

THE SENSE OF HUMOR

Using Comedy, Laughter, and Improvisation
for Effective Training

Presented by
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<http://www.wavelength.biz/web/sensehumor.ppt>

THEORIES OF HUMOR

I. Incongruity Theory - (Kant, Schopenhauer)

- ❑ Multiple meanings
- ❑ Detecting ambiguities
- ❑ Sudden shift of perspective

II. Superiority Theory - (Plato, Aristotle, Descartes)

"Everything is funny as long as it's happening to someone else."

- Mark Twain

- ❑ Humor to inflate our own ego
- ❑ Humor to deflate others we feel are superior
- ❑ Seeing flaw in others as compared to ourselves

III. Relief\Release Theory - (Freud)

- ❑ Temporary freedom from our restrictions
- ❑ Rebellion against the repressive or uncontrollable
- ❑ Levity in a tense situation.

IV. Humor as a Form of Play - (Eastman)

- ❑ A reversion to childish innocence

V. Humor Exposes the Truth - (White)

- ❑ Rips away the veils of pretense
- ❑ Reveals truth of human nature and human affairs

HUMOR'S EFFECTIVENESS: A "CLEESIAN" PERSPECTIVE

I. Humor facilitates learning.

- People learn best when in a moderate state of arousal
- Humor restores a sense of proportion
 - Makes problems less threatening
 - Reduces resistance to new ideas

II. Humor helps change people's behavior.

- Humor involves people.
- Bypasses head - Gets through on a gut level
- Get people to laugh at wrong ways. We learn from our mistakes.

III. Humor promotes an increase in creativity.

- Research by MacKinnon at Berkeley
 - Creative people took the time to play with problems
- Switch in frames of reference.
 - Jokes use lateral\divergent thinking
- Ha-Ha to Aha! - Arthur Koestler

IV. Humor reduces stress.

- Provides an emotional support
- Keeps things in proportion
 - We start to overcome problems when we can laugh at them
- Stimulates immune system - Norman Cousins

THE FOUR FORMS OF HUMOR

FIGURAL

Comic Books
Comic Strips
Cartoons
Political Cartoons

VERBAL

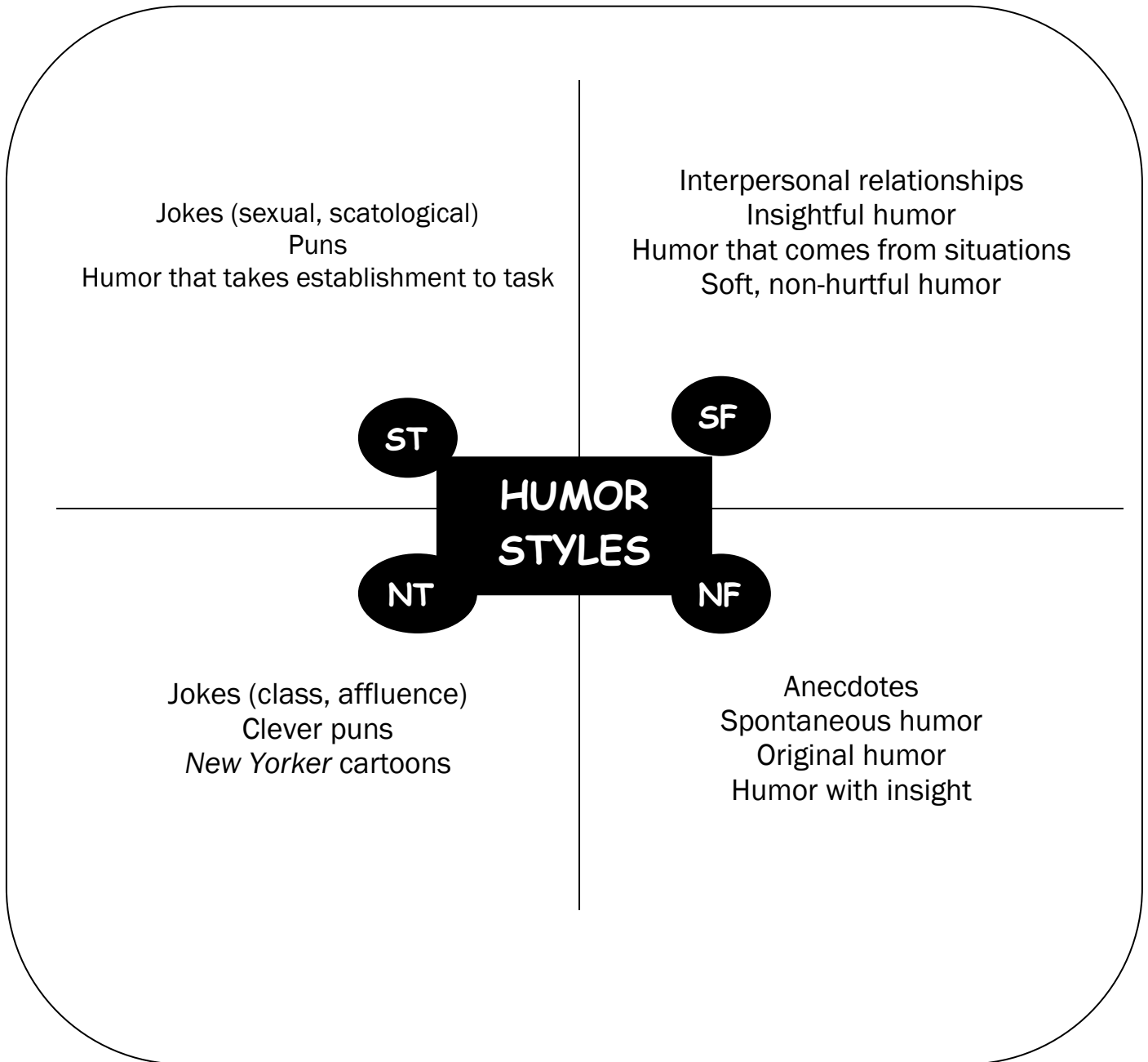
Jokes
Puns
Riddles
Satire
Parody
Irony
Wit
Anecdote

VISUAL (Physical)

Impressions
Impersonations
Mime
Pratfalls
Practical Jokes
Slapstick
Sightgags

AUDITORY

Impressions
Impersonations
Noises
Sounds



From J. Robert Hanson, Ed. D. Hanson Silver Strong & Associates, Inc.

KEYS TO THE SUCCESSFUL USE OF HUMOR

I. Relationship

- Know your audience
- Tell stories with a purpose

II. Rapport

- Have an understanding of your audience's feelings
- Should be laughing with, not at someone

III. Setting

- Make sure the humor is appropriate for the space
- Humor should enhance, not distract

IV. Timing

- Allow time for the imagination to work
- Remember the non-verbal pathway to humor

Areas of humor to likely avoid:

- Sexual
- Ethnic/racial
- Religious
- Hostile/Sick
- Demeaning to Men/Women



From "A Laughing Place" by Christian Hageseth III, M.D.

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR PERSONAL SENSE OF HUMOR

- ❑ Look for humor in everything

"Nothing is quite as funny as the unintended humor in reality."

- Steve Allen

- ❑ Collect humor –

Keep a journal/file/bulletin board/library of:

Books	Magazines	Videos/Audio tapes	
Jokes	Stories	Cartoons	Headlines
Signs	Anecdotes	Excuses	Oxymorons

- ❑ Smile more - Lighten up - Be more playful

- ❑ Participate in humorous activities

Dress up for "dress-up" day

Create/perform in a sketch written by/for your colleagues

Make a presentation in costume

- ❑ Hang out with funny people - try the humor buddy system

- ❑ Use humor in your correspondence/surveys/tests

- ❑ Try out other styles/forms of humor

- ❑ Tell stories on yourself

- ❑ Have some sort of humor always at the ready



RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

The Association of Applied and Therapeutic Humor - Mission: "To advance the understanding and application of humor, laughter and play." AATH provides state-of-the-art, evidence-based information about current research and practical applications of humor to education, health-care, business, and government. www.aath.org

Energize Your Meetings with Laughter. Sheila Feigelson, ASCD Publishing, 1998
www.ascd.org.

Health, Healing and the Amuse System. Paul E. McGhee, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1996

The Humor Project, Inc. Joel Goodman, Founder. (Produces annual "Positive Power of Humor" Conference.) 480 Broadway, Ste. 210, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866, (518) 587-8770 www.HumorProject.com

Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre. Keith Johnstone, Theatre Arts Books, 1979

Improvisation for the Theatre. Viola Spolin, Northwestern U. Press, 1983

The Laughing Classroom. Loomans & Kolberg, H J Kramer, Inc., 1993

A Laughing Place. Christian Hageseth III, M.D., Berwick Publishing Company, 1988

License To Laugh. Richard A. Shade, Teacher Ideas Press, 1996

"She Who Laughs, Lasts." Article by Jim Winter in *Principal* magazine, March/April 2004. NAESP Publications. www.naesp.org

Truth In Comedy. Charna Halpern & Del Close, Meriwether Pub. 1994

WAVELENGTH – Improvisational comedy ensemble using humor to focus on Educational concerns. Videotapes, CDs, workshops and live performances for professional development. www.wavelength.biz

World Laughter Tour - Famous for its two-day Certified Laughter Leadership workshop "to teach people enjoyable, systematic, self-care strategies." www.worldlaughtertour.com