THE
‘SENSE’ OF HUMOR:
Bringing Joy and Fun
to the Workplace

Using Humor, Laughter and Improvisation
to Train, Motivate and Inspire

Presented by
Michael Edgar Myers
WHAT IS ‘SENSE OF HUMOR’?

HUMOR (n.)
A ______________ phenomenon, personal and subjective, influenced by culture, language, intelligence, tastes, preferences, values and the mood of the moment. – World Laughter Tour

Let’s LIC Humor
• L__________
• L__________
• C__________

LAUGHTER (v.)
A ____________ response to express mirth, pleasure, derision or nervousness with an audible, vocal expulsion of air from the lungs that can range from a loud burst or sound to a series of quiet chuckles, and is usually accompanied by characteristic facial and body movements.
– Webster’s Unabridged

IMPROVISATION (n.)
A presentation process of devising a solution to a requirement by making-do, despite absence of resources that might be expected to produce a solution.

COMEDY (n.)
A purposeful, formulaic use of ________________ to induce _______________ through physical, visual or auditory stimulation.
– Wavelength, Inc.
Yes, And: You Must Remember This

The Soul of Wit
(a brief summary)

• Humor exists without comedy;
• Laughter exists without humor;
• Improvisation exists each moment of our lives;
• Comedy cannot exist without laughter (trust us)
  • All are born with a sense of humor and laughter; some are born with a skill for comedy.
  • Laughter, improvisation and comedy can be taught and developed to form our Sense of Humor.

Great Improvisers & Great Teachers

• Need to “be in the moment.”
• Play at the top of their intelligence
• Bridge conflict
• Heighten and explore another’s gifts
• Work without a script

Improv Skills and Learning Modes Intersect

• Kinesthetic
• Cross-Brain
• Interpersonal
• Relationship

• Verbal
• Creativity
• Non-verbal
• Collaboration
BENEFITS OF HUMOR

Four Cs of Education Addressed by Improvisation

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Creativity and Innovation

The P’s of EFFECTIVE HUMOR

Physiology
- Reduces and tension
- Improves memory functioning
- Decreases depression and anger

Psychology
- Mature coping skills
- Promotes sense of empowerment
- Improves mood

Productivity
- Enhances climate
- Increases involvement
- Jumpstarts creativity

Pedagogy
- Brain compatible
- Facilitates learning and productivity
- H.O.T. – Higher Order Thinking Skill

Personality
- Happier
- Healthier
- More effective
THEORIES OF HUMOR

I. Incongruity Theory - (Kant, Schopenhauer)
   □ Multiple meanings
   □ Detecting ambiguities
   □ Sudden shift of perspective

II. Superiority Theory - (Plato, Aristotle, Descartes)

   "Everything is funny as long as it’s happening to someone else."
   - Mark Twain
   □ Humor to inflate our own ego
   □ Humor to deflate others we feel are superior
   □ Seeing flaw in others as compared to ourselves

III. Relief/Release Theory - (Freud)

   □ Temporary freedom from our restrictions
   □ Rebellion against the repressive or uncontrollable
   □ Levity in a tense situation.

IV. Humor as a Form of Play - (Eastman)

   □ A reversion to childish innocence

V. Humor Exposes the Truth - (White)

   □ Rips away the veils of pretense
   □ Reveals truth of human nature and human affairs

From "License to Laugh" by Richard A. Shade
KEYS TO THE SUCCESSFUL USE OF HUMOR

I. Relationship
   - Know your audience
   - Tell stories with a purpose

II. Rapport
   - Have an understanding of your audience’s feelings
   - Should be laughing with, not at someone

III. Setting
   - Make sure the humor is appropriate for the space
   - Humor should enhance, not distract

Areas of humor to likely avoid:
From “A Laughing Place” by Christian Hageseth III, M.D

- Sexual
- Ethnic/racial
- Religious
- Hostile/Sick
- Demeaning to Men/Women

Final Words

“He who laughs, lasts.”
– Mary Pettibone Poole, author, “A Glass Eye at the Keyhole,” 1938.
(Let’s assume this idea also applies to the female pronoun.)
HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR PERSONAL SENSE OF HUMOR

❑ Look for humor in everything
   “Nothing is quite as funny as the unintended humor in reality.”
   - Steve Allen

❑ Collect humor –
   Keep a journal/file/bulletin board/library/ of:
   Books  Magazines  Videos/Audio tapes
   Jokes  Stories  Cartoons  Headlines
   Signs  Anecdotes  Excuses  Oxymorons
   MEM’s Educational Pinterest boards
   UnCommon Core Comedy  Toons
   Sometimes I Just Find Stuff Funny
   Books on Humor & Cognitive Science  Association for Applied & Therapeutic Humor (AATH)

❑ Smile more - Lighten up - Be more playful

❑ Participate in humorous activities
   Dress up for “dress-up” day
   Create/perform in a sketch written by/for your colleagues
   Make a presentation in costume

❑ Hang out with funny people - try the humor buddy system

❑ Use humor in your correspondence/surveys/tests

❑ Try out other styles/forms of humor

❑ Tell stories on yourself

❑ Have some sort of humor always at the ready

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I GOT THE HUMOR IN ME

Today I Discovered:

Something Humorous I’m Going to Try Is:
HUMOR PRACTICE

Sounds of Laughter Exercises

“Warm Up”

Ho-ho-ho
Works the Diaphragm

Ha-Ha-Ha
Works the Mouth and Jaw

He-He-He
Works the Lips and Cheeks

“Ho-Ho, Ha-Ha-Ha-Ha Dance”

Ho-ho-Ha-Ha-Ha
Ho-ho-Ha-Ha-Ha

Add A Clap

Add a Dance in Place

Raise Your Hands and Shout ‘Yeah’

Good-Hearted Living
Six Daily Practices to Prevent Hardening of Attitudes and Add Laughter to Your Life

Mondays are for Compliments
It only takes a second to brighten someone’s day.

Tuesdays are for Flexibility
Having flexibility to change will reveal new paths to explore

Wednesdays are for Gratitude
Awake and be thankful. Open your eyes, ears and heart to all you have.

Thursdays are for Kindness
There has never been a random act of kindness that was too small to make a difference.

Fridays are for Forgiveness
The release of anger makes room in your heart for more joy.

Weekends are for Chocolate
Remember to balance your life with some sweetness in your day

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RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Books & Articles
(Many available through Amazon in print and audio)

www.ascd.org.

Good-Hearted Living by Steve Wilson, World Laughter Tour, 2001

Hatch!: Brainstorming Secrets of a Theme Park Designer by C. McNair Wilson, 2012

Improvisation for the Theatre by Viola Spolin, Northwestern U. Press, 1983

Laughing Matters: Strategies for Building a Joyful Learning Community by Susan Stephenson & Paul Thibault, Solution Tree Press, 2006

A Laughing Place by Christian Hageseth III, M.D., Berwick Publishing Company, 1988

License To Laugh by Richard A. Shade, Teacher Ideas Press, 1996


The Laughing Classroom by Loomans & Kolberg, H J Kramer, Inc., 2005

The Second City Almanac of Improvisation Paperback by Anne Libera, Second City Inc., Northwestern U. Press, 2004


Organizations

The Association of Applied and Therapeutic Humor -- AATH provides state-of-the-art, evidence-based information about current research and practical applications of humor to education, health-care, business, and government. www.aath.org


Wavelength Inc. – Improvisational comedy ensemble using humor, laughter and spontaneity to train, motivate and inspire educational professionals. Training DVDs, CDs, interactive workshops and live keynotes for professional learning. www.wavelengthinc.com

World Laughter Tour - Famous for its two-day Certified Laughter Leadership workshop “to teach people enjoyable, systematic, self-care strategies.” www.worldlaughtertour.com
About The Presenter

Michael Edgar Myers is teaching artist based in Chicago. Michael’s teaching artist roles include serving as an actor, director, playwright, essayist, educator and audio-book narrator.

Michael has been a member of the educational comedy troupe Wavelength since 1988, appearing in 49 states and overseas in such memorable characters as “Gen. Wormwood,” the militaristic superintendent; Smith, the shell-shocked diversity teacher; Bernie, the schizophrenic principal.

Michael teaches workshops in team building, conflict management and listening, has presented at ASDC, NSCD, and AASA, and is widely known to be a former high school English student.

To Keep In Touch

Wavelength Teacher Comedy @wavelengthinc
@MyersMedia0429 @wavelengthinc #WLSOH

For Booking Information

WAVELENGTH
5325 N. Lakewood Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60640 USA
Toll free: 1 (877) LAUGHS 2 * Fax: 1 (773) 784-1079
Email: info@wavelengthinc.com
Online: www.wavelengthinc.com

THE PUBLIC FACE
1723 Roosa Lane
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007
630-632-7775
Email: themyersplace@msn.com