average American needs to laugh 15 times or more a day for health maintenance.

## *The Benefits of Humor and Laughter*

- 😊 **Laughter can make you feel better** - People who laugh heartily, on a regular basis, have a lower standing blood pressure than the average person, it reduces at least four of the neuro-endocrine hormones associated with stress, laughter strengthens the immune system by increasing infection-fighting antibodies, laughter allows a person to “forget” about pains such as those associated with aches, arthritis, and may help protect against a heart attack.
- 😊 **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 provide good cardiac, abdominal, facial, and back muscle conditioning, especially for those who are unable to perform physical exercise.
- 😊 **Laughter benefits brain function** - Laughter stimulates both sides of the brain to enhance learning. It eases muscle tension and psychological stress, which keeps the brain alert and allows people to retain more information.
- 😊 **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.

## *Characteristic 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 affirms life and brings people together.
- ❖ Humor often succeeds where other methods have failed.



## *Adding Humor to Your Life*

- ❖ Look for the everyday humor. Start looking for the absurd and silly activities that go on around you each day.
- ❖ Observe infants and young children to learn how to find delight and amusement in the most ordinary things.
- ❖ Increase your exposure to comedies, comic sitcoms, joke books, comedy clubs, etc.
- ❖ Hang around funny friends.
- ❖ Take a 5 to 10 minute humor break each day. Read jokes, add to a humor notebook, and listen to funny tapes.
- ❖ If you hear a joke you really like, write it down or tell it to someone else to help you remember it.
- ❖ Remind yourself to have fun.
- ❖ Spend time with those who help you see the bright side. Whenever possible, avoid negative people.
- ❖ Avoid conversations, news, entertainment, etc., that frightens, upsets or distresses you, or makes you feel sad and unhappy.
- ❖ Be mindful of just "lightening up."

## *How can you add laughter to your life??*

*"Your attitude is like a box of crayons that color the world. Constantly use gray colors, and your picture will always be dark and depressing. Use humor to add bright colors, and your picture begins to lighten up." Have you had your laughs today? If not, get working on it! – Allen Klein, Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor*

*"You can't help getting older, but you can help getting old. Chronologically the clock is going to keep on ticking for all of us, but if we take a lick of humor, we can prevent a hardening of the attitudes. If we save humor, humor can be a lifesaver." – George Burns*

*"A good laugh is like manure to a farmer – it doesn't do any good until you spread it around." – Michael Pritchard*

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Sources: Cooperative Extension Service University of Kentucky – College of Agriculture  
The Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service

# 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 of 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.