

Humour makes my world go 'round

by Mark Pavilons

'If I can stay funny, I can stay alive.' ? Jamie Foxx

While I'm nowhere near the comedic talent of one of the most talented men on the planet, I am a funny guy. That's funny haha not funny strange. Okay ?

Jorge Garcia once said that mixing humour and harsh reality is a very human behaviour ? 'it's the way people stay sane in their daily lives.'

As complicated as humans are, I've always found humour to be a rather simple thing. It levels the playing fields, all the time. It has the ability to bring people together ? even a room filled with strangers.

Modern neuroimaging studies have shown that mirth lights up our brains like a proverbial Christmas tree. Not only that, a good laugh has some very measurable short-term effects. It can stimulate our organs by increasing our intake of oxygen-rich air. It activates our stress response and soothes tension.

According to the Mayo Clinic it can also improve our immune systems, relieve pain and improve our mood. The bottom line ? laughter really is the best medicine.

Now, we can't all walk around high on laughter; it's not practical. But merely taking time to laugh at a joke or meme can ease our troubled minds and daily journeys. I've read that laughing for roughly 15 minutes a day is as beneficial as a long walk.

It's like a mini-puzzle for our brains, with the punchline serving as the satisfying solution.

As research in this field has evolved, so too has our understanding of humor's key components.

Today, psychologists recognize that humor involves cognitive, emotional, and social elements. It's not just about the content of a joke, but also about the context in which it's delivered, the relationship between the joke-teller and the audience, and the cultural norms that shape what we find funny.

In order to get it, or even open the door for any knock-knock joke, our brains balance cognition and emotion. When we find something funny, we experience a range of positive emotions ? joy, amusement, surprise, and sometimes even a touch of mischievous delight. These emotional responses are what make humor such a powerful force in our lives.

Interestingly, the relationship between cognition and emotion in humor isn't always straightforward. Sometimes, we might understand a joke on a cognitive level but not find it particularly amusing. Other times, we might laugh at something without fully understanding why it's funny. This complexity is part of what makes humor such a rich area of study for psychologists.

I can't accurately count the number of times when one of my humorous outbursts were misunderstood or taken out of context. Alas, such is the plight of the whimsically inclined. I seldom let the opportunity for a good barb or comment slide. It's in my nature. And our dogs and their antics make me laugh every day.

When we think about humor, our first association might be entertainment or amusement. But from a psychological perspective, humor serves a multitude of functions that go far beyond simply making us laugh. It's a 'Swiss Army knife' of the mind, capable of cutting through tension, building bridges between people, and even sharpening our cognitive abilities.

One of the most well-known functions of humor is stress reduction. When we laugh, our bodies release endorphins – those feel-good chemicals that act as natural painkillers and mood elevators. But the stress-busting power of humor goes beyond just the physical act of laughing.

The ability to find humor in stressful situations can provide a psychological buffer, helping us gain perspective and maintain emotional equilibrium.

Far from being a frivolous activity, engaging with humor can actually make us smarter! Humor often involves making unexpected connections between ideas, which can enhance creativity and problem-solving skills. When we “get” a joke, we’re essentially solving a cognitive puzzle, and this mental workout can help keep our brains sharp.

What can I say? Sharp as a tack I am.

Bianca Del Rio once said that there's humour in everything, and “the minute you find it, the better life is.”

I'm sure every comedian will agree and no topic is taboo. There's been a lot of talk and discussion about “censoring” comedy and moving away from “woke” behaviour.

I think when you do that, all is lost. Humour has to be spontaneous, reflect life, and be hard-hitting at times. What's wrong with making you laugh and think at the same time?

To me, humour is like a shovel, digging my way out of a dark and dreary hole. It doesn't really matter how I ended up in this void, but jocularity is often my ladder, the only way I can climb out.

When one is stricken with a life-altering ailment or disease, humour becomes even more important. During my time so far “coping with cancer,” I must say that a few wisecracks have saved me from misery. I've lived my entire life with playfulness in my heart, why give it up now?

I've even welcomed the odd one-liner from my family members, remarking on my chemo-induced hairstyle. If clowning around could lead to a cure, I'd be all set.

I will continue to fight the dark shadows with my balloon sword until it pops. Pleasant chuckles my friends.