Humor for your health and tranquility

Overview
1. Gain an understanding of the role therapeutic humor can play in mental health with a specific focus on the post trauma milieu.
2. Explain the physiological, psychological and social benefits of using therapeutic humor.
3. Define and distinguish the different between appropriate, healthy humor versus inappropriate, unhealthy humor.
4. Discuss and practice humor strategies that can be utilized to enhance one's use of therapeutic humor.

“In recent decades, a sense of humor has come to be viewed not only as a very socially desirable personality trait but also as an important component of mental health. Besides boosting positive emotions and counteracting negative moods like depression and anxiety, humor is thought to be a valuable mechanism for coping with stressful life events and an important social skill for initiating, maintaining and enhancing satisfying personal relationships” (Galloway & Cropley, 1999; Kuiper & Olinger, 1998, Lefcourt, 2001, Gambini, the Court Jester; 1612)

The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach by Rod A. Martin

Tucson Memorial at UMC

Carlos Gonzales

“Let us remain humble. And also use humor when appropriate. For humor is healing and can help people.” Carlos R. Gonzales, M.D.
Psychoneuroimmunology and Humor
Evidence is growing year by year that your thoughts, moods, emotions, and belief system have a fundamental impact on the body’s basic health and healing mechanisms.

From Marc Gelkopf’s article:
The Use of Humor in Serious Mental Illness: A Review
**Humor Brain Storming:**

What are you proud of that you have done?
What do you think others like about you?
What do you like about yourself?
What are you good at?

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**Proposed Jacobson’s Joy Inventory**

- 20 Question Inventory created by reflecting on the Beck Depression Inventory II© with positive verbiage from a Therapeutic Humor perspective.
- Not yet reviewed or approved for use. Not evidence based tested. No permissions have been requested or granted for use as of this date.
- Based on Humorgy Theory: That there is a spirit of humor that is therapeutically healing, positive, and joyful. It celebrates all that humor brings to humanity including the adaptive, creative and self healing potential of human beings.

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1. Happiness
   - 1) I am so happy or not so happy that I can’t stand it
   - 0) I do not feel happy
   - 1) I am happy sometimes
   - 2) I am happy with how happy I am
   - 3) I feel happy much of the time
   - **Jacobson’s Joy Inventory possible question draft**

2. Optimism
   - 1) I am never optimistic about anything
   - 0) I am not optimistic about the future, but that is because of my cultural upbringing
   - 1) I feel more encouraged about my future than I used to be
   - 2) I expect things to work out for me
   - 3) I feel my future is full of hope and will only get better

3. Past Success
   - 1) I have never had a success in my life
   - 0) I do not feel successful
   - 1) I have experienced success in the past
   - 2) As I look back, I see a lot of successes
   - 3) I feel I am a total success as a person

4. Increase in Joy
   - 1) Joy. What’s That?
     - 0) I am capable of experiencing joy
     - 1) I enjoy things, but not very often
     - 2) I experience joy on a regular basis
     - 3) My life is filled with joy

5. Contentment
   - 1) I am unsatisfied with my life and so would you be if you were me
   - 0) I feel content and I feel guilt an equal amount of time.
   - 1) I am more often content than not
   - 2) I feel content most of the time and am content with the answers I’ve given so far.
   - 3) I am almost always content

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**The Stress Response**

- Shallow breathing
- Increased blood pressure
- Adrenalin floods blood stream
- Increased muscle tension
- Digestion slows down
- Increased heart rate

**The Laughter Response**

- Deep breathing
- 02 in blood increases
- Blood pressure decreases
- Muscle tension decreases
- Better digestion
- Brain releases endorphins
- theory
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Psychological Benefits
- Helps with replacing losses
- Helps us feel better about ourselves
- See new perspective
- Stops you from feeling bad
- Helps you be more flexible
- Helps gain control over situation

Social Benefits
- Helps to decrease anger
- Decrease conflict & fighting
- Builds trust
- Decreases fear
- Eases tension
- Helps group activities to be more fun

Spiritual Benefits
- Laughter is universal
- Decreases prejudice
- Reveals connections of all
- Balances mind, body & spirit
- Helps you feel more peaceful and calm

To help other’s apply humor as a coping skill, you must be comfortable in using humor yourself.

Steps to improve your own and other’s sense of humor

PTSD Humor Strategy
Use Humorous Fantasies
Keep a humor journal

Start a humor library

Never forget the importance of play

The Half Habit

- You don't need the whole habit in order for it to be effective. It is the most difficult habit to maintain.
- This is the habit of changing your thoughts.

Choices

- “In my life, I spent more time worrying about things that might have happened, but didn’t, or happened, but I couldn’t change.”
- “My life has been flavored more by my sense of humor, than by all my other senses.”

- Mastering your thoughts is a constant struggle, if you master them half the time, you’ll be twice as healthy!
- The thoughts you share with others can have a profound influence on them.
**Habit One**

- Treat humor as a necessity, not a luxury
- Develop a willingness to laugh and play attitude

**Habit Two**

Use Self-Effacing Humor

- Know your weaknesses and turn them into strengths

**Habit Three**

Keep your eyes open for humorous situations and share them!

**Inappropriate humor**

- During the initial crisis
- If there is no rapport and you know nothing of the person's perspective on humor
- If visibly upset
- If making them the target of the humor
- Is perceived as uncaring

**Appropriate Humor**

- If humor is initiated by patient
- If you have good rapport and there is mutual trust
- Help creates mood of fun and caring
- Focuses on the positive side of life
- Self-effacing humor
**Habit Four**

Use the power and influence of humor to make your life and the lives of others better.

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**Playshop**

List 5 things you love to do, that you feel joyful when you do them, that you haven’t done in the last several months. (I.E. lying in the sun, taking a cruise, getting a message, reading a good book, dancing, going to a humor talk, etc.)

12345

Now, besides each of these things list what stops you from doing it – something either inside (your feelings) or outside (lack of money, time) that keeps you from doing it.

Take two things on your list that hold the most joy and think of one step you can take toward bringing it into your life.

1.

2.

Make your calendar with a date and time that you will bring each of these joyful activities into your life.

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**Habit Five**

Use your humorous imagination to improve your communication.

Humor is a therapeutic communication technique.

“Once you get people laughing, they’re listening and you can tell them almost anything.” - Herbert Gardner

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**Humorgy Exercise**

Aura Fluff

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**Habit Six**

Humorize with Humorgy (humor force)

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**Habit Seven**

Act Like the highly humorous person you’ve become or are becoming.
I open the door
joy walks in
I explain that she has the wrong address
she should be next door
She comes in anyway
joy, like pain
knows not of manners or proper protocol
I open the door
humor walks in
It fills the empty spaces
Pain is still here
But, it has little room

References
1. Gelkopf, Marc; Marc The Use of Humor in Serious Mental Illness: A Review

Play improves communication and rapport.

I open the door
pain walks in
filling my home with darkness and discontent
I open the door
faith walks in
illuminating my living room
I open the door
hope walks in
filling the kitchen with wonderful smells

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Other resources

- Any research by Dr. Lee Berk
- http://mirthmatters.com Website of Dr. Steve Sultanoff
- www.teacheq.com Dr. Ed Dunkelblau

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