

*Kentucky School of Alcohol and Drug
Studies*

Presents

*The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor in
Addictions Treatment*

Presenter

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The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor: What the Research Says

Laughter and Pain

Laughter releases endorphins in the brain that fight pain.

The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor: What the Research Says Continued

Laughter and the Immune System

- 1. Laughter Lowers cortisol levels and protects our immune system*
- 2. Laughter increases antibodies, which fight infection.*
- 3. Laughter activates T-cells and prepares the body to fight foreign substances.*
- 4. Laughter increases Natural Killer Cell activity. Natural Killer Cells attack cancerous cells in the body.*

(Source: Laughter and the Immune System: A Serious Approach, by Lee Berk, Ph. D and Stanley Tan, M.D.)

Therapeutic Benefits of Laughter Continued

- *Improves brain functioning and protects the heart*
- *Increase oxygen in the blood which encourages healing*
- *Reduces stress, depression, anxiety, and fear*
- *Elevates mood and increases energy*

The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor: What the Research Says Continued

Laughter and Stress

"Laughter is God's gift to human beings. You never see a cow laugh."

Joan Rivers

Laughter can decrease stress, lower blood pressure, and decrease muscle tension.

(Source: "Neuro Endocrine and Stress Hormone Changes During Mirthful Laughter." American Journal of Medical Sciences, 1990, 298:390-396.)

The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor: What the Research Says Continued

Humor and Health

"In a study of terminally ill patients, 4 out of 5 said they wished people would stop being so glum and joke with them!"

"For every 10 minutes I laughed, I had two hours of pain free sleep."

Norman Cousins

The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor: What the Research Says Continued

- 1. Studies of cultures where people often live to be between the ages of 120-150 indicates that high esteem for old people and humor are key ingredients of longevity.*

(Source: Longevity: Fulfilling Our Biological Potential, by Kenneth Pelletier)

*The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor:
What the Research Says Continued*

- 2. Laughter gives the lungs a workout. When we laugh heartily, we take in six times more oxygen than when we are talking.*


The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor: What the Research Says Continued

- 3. When we laugh, the heart pumps more, increasing blood circulation. According to Dr. Fry, 20 seconds of hearty laughter gives the heart the same exercise as 3 minutes of rowing.*

The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor: What the Research Says Continued

4. People who laugh a lot have higher levels of immunoglobulin-A in their throats and nasal passages and come down with fewer colds than people who seldom laugh. One study found that new mothers who laughed a lot had fewer upper respiratory infections, and their babies did, too.

(Source: Humor Works, by John Morreall, Ph. D.)

The background is a solid blue color. In the upper left quadrant, there are several curved, overlapping bands of lighter blue, creating a sense of motion or a stylized wave. In the center, there is a dark blue shape that resembles a smiling mouth, with a small dark blue circle above it, possibly representing a nose or a shadow. The text is positioned in the upper right area, overlapping the lighter blue bands and the dark blue shape.

*Laughter as Prevention of Compassion
Fatigue*

Compassion Fatigue

1. The stress of caring too much

Compassion Fatigue Continued

- 2. Emotional residue as a result of working with those who suffer*
- 3. Secondary trauma*

Compassion Fatigue Signs

Loss of energy

Loss of hope

Loss of enthusiasm

Loss of the ideal

Spiritual distress – “Where is God?”

A shift in one’s world view

Laughter to the rescue!









Laughter and Mental Health

The background is a solid blue color. In the upper left quadrant, there is a stylized, layered graphic element consisting of several overlapping, curved shapes that resemble a wave or a ribbon. These shapes are in various shades of blue, from a very light, almost white-blue to a dark, deep blue. The overall effect is dynamic and modern.

Laughter and Mental Health Continued

- 1. Humor raises endorphine levels in the brain and reduces emotional pain.*

(Source: Margaret Caudell, M.D., Ph.D., Mind Body Clinic – Boston)

Laughter and Mental Health Continued

2. It is also believed that humor activates neurochemicals in the brain, such as dopamine, and thus acts as an antidepressant.

Laughter and Mental Health Continued

3. The emergence of a sense of humor is one of the signs of mental health and progress in therapy.

(Source: The Handbook of Humor, by Krieger)

Counselor Humor

"A sign that you enjoy life is a good sense of humor."

Vanessa Williams Church

"A good sense of humor is one aspect of self-actualization."

Abraham Maslow

The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor in Addictions Counseling

A goal of counseling is to help clients feel better and act differently. Many models of counseling attempt to reach this goal by interventions that focus on one of four areas: feelings; behavior; thinking; and biochemistry. Humor can affect changes in all four of these areas.

The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor in Addictions Counseling Continued

- 1. It is the great equalizer.*
- 2. It brings the idealized counselor back to life.*
- 3. It can decrease resistance.*
- 4. It can decrease cross-cultural tension.*

The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor in Addictions Counseling Continued

- 5. It can facilitate bonding between counselors and clients.*
- 6. It can facilitate self-disclosure – by creating a friendly environment.*
- 7. It can allow some relief from pain.*
- 8. It can allow client to change how they perceive a situation.*

The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor in Addictions Counseling Continued

- 9. It can ease some of the anxiety caused by taboo subjects*
- 10. It can provide insight.*
- 11. It can decrease stress and anxiety.*
- 12. It can make the therapeutic hour seem quicker.*

Benefits of Laughter in Therapy Continued

- 13. Increases client talking and eye contact*
- 14. Decreases client stigma*
- 15. Helps client cope with loss and illness*
- 16. Laughter is contagious. It facilitates bonding in group therapy*
- 17. Laughter improves marriage and partnerships*

"Someone asked me why I wear my wedding ring on the wrong hand. It's because I married the wrong person."

"Marriage is not Heaven and it's not hell. It's purgatory."

Abraham Lincoln

Utilizing Humor in Counseling With Clients

Many counselors agree that the best humor by counselors is thoughtfully spontaneous, well timed, and takes into consideration who the client is. The goal should be to lessen client tension, increase client comfort, and/or to help the client gain insight. The primary purpose of humor is to benefit the client.

Utilizing Humor in Counseling With Clients Continued

Approaches

- 1. Planned spontaneity*
- 2. Exaggerations*
- 3. Changing dialects*

Utilizing Humor in Counseling With Clients Continued

4. Taking a "funny bone history"

- A. What makes you laugh?*
- B. Do you like to tell jokes or hear jokes?*
- C. What kind of humor do you find unpleasant?*
- D. What kinds of things that make others laugh are not funny to you?*
- E. What are the funniest movies you have seen?*
- F. Who are your favorite comedians?*

Utilizing Humor in Counseling With Clients Continued

5. Reframes

6. Offering a menu

7. Stories

8. Making fun of yourself

Utilizing Humor in Counseling With Clients Continued

- 9. The use of humor tools – movie clips, cartoons, anecdotes, signs, prompts, masks*
- 10. Repeating a funny punch line*

Utilizing Humor in Counseling With Clients Continued

- 11. Pointing out absurdities and illogical reasoning*
- 12. The use of art*
- 13. Role plays*
- 14. Group activities*

Humor in Group Therapy Auction

- 1. To be president*
- 2. Peace of mind*
- 3. A good pair of shoes*
- 4. To smoke a joint*
- 5. A gold mine*
- 6. To influence the education of children*
- 7. A new car*
- 8. To snort cocaine*

Utilizing Humor in Counseling With Clients Continued

6 Types of Inappropriate Humor

- 1. Laughing at the client*
- 2. Cheap shots*
- 3. Put downs*
- 4. Sarcasm*
- 5. Racist and sexist jokes*
- 6. When there's not enough distance from the crisis.*

When is Humor Inappropriate? Continued

- *When the client is offended by it.
(Micro-aggression)*
- *When it makes the client feel like they're not being taken serious*
- *When it's used so often it's seen as boring*
- *When the counselor uses it to avoid dealing with the client's or their own anxiety*
- *When it is inappropriately timed*

"When I Was A Kid"

- 1. My favorite game was*
- 2. My favorite food was*
- 3. My favorite cartoon character was*
- 4. My favorite song was*
- 5. My favorite toy was*
- 6. My favorite holiday was*
- 7. My favorite teacher was*
- 8. My best friend was*



**A police officer called the station on his radio.
"I have an interesting case here. An old lady
shot her husband for stepping on the floor she
just mopped."**

"Have you arrested the woman?"

"Not yet. The floor's still wet."



*Assistant
Branch Manager*

Branch Manager




"please be dolphins, please be dolphins"

What makes you think



the kid is mine?

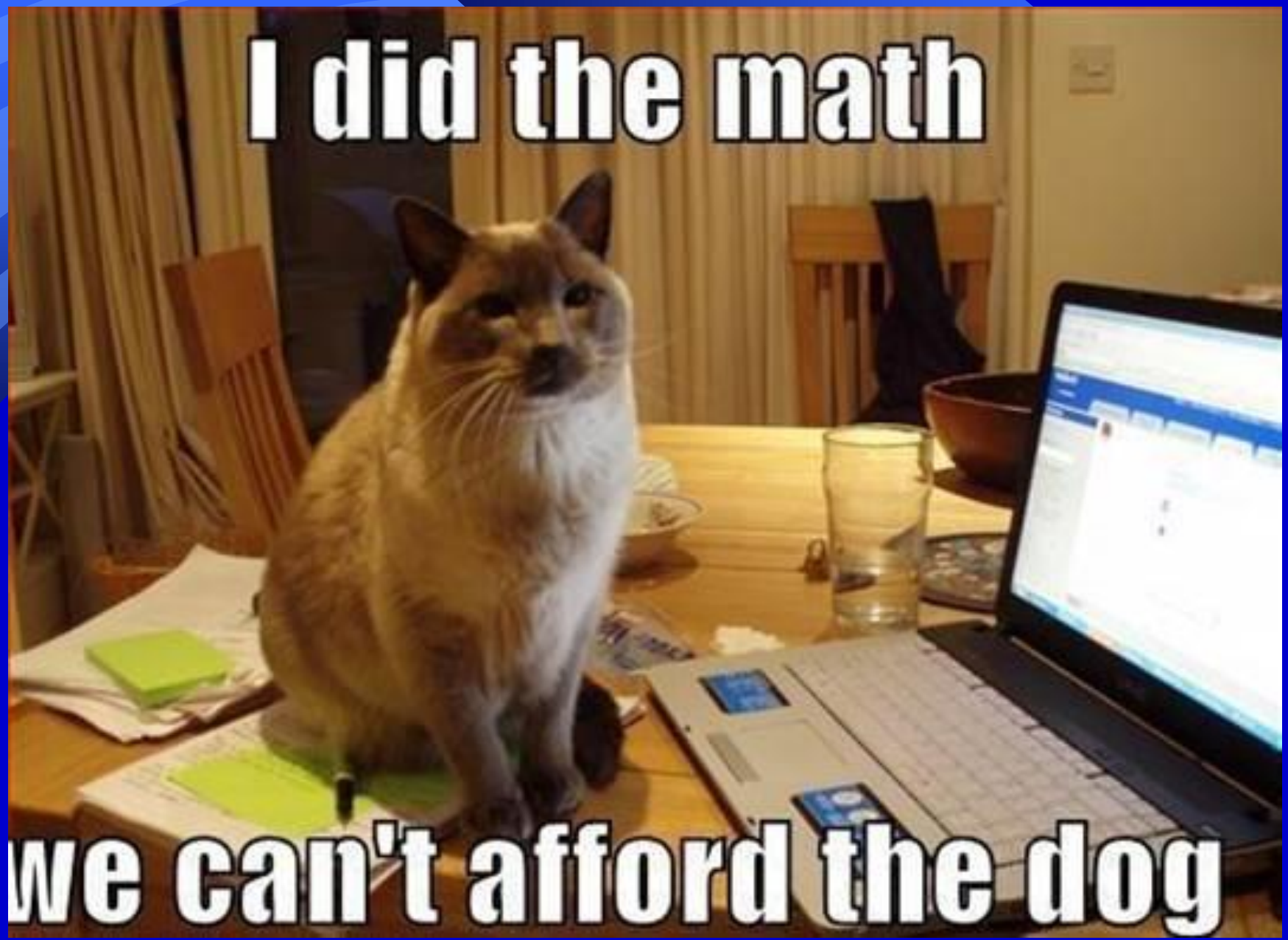


I told you
not to use
bleach

Shut up!

I did the math

we can't afford the dog



7 Cousins of Laughter

- 1. Love*
- 2. Hope*
- 3. Faith*
- 4. Touch*
- 5. Creativity*
- 6. Good nutrition*
- 7. Goals and a sense of purpose*