

Humor

Adding humor to a stressful situation can help lighten the mood and take unnecessary pressure off important decisions one may face. Humor diffuses stress levels and better enables one to step back and reevaluate situations.

Mental health professionals point out that humor can help patients gain perspective of their lives by allowing them to see reality in a lighthearted and non-threatening manner, as opposed to seeing the world only through personal perceptions. Humor shifts the way in which we think because it is not situations that generate our stress, but the meaning that one assigns to those situations. Humor adjusts the meaning of an event so that it is not so overwhelming. Lacking humor can cause one's thought processes to stagnate leading to increased distress. Humor helps us replace distressing emotions with pleasurable feelings. You cannot feel angry, depressed, anxious, guilty, or resentful and experience humor at the same time.

Humor is often accompanied by laughter. Laughter has been shown to have several physiological and psychological effects.

Laughter can:

- Increase creativity
- Reduce pain
- Decrease stress hormones
- Increase infection-fighting antibodies
- Increase attentiveness
- Increase heart rate and pulse
- Stimulate the brain to enhance learning
- Ease muscle tension and psychological stress, which keeps the brain alert and allows for better retention of information