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REVIEW ARTICLE

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## A REVIEW ON FUN ORIENTED SOFT SKILLS- HUMOR BOOSTS YOUR CREDIBILITY: POSITIVE EMOTIONS CREATE A POSITIVE WORKPLACE

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### ABSTRACT

Soft skills, often called “people skills” or “interpersonal skills,” are non-technical skills that relate to how we work. These traits and qualities determine how you interact with others and how you perform at work. Soft skills in the workplace are necessary for success in relationships, communication, problem-solving, and collaboration. Humor serves as a moderator of the deleterious effects of negative stressful life events. Humor can be very effective in the workplace too, even if you’re not a professional speaker. If you can add humor to your presentations and other communications, you will find your ability to influence others increasing dramatically. No one wants to sit through a dry presentation. But if you can generate some laughter every few minutes, even if the topic is a serious one, you’ll hold your audience’s attention, and people will be more likely to hear (and to care about) what you’re saying. The review of this article reveals that using humor at work isn’t about writing jokes and being a comedian; it’s another tool you can use to do your job. It’s one of the “soft” skills that include communication, teamwork and creativity.

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## INTRODUCTION

**The 4 H’s of leadership” – Humility, Humanity, Hope and Humour in order of importance.** Humor helps to make certain personal development concepts more easily understood. Sometimes we get stuck in negative states like frustration or guilt, but when we can laugh at our most difficult situations, we can more easily grow through them. We have a special segment at the end of every meeting called Observational Humor. This is a time where anyone in the room can offer a joke about something related to the content of the meeting (Reis, 2019). There are some professions and some workplaces that are more humorous than others. Advertisers use humour routinely in their ads. Filmmakers to rely on humour. And there is a lot of banter among manual labourers. Rickshaw-pullers and auto-rickshaw drivers ribbing each other and having a good laugh. Workers are human and it is human to laugh and joke. “Office” workplaces have been populated primarily with people from the non-humanities stream – Engineering, Technology, Finance etc. Not enough people from Literature, Languages, Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy etc. The former are more concerned with machines, ideas, output, bottom lines etc. The latter are more concerned with well-being, emotions, labour laws, puns etc. All economic activity is essentially human activity and therefore the workplace is never going to be devoid of emotion. And positive emotions create a positive workplace (Zhao, 2019).

**Benefits of Humour:** Aside from people wanting to work with someone who uses humor, there are many benefits:

- **Humor gets people to listen and makes your message memorable.** if you want people to retain information, you must connect it to an emotion, like laughter. People will take time for something (or someone) funny and they’ll remember it and share it. Businesses spend millions on funny Super Bowl ads because humor works.
- **Humor defuses tension.** Humor can help calm people down and change the energy in the environment. A little humor can quickly get them from ruffled to relaxed.
- **Humor connects people instantly.** You know that “aha” moment you feel when someone else “gets” your humor? That means you’ve just found some common ground without spending 20 minutes on small talk about their kid’s school. Making this quick connection opens the lines of communication easily with clients, potential clients, coworkers and staff.
- **The tangible benefits of humor at work:** When leaders use humor, employees are more likely to go above and beyond the call of duty. Humor influences critical behaviors and attitudes that matter to leadership effectiveness, including employee job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, citizenship behaviors, creativity, psychological safety in groups, and desire to interact again in the future (Moyer-Gusé, 2018).

### Three Quick Ways to Find Humor

- **Pull out the contradictions.** Humor is about irony, so look around and start noticing the ironies and contradictions in your environment. A sign in the bathroom at my last company read “Low-flush toilets — please flush twice.” Someone missed the

point about water conservation! Point out these ironies for some quick humor.

- **Ask funnier questions.** The next time you're networking, instead of asking someone their name and title (all the stuff on their badge!), sprinkle in a few fun questions to get more memorable information which will spark a funnier conversation. Saying you work at the bank is good, but saying "yeah, this beats my first job after college telemarketing sides of beef" is funnier. It piques people's interest, encourages them to connect with their funny job and gives you an opportunity to inject more humor. Your chat will be more interesting and memorable. (By the way, yes, I telemarketer sides of beef, and yes, I have some humor about it.)
- **Do passive humor.** If you don't want to say something funny, then show them. One quick way is to change the meaning of your business acronyms. No one remembers what they mean anyway, so add in a few funny definitions to get people laughing — they may even read your entire email. RFP — Request for Proposal becomes Really Frustrating Paperwork, and HMO — Health Maintenance Organization becomes Having Many Oops. You can also add passive humor in your bio or the "about us" page on your website. Noting that "John played high school football" is boring. Change it to "John was a great high school football player, which influenced his career. After being repeatedly tackled by 300-pound guys, he opted for a career in accounting," shows your sense of humor (Nabi, 2016).

**Styles of humor:** Humor can be divided into four styles: two positive and two negative.

#### Positive styles of humor

- **Affiliative humor:** In this style, jokes aren't made at the expense of others. The idea is to make everyone laugh or at least feel included. This type of humor is meant to have broad appeal and doesn't center around a particular target.
- **Self-enhancing:** Not to be confused with self-effacing humor, this style of humor is driven by a desire to enhance oneself by focusing on the positive. Someone might use this type of humor when looking at the brighter side of a difficult situation or sharing a story using revealing and self-deprecating details [5]. This style functions as a good coping mechanism because it invites camaraderie, and it can also decrease depression and anxiety showing in figure 1.



Figure 1. Humor when looking at the brighter side of a difficult situation

#### Negative styles of humor

- **Aggressive humor.** This is easily identified as a style that puts down others, with a (mistaken) sense that it will reflect well on the joke-teller. Aggressive humor can create division and mistrust.
- **Self-defeating humor.** This can be considered the opposite of "self-enhancing," whereby joking about oneself, with the goal of appearing "good" to others, actually has the opposite effect: defeating oneself in the face of others. People who use self-

defeating humor want to amuse others by causing pain to themselves, often by hiding anxiety with jokes.

It's no surprise that the positive humor styles are more effective at building relationships. These findings remain consistent when applied to work relationships. That is, positive humor enhances work cohesion and coping effectiveness, and negative humor decreases knowledge-sharing and trust (Skalski, 2009).

**Benefits of Humor in the Classroom:** Humor in the classroom is an essential part of learning. "When we laugh, our brains release feel-good chemicals that enhance attention, memory and creativity making it easier for the brain to soak up knowledge and make meaningful connections that drive learning outcomes showing in figure 2.

- a) Building connection with students: Humor helps students see the "humanness" of teachers, making them more relatable and accessible.
- b) Creating space in the classroom for new ideas: Once any barriers are broken down with humor, students are more relaxed, engaged, and receptive to learning new things.
- c) Increasing student motivation: Humorous and playful teachers are magnetic. They inspire students to be excited to go to school every morning and apply their best effort throughout the day.
- d) Helping learning stick: Humor can be leveraged to make learning more salient by striking a chord that helps material and concepts go into long-term memory [7].



Figure 2. Benefits of Humor in the Classroom

**Humor in daily life:** Much of what we find funny has to do with our outlook on life. Funny people notice even small things and find humor in them. They even have the ability to make fun of themselves, their insecurities, and quirks. No matter what the situation is, they can laugh about it and make others around them laugh too. Bad things happen every day. Humans face stressful situations all the time. And as the saying goes, if we did not laugh, we would cry. So instead of crying every time something bad or inconvenient happens, we should learn to have a good sense of humor. We will be much happier if we do. Humor in daily life can cut through tension easily and diffuse arguments. It also relieves stress. Using humor in daily life lets people know that you have a balanced perspective on things. You don't get too high or too low and you don't get rattled easily. With humor, you can easily shake off a bad experience or turn a good encounter into a great one [8].

Six ways you can develop the skill of using humor in daily life:

- Laugh at your own weirdness
- Listen to others
- Spend time with kids
- Spend time with animals
- Watch funny shows and movies
- Spend time with funny people

We don't want to be the kind of person that laughs at funerals, at least not within earshot of other people. But we can use humor to make yourself and your friends laugh more often. This will make you happier overall.





**Figure 3. Stress free situations with humour**

**Important part of public speaking:** For one, humor helps put you and your listeners at ease. The tension can be high when you are in front of a room full of people. Think of humor as a simple way to break the tension. A sigh of relief that you and the listeners are waiting for. To master this technique and give memorable speeches, you need to do five things [9-11].

- Be confident
- Be decisive
- Be observant
- Start strong
- Include your audience
- Be Confident

Confidence is always important when presenting you in front of other people. we are presenting our self when we give a speech or presentation, not clever anecdotes about airline food, or power points about global warming. We have to be confident that what you are saying has value. Even if you're the only one who appreciates that value. When preparing to inject some humor into your public speaking, be confident in the joke. Don't say something funny and wait for the audience to give you permission to think it's funny. This will never work as there's nothing more awkward than a comedian that lacks confidence in what he's doing—or rather saying. Stick to your guns and keep moving forward regardless of how many laughs you get for each quip (Ministry of Health, 2023; Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2023; Ratcliff, 2012 and Yoon, 2013).

**Be Decisive:** This one has many applications, but an important area to be decisive in is your style of humor. Choose what best suits your subject matter and your audience. Some subjects lend themselves to well-timed dry humor. Our audience may be full of scholars, so be witty. Whatever it is, choose a path and stick with it. Humor is a valuable tool that should increase the value of what you're saying. Don't use it as a cheap intermission between boring bullet points. Unless you want your performance to be a real snooze-fest (Weinberger, 1992).

**Be Observant:** Of course, you should observe how the audience is reacting to what we are saying. These lets you know if you should linger on a bit or keep moving to your next point. Observation is also something that starts long before we get on stage. Use the mundane or outrageous happenings of daily life to add relatable humor to your speaking. Observe what is happening in the lives of your audience to make your material more relatable and thus more humorous (Weinberger, 2019). **Start strong:** This is just as beneficial to you as it is to the audience. Starting off with humor that gets even a slight chuckle or applause will boost your confidence for the rest of your presentation. As a public speaker, you have a synergetic relationship with the audience. Inject them with good energy at the beginning and they will return the favor. It is almost impossible to start off with low energy and transform from boring to hilarious mid-speech. Start strong so you can finish strong (So, 2017).

**Include Your Audience:** This is a component of great teaching in general but also applies to using humor successfully during public speaking. People love to be included and it keeps them more engaged in your speech. Look at your audience and find as many people as you can to include in your presentation. Instead of focusing on the person asleep in the front row, hone in on the person eating your

every word. Think about how they may respond to something you just said in your speech, and then use that imaginary dialogue. Audience members love this kind of humor because it feels like they are the ones who came up with it. Style can vary depending on personality and experience level, but all great public speakers excel in those five areas and then some. We put so much pressure on ourselves to be a funny person and we get discouraged when we think it's not a natural talent of ours. It doesn't have to be. we can master the fundamentals of humor and use them to become a great public speaker (Suka, 2018; Jiang, 2019).

**The Power of Humor:** We are also big believers in choosing comedy as a career. For those of you that want to be stand-up comedians, actors, or improve artists, it might be hard to know where to start and how to improve. Since we have struggled and succeeded in the comedic line of work, we know what it feels like to be disappointed, but we also know how to continue trying and have the effort pay off. Our main passion and goal are helping those who want to get into a comedic line of work. This is for people who enjoy making others laugh as much as they enjoy laughing. If everyone tells you that you are hilarious and you want to know if you can use that humor to get ahead in life, this is the blog for us. Or if you need humor just to get by in life, this blog will help us too. Comedy is a huge industry, so people think being funny means being famous. It doesn't. There are many small-time comedians that enjoy telling jokes in bars or comedy cafes. Although they are not famous, they still get by and love what they do. There are thousands of people across the country who like to meet up virtually or in-person to practice comedy. At Humor Power we can connect with like-minded people and have a support group with a sense of humor. This community will help you learn new jokes, new delivery methods, and new styles. It is a great place to bounce ideas off of each other and refine skills. Watching and learning from others is one of the best ways to improve any skills, and that includes comedic skills (Tellis, 2004 and Zhang, 2006). Dr. Brahmanandam is a popular Tollywood comedian who has predominantly acted in many movies in Telugu and some in Tamil industry. After completing his Master of Arts degree, Brahmanandam worked as a Telugu lecturer in Attili of West Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh. Simultaneously, he also worked in theatre and as a mimicry artist. The Padma Shri winner also holds the Guinness World Record for the most screen credits for a living actor. He acted in close to 1600 movies.



**Figure 4. Power of humor [From Guru (Teacher) position to Guinness World Record position]**

**Some of the humorous expressions for health promotions:** Public health professionals have prepared and distributed many messages and materials to convince the public to adopt healthy behaviors or reduce risky behaviors., Health promotion materials showing in fig 5 and 6, do always have the desired effect due to a ability to engage target audience. This study examined the effectiveness of humor appeal (i.e. using humor as an advertising technique to attract

attention and increase acceptance of the message) in health promotion materials and how to use it effectively [22].



Figure 5. Health promotion Image- 1

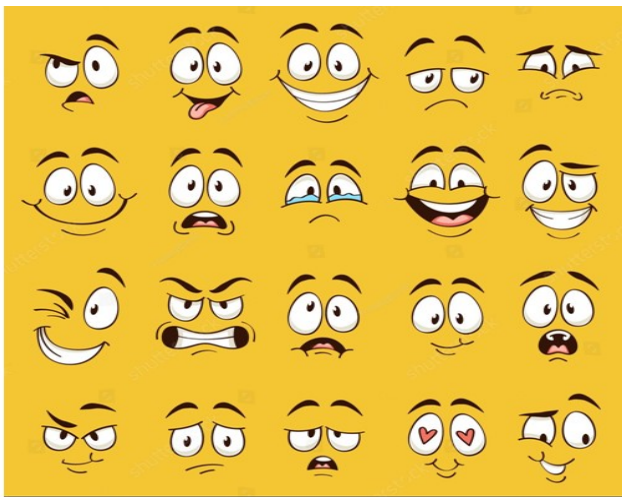


Figure 6. Health promotion image-2

### Benefits of Humor

#### Humor and Execution

- **Humor improves productivity.** “In one study of more than 2,500 employees, 81 percent said they believe a fun working environment would make them more productive (Humor in the Workplace, 2004).
- **Humor reduces stress.** “People with a sense of humor report less stress and anxiety than those with a low sense of humor, despite experiencing the same number of problems at work (Millicent H. Abel, 2002).
- **Humor prevents burnout.** “Humor has also been identified as a communication tool that, when used effectively, can prevent burnout and create a resilience to stress (B.J. Avolio, 1999).
- **Humor provides motivation.** “The use of humor in organizations has been associated with improving morale among workers, creating a more positive organizational culture, and increasing motivation (Fabio Sala, 2013)
- **Humor increases size of paycheck.** “The size of their bonuses correlated positively with their use of humor – ‘In other words, the funnier the executives were, the bigger the bonuses (Lydia Dishman, 2013).

#### Humor and Thinking

- **Humor boosts overall brainpower.** “A dose of humor releases the chemical serotonin in your brain, which improves focus,

increases objectivity and improves overall brainpower (Cheryl Strauss Einhorn, 2013).

- **Humor improves decision-making.** “Positive moods prompt more flexible decision-making and wider search behavior and greater analytic precision (Theodore Lewis, 2005).
- **Humor increases the acceptance of new ideas.** “Unconventional interactions can lower the barrier for people to posit novel things (Saba Ghayas, 2013).
- **Humor triggers new connections.** Humor in the design and problem solving classroom can promote divergent thinking (David Stauffer, 1991).
- **Humor enhances one’s ability to solve problems.** “Studies have shown that simply watching comedy films can improve creative problem solving skills (Melissa B. Wanzer, 2010).

#### Humor and Communication

- **Humor gets people to listen.** “Consistent use of appropriate humor makes people want to read and hear what you say (Mike Kerr, 2014).
- **Humor improves memory retention.** “Instructional messages that gain students’ attention and help them make sense of course content (clarity behaviors) enhance students’ ability to process the content resulting in greater retention and learning (Humor, 2005).
- **Humor boosts persuasion.** “Humor can be highly persuasive when presenting a message that people disagree with because the humor distracts them from immediately creating counter arguments, in part because they don’t feel like the message is being crammed down their throats (Andreea Niculescu, 2013)
- **Humor assists in learning.** “The use of humor as a pedagogical tool has been shown to reduce classroom anxiety, create a more positive atmosphere, as well as facilitate the learning process (Mirror, 2006).
- **Humor increases likability.** “Innocent humor increases likeability and interpersonal attraction (Hugh Foot, 2006).

#### Humor and Connection

- **Humor connects us with others.** “Positive sounds such as laughter or a triumphant ‘woo hoo!’ can trigger a response in the listener’s brain. The response is automatic and helps us interact socially by priming us to smile or laugh, and thereby connecting us with the other person (Shaul Fox, 2006).
- **Humor fosters rapport.** “Humor is valued as a social asset and, exercised judiciously, confers upon its encoder the animated interest and welcoming approval of others. Sharing humor fosters rapport and intimacy and promotes friendship by showing common sentiment and reducing tensions (Terri Kurtzberg, 2009).
- **Humor reduces status differentials.** “Humor can help to reduce the social distance between managers and employees (Drake Baer, 2013).
- **Humor builds trust.** “Negotiators who start an online transaction with a humorous experience will have more interpersonal trust, greater joint gains, and more satisfaction with the process and their partner (Martha Craumer, ?.)
- **Humor encourages collaboration.** “A growing body of research shows that when you share a laugh with someone, you’re mirroring not only one another’s body language, but also the hormonal and neuronal activity, prompting a mutual investment in each other’s well-being (Jill Knox, 2013).

#### Humor and Leadership [43-47]

- **Humor enhances perceived leadership skills.** “People who use humor, particularly in stressful or seemingly one-down positions, are viewed as being on top of things, being in charge and in control, whether they are in fact or not.
- **Humor diffuses conflict.** “Humor has long been seen as the great equalizer—a means to facilitate conversation and bridge

differences. As a matter of fact humor has been identified as a key factor in peace-building and international mediation.

- **Humor creates more opportunities.** “Research has shown that managers displaying a good sense of humor are given more opportunities in organizations than those without a sense of humor.
- **Humor builds credibility.** “Humor users are seen as more credible and as more competent.
- **Humor improves ratings.** “Supervisor use of humor is associated with enhanced subordinate work performance, satisfaction, perception of supervisor performance, satisfaction with supervisor, and workgroup cohesion, as well as reduced work withdrawal.

**Humor and Health (Julia Wilkins, 2009; Mary P. Bennett, 2003; Amy Toffelmire, 2009; v, 2012 and George E Valliant, 2002):**

- **Humor increases ability to cope.** “By finding humor in stressful or potentially threatening situations, people can replace negative with positive affect, thereby giving them an increased ability to cope with negative states of affairs.
- **Humor strengthens the immune system.** “Laughter may improve immune function by blocking production of stress hormones, such as cortisol, and by increasing the release of immunoenhancers, such as beta-endorphin.
- **Humor relaxes muscles.** “Humor relaxes muscles, decreases blood pressure and improves our immune system.
- **Humor burns calories.** “Laughing 100 times can burn as many calories as 10-minutes on a stationary bicycle.
- **Humor increases happiness.** “Humor was one of the healthiest adaptations to being happy in life.

## CONCLUSIONS

Daily life is more enjoyable and more stress-free when you laugh. Develop your skills of using humor to transform any moment into a funny one. Opportunities for inserting humor into your work life are everywhere, but be tactful. Pay attention to the situation (“read the room,” as it were) and remember cultural dynamics vary. So be careful, and positive. Humor appeal is a well-known peripheral cue that can evoke positive feelings in message recipients. Humor appeal may provide an effective hook to direct public attention.

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