

Humor: Not Just a Laughing Matter

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Learning Objectives for Class 1: at the end of this session, the learner will be able to:

- List the 3 components of the humorous experience.
- Contrast mirth and wit.
- Describe the impact of laughter on the brain.
- Discuss why babies laugh without cognitive understanding.

Content Outline: Class 1: Welcome and Course Overview

- How do you define humor?
- The Humor Experience: Making the Cocktail
 - Wit: “trainwreck of the mind”
 - Brains make assumptions on what the outcome will be (jokes) based on prior experience and builds a neuro pathway
 - However, when a joke is told, it's an unexpected outcome. Our brain has no path to fire the neurons and it creates a spasm, which translates to laughter.
 - Natural aptitude for using words and ideas in a quick and inventive way to create humor
 - Mirth: sensation of merriment
 - A way to disengage from seriousness
 - Laughter: involuntary physiological response
 - Gestures & sound
 - HaHa vs HoHo
 - Types of laughter
 - Duchenne Smiles
 - The brain on laughter
 - Impact on wave transmission
 - Benefits of mirthful laughter
 - Laughter development
 - Impact of unexpected learning
 - Influence of social context

- Familiarity factor
 - Magic/Possibilities
- Tickle response
- **Class 1 Summary:**

References for Class 1

- <https://iep.utm.edu/humor/>
 - Smuts, Aaron. Humor. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP)
- https://www.reddit.com/r/explainlikeimfive/comments/3t8s71/eli5_why_do_people_laugh_when_being_tickled_even/
- <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20140131-why-do-we-laugh-when-tickled>
- Gregory A., Bryant, C., Athena Aktipis (2014). The animal nature of spontaneous human laughter. *Evolution and Human Behavior*;35(4), 327-335.
- Sabato, Giovanni. “What’s so Funny? The Science of Why we Laugh.” Scientific American. 26 June 2019, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/whats-so-funny-the-science-of-why-we-laugh/> 19 Sep. 2022.
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/duchenne-smile>
- Kamiloğlu Roza G., Tanaka Akihiro, Scott Sophie K. and Sauter Disa A. (2022). Perception of group membership from spontaneous and volitional laughter. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc.* B37720200404. <http://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2020.0404>

Youtube videos on the topic

- <https://youtu.be/ddV6jyDeCKA> (Vsauce) Why Are We Ticklish? Why do We Laugh?
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xu-QfE_1ksk&ab_channel=TED-Ed The science of laughter –(Sasha Winkler)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmL1sNnEKXc&ab_channel=ProfessorDaveExplains The Psychology of Humor: Why Are Things Funny?