

THE HUMOROUS ROAD TO PERSONAL GROWTH

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Personal growth can be challenging, but it can also be a lot of fun. You may even reach your goals sooner if you learn to lighten up.

Numerous studies support the conclusion that laughter is powerful medicine. However, just like any drug, it's important to follow the directions to avoid unwanted side effects. **Find out how to use humor skillfully, so it will enrich your life.**

Appreciating the Benefits of Humor:

- 1. Live healthier.** Research shows that laughter can lower your blood pressure and heart rate, strengthen your immune system, and burn calories. It also releases endorphins that may help you to fight depression.
- 2. Boost your popularity.** A quick look at dating profiles will prove that a sense of humor is a very attractive quality. A lighthearted approach may also be useful for resolving conflicts and delivering feedback. Some business schools even teach humor as part of developing leadership ability.
- 3. Reduce stress.** Have you ever experienced relief when your boss cracks a joke when tensions are rising due to heavy workloads? **Humor often drives away anger and fear.**
- 4. Increase your resilience.** The mental and physical health benefits of humor can help you through ordinary days and difficult times. Hardships are easier to bear when you can recognize the irony in the situation.

Cultivating Your Sense of Humor:

1. **Be kind.** Tasteless jokes and ridiculing others are more likely to get you fired than promoted. **You want to generate the kind of humor that creates social bonds and takes a playful view of life.**
2. **Smile more.** Start out by looking friendly and approachable. Smiling at others will give you more opportunities to have fun.
3. **Hang out.** Surround yourself with family and friends who know how to enjoy themselves. Laughter is contagious. Sharing routine activities can be just as diverting as jokes and pranks.
4. **Act silly.** You could be missing out on joyful experiences because you're worried about looking foolish. In reality, **you'll probably earn more respect by letting go of your need for approval and behaving more authentically.**
5. **Think creatively.** What can you learn from a comedy writer's brain? MRI scans show higher levels of activity in the temporal lobe where spontaneous associations are made. Try new things and trust your instincts.
6. **Take risks.** Being funny may require sharing your thoughts and feelings. You can start small in situations where you feel safe, like with your family or chatting online.
7. **Fake it.** What if you're having trouble finding anything funny? Even simulated laughter can lift your spirits. **Pretend to chuckle and feel it turn into the real thing.**
8. **Play with kids.** Children are an excellent source of inspiration. Listen to their

stories and join their games. Your dog may be willing to share some pointers too.

9. **Watch videos.** As long as you have an internet connection, you can access a wide variety of amusing content. Watch cats shredding toilet paper or senior citizens disco dancing.

10. **Use props.** Laughter is more effective when you practice on a daily basis. Keep objects around that will remind you to take a break. Decorate your office desk with windup toys. Hang a set of oversized forks and spoons in your kitchen.

11. **Shift your perspective.** Almost anything can be humorous if you change the way you look at yourself and your world. Look for the entertainment value in parent teacher conferences and garbage strikes. **Emotional intelligence depends on striking a balance between humor and seriousness.**

Laugh your way to greater happiness, health, and success. Using humor kindly and responsibly can help you to heal and fulfill your true potential.