

Introduction To Humour

Humour



Compassion

Empathy

These activities could be used to follow an incident or address issues rather than as a stand-alone lesson. This session also works well with the empathy activities in the module on compassion..



Humour is the quality of being amusing or comic.

Activity 1

What makes you laugh?

Aim(s)

- To explore what makes people laugh.

Resources

- An internet connection to show video clips or some pictures/examples of funny things.
- *What is funny?* Power Point.

Delivery Guide

Facilitators are encouraged to take part in this activity by sharing what makes them laugh and why.



Find a video that makes you, personally, laugh. There are a few ideas here (also available on the *What is Funny?* Power Point, but please do add your own:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=RP4abiHdQpc - Babies laughing

www.youtube.com/watch?v=6B1V1PFsyho - Mr Bean falls asleep in church

www.youtube.com/watch?v=R73IRPhb5DE - Rio Ferdinand 'punking' David Beckham

www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0tE6T-ecmg
www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Vns6MXPaCI
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vi41zAu4FfM
(all videos available 8/16)

- Donald Trump doing Game of Thrones
- Little girl farting
- The limbo trick



Show it to the young people. Does it make them laugh? Whether it does or doesn't make them laugh, ask them to think about why.

Ask them what makes them laugh. Give them some time to do an internet search to find things that make them laugh. If there is no internet access, think of some examples (or show them the examples given in this activity) and let them 'rate' them as to whether they find them funny or not.

Once each person has something that makes them laugh, get them to share it with the group. Ask them to explain why it's funny (if that's possible! It may not be).

Some of the things that may come up include:

- We all find different things funny.
- Some things can make you laugh out loud, some can make you smile, or chuckle slightly. What makes the difference?
- Sometimes we don't know why things make us laugh, they just do.
- Sometimes people can find cruelty or harm to others funny. Is that okay? (This is explored more in the next activity.)

Points to highlight

- There are different types of humour and not everyone finds the same thing funny.
- Sometimes people can find it funny when someone else looks silly or is hurt.
- We don't know a lot about why certain things make us laugh.

Activity 2

Aim(s)

- To explore how humour can hurt people.
- To think about the appropriate ways in which to respond to humour that may hurt someone.

Resources

- Examples of cases where offensive humour has been used.
- *Yes No Maybe* Cards. **OPTIONAL**
- Sellotape/blu tack. **OPTIONAL**
- Pen and flipchart paper. **OPTIONAL**

Delivery Guide

Part I

Find some examples of controversial cases where offensive humour has been used publically and, if possible, print out the news reports about them. There are some ideas below, but please choose the right ones for your context and young people.

Frankie Boyle:

www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-19439270

Jeremy Clarkson:

www.theguardian.com/media/2014/mar/28/top-gear-jeremy-clarkson-racist-joke-allegation-burma-bbc

Joan Rivers:

www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2285794/Joan-Rivers-refuses-apologise-vulgar-offensive-joke-Heidi-Klums-backside.html

Russell Brand and Jonathan Ross in trouble for prank calls they made:

www.theguardian.com/media/2008/oct/29/jonathan-ross-russell-brand

Australian Radio Hosts Mel Greig and Michael Christian make a prank call to the hospital where Kate Middleton was giving birth. The Nurse who took the call later committed suicide:

www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/jacintha-saldanha-prank-call-aussie-5268935

(all available 8/16)

Choose one or two and read through, discussing the situation. Think about these questions:

- What did you think?
- Is it morally wrong to use humour to offend and wound people?
- Were they being kind? Do they need to think about showing kindness?
- Is it the job of the comedian to 'test the limits' and say the unsayable? Should there be limits on what they can make jokes about? If there should be limits, who decides those limits?
- Are these examples funny because they 'cross the line'?

- ! As an extension, ask them if they notice anything about the gender balance in these examples.
- Do they think that there is a difference between how men and women use humour?

Part II

Ask the young people how they would react if someone tells a joke that hurts someone or is offensive. What would they do?

Ask them to come up with the different options someone would have and write these up on a flipchart or a whiteboard, or note them down on a piece of paper. Suggested options are:

- Say nothing.
- Challenge the person telling the joke – say it's offensive or it isn't kind.
- Explain why it isn't funny.
- Join in and tell a similar joke or make a similar comment.
- Laugh along with everyone else.
- Walk away.
- Point out that it isn't very kind.

but there will be additional ones.

YES/NO/MAYBE activity: Put each of the cards provided in a different part of the room. Read each option and ask the young people whether they think it is a good or a bad response, and to stand in the YES, NO or MAYBE section depending on their choice.

After each option, talk about its strengths and weaknesses, or what specific situation it would be best in. For instance:

- Say nothing.
 - Strength: People will continue to like you, you won't upset anyone.
It's none of your business anyway
 - Weakness: It doesn't challenge the offensive or unkind views.
- Challenge the person telling the joke – say it's offensive or it isn't kind.
 - Strength: You're acting to stop someone hurting someone else.
 - Weakness: You could cause an argument.
The person telling the joke might feel disrespected.

Once you have finished, ask them again what they would do if they heard someone tell a joke that hurts someone or one that is offensive. Would it make any difference if it is about them or someone close to them, or if it was making fun of a stranger? Does it make a difference if the person the joke is about can't hear it?

Points to highlight

- We need to think about other people's feelings when we make jokes: making fun of people can be unkind and unfair. We need to show empathy.
- It takes courage to challenge someone, even if we think what they are doing is wrong or unkind. It can cause conflict and damage friendships.
- If there should be limits on what people make jokes about, who decides those limits? If jokes about race are not okay, then what about jokes about disabled people? Or gender?

Further Resources

This video explores the science behind why we find things funny. It is interesting, although quite dry and aimed at an older audience:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysSgG5V-R3U (available at 8/16)