

TERMS

- wit: mental experience of humor
- mirth: emotional experience of humor
- laughter: physiological experience of humor; hardwired in the brain

gelotology: physiological study of laughter

OTHER INTERESTING POINTS

- laughter isn't necessarily connected with humor
- laughter is beneficial regardless of whether it involves humor
- normal laughter follows sound patterns
- laughter results in both sounds and gestures
- laughter "punctuates" speech at logical junctures
- studies on the frequency of laughter are inconsistent, but most say children laugh more
- speakers laugh more than listeners do
- women laugh more than men
- dominant individuals get to use more humor
- men tell jokes more often than women do
- both men and women laugh more often at men's jokes
- laughter is "contagious"
- we can enhance our senses of humor

LAUGHTER'S ELEMENTS

cognition + movement + emotion

Laughing Matters!

THE NEURAL CIRCUS: LAUGHTER, HUMOR, AND THE BRAIN

Janet Elder, Ph.D.

www.readingprof.com

THEORIES OF WHY WE LAUGH

- superiority
- incongruity
- relief

More recently:

- to bond with others
- to change others' behavior

LAUGHTER'S PHYSIOLOGICAL BENEFITS

- makes you feel good physically
- raises body temperature slightly
- enhances immune system
- lowers blood pressure
- provides an internal massage
- reduces levels of certain stress hormones
- increases blood oxygenation
- boosts energy
- increases pain tolerance

LAUGHTER'S PSYCHOLOGICAL AND COGNITIVE BENEFITS

- makes you feel happy
- lowers stress
- increases enthusiasm
- builds confidence
- raises optimism and hope
- aids coping ability
- enhances creativity
- lifts self-esteem
- promotes engagement and attention
- fosters divergent thinking
- improves retention
- increases willingness to take risks

LAUGHTER'S INTERPERSONAL BENEFITS

- decreases conflict
- builds camaraderie
- increases communication
- fosters trust and rapport
- increases openness
- provides a model of humor and laughter

*Common sense and a sense of humor are the same thing, moving at different speeds.
A sense of humor is just common sense, dancing. --William James, philosopher, psychologist*