

#5 Sense of Humor

Humor expands your thinking and rewires your brain. We are born with five senses which generally grow as we grow. But our sense of humor requires training, practice and attention to achieve competence. Five of senses have an organ associated with them: the eyes, ears, mouth, nose and skin. The entire body is the organ for our sense of humor. All our senses are feeding us information that can be used for pleasure and play.

Our sense of humor adds sparkle to other virtues. Humor is a special human skill, a mode of expression, a choice in how we respond to situations. The benefits of a well-developed sense of humor are literally endless. Healthy humor boosts our immunity, conveys "I am approachable," lowers defensiveness, promotes trust, enriches life by building intimacy, brightens our spirits, brings forth good will and instills hope. All of these qualities assist us in our personal and professional lives. A good sense of humor is an essential stress survival skill.

Problems occur when someone's humor skills are underdeveloped or were repressed repeatedly when they were young. A big problem occurs when someone tries to make one style of humor fit every situation. It is better to have a grab bag of tricks from which to pull.

Good humor is wisdom and wit combined.

Finding just the right amount of humor requires discretion, and creative adaptation shows we care. We can learn to customize our style of humor to the temperament of another. All this occurs in a split second without sacrificing spontaneity. Mastering these complex social dynamics is a big challenge when we are dealing with a new person. Below is a sampling of questions to ask yourself before being humorous:

Is this a good time?

What is the mood of the individual or group?

What is a sensitive style that will work with this person?

What type of humor is best for this situation?

How much playfulness is appropriate here?

Being socially sensitive requires understanding that one joke may sit well with one person and fall flat with another. It is important to know when not to engage one's humor externally. It's just plain smart to refrain from saying something that you think is funny when others would not share your amusement. Telling true, funny, personal stories is

usually better than repeating jokes. Many people find jokes hard to remember and it's easy to screw up the punch line. We all have the creative license to tweak the facts a little, for effect. It is better to invite people to laugh with you rather than trying to "make" people laugh.

Humor heals.

Humor is the best medicine when the spirit is down. Just the right dose makes pain bearable, reduces tension and helps us to cope with tragedies.