

Q: What can you do now during the pandemic while we are practicing social distancing?

A: An excellent question. The current pandemic has really changed the way we interact with one another. Doing silly things during meetings like changing your zoom background or requiring someone wear a funny hat when they're speaking, can help lighten the mood. Maybe even start the meeting with a joke or a riddle? Whatever we do, we do not want to ignore the fact that people are going through a difficult time.

One home-schooling mom me her son applied to transfer to a different school district!

Q: I have bosses that sent out a memo to A. not play Christmas music, B. not hum, C. not sing. That kind of squashes the desire to be "human". Any thoughts?

A: This is so far beyond the simple question of humor, and very disturbing. The best way to handle this would likely be to share with the boss that people need an outlet in order to keep their creative juices flowing and have a little fun. And then, ask them what outlets he / she would allow? This puts it squarely in their lap. If the answer is we don't have fun in this office, I would recommend reviewing articles on how to work with narcissistic bosses. That appears to be what you are facing.

Q: Yes, please, provide the scientific journal articles as evidence to be shared with senior executives that can't find their own funny bone (just not humerus).

A: I get it! Ha! Fortunately, there are several:

- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/243463818_A_meta-analysis_of_positive_humor_in_the_workplace
- <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/uncategorized/what-research-says-about-humor-in-the-workplace.html>
- https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_a_little_humor_can_improve_your_work_life
- <https://www.petermcgraw.org/new-research-humor-workplace/>
- <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/02683941211199554/full/html#loginreload>
- Berk, R. (2001). *The active ingredients in humor: psycho physiological benefits and risks for older adults.* *Educational Gerontology*, 27, 323-339.
- Berk, L. S., et al. (1989). "Neuroendocrine and Stress Hormone Changes during Mirthful Laughter." *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, 298, 390-96.
- Provine, R.R., *Laughter. A Scientific Investigation*, New York: Viking, 2000.

Q: Seems like laughing and crying have some kind of connection...like the bucket list item..from the movie laugh until I cry. Thoughts?

A: Interestingly, they are related in a couple of ways. The physiological response to laughter will often activate tear ducts which will allow us to cry. It doesn't mean we're crying for sadness it's simply a reaction to the mechanics of laughter. However..... there is a line of research now that suggests that we get the same physiological benefits from laughing as we do from crying or screaming. This is very interesting and still under review. The physical movements of the body would be similar but I'm not sure that the emotional health benefits would be the same. Perhaps they would? Both laughing and crying or cleansing. Excellent question and definitely something I will be watching in the coming months.

Q: If your coworkers and boss aren't familiar with the theories you presented, how can you get the rest of your unit/coworkers on board with these theories?

A: Happy to present to any team or group if requested. In the meantime, let me recommend:

- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/05/03/10-reasons-why-humor-is-a-key-to-success-at-work/#3745e5a25c90>
- <https://hbr.org/2014/05/leading-with-humor>
- https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_a_little_humor_can_improve_your_work_life
- <https://mikekerr.com/why-humor-in-the-workplace-is-a-key-to-success/>
- *The Humor Code - McGraw and Warner*
- *The Elephant in the Office - Ross*
- *Humor that Works - Tarvin*

One thing that often works is a brown bag session where everyone brings an interesting article. It's a nice way to gently bring humor into the conversation. Or, as I mentioned, sometimes it is easier to have an outsider come in and do a short entertaining presentation. I would be happy to help with anyone at any time. This is such important information for our health and our organizational missions.