



**STARR KING**  
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH



Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

## Humor

Hayward, CA. Wednesday Evening Small Group, Kathryn LaMar, 07 March 2018

### CHALICE LIGHTING

1 min

Laughter is man's most distinctive emotional expression. Man shares his capacity for love and hate, anger and fear, loyalty and grief with other living creatures. But humor, which has an intellectual as well as emotional element, belongs to man.

*Margaret Mead*

### OPENING WORDS

1 min

One of Sigmund Freud's famous observations was that people joke about whatever is most important to them in order to reduce the tension created by that importance. This is true on the level of speech in communities as well as individuals. If the jokes shared by the members of a community are reflections of the values of that community, and in particular the tensions created as members of that community try to live up to those values. It is no accident that preschoolers joke about control of bodily functions, teenagers about sex, and teachers joke about outrageous excuses offered by students.

*Karen Tracy, from Unitarian Universalist Identity, Kate Tweedie Erslev, Youth and Campus Ministry Covenant Group Series, Vol. 1, p.11*

### SILENT MEDITATION

2 min

The first sound of the gong brings us to silence. Please take time to center yourself, and temporarily push aside whatever might be preventing you from participating fully in tonight's session. The second sound of the gong returns us to each other's presence.

### CHECK-IN / FEEDBACK

40 min

Please share something(s) about your life since last we met.

### INTRODUCTION TO HUMOR

3 min

Humor has been described as willingness to accept life and ourselves with a shrug and a smile, lightheartedness, and gives a sense of mastery over a situation. Humor has been viewed as a way of looking at a situation from a different point of view, diffusing a crisis and providing an opportunity for increased insight and objectivity. Humor matters in our relationships. Humor matters in preventing the buildup of stress. Humor matters in our perspective of life and thrives between man's aspirations and his limitations.

At a youth conference in 2004, junior youth defined "compassionate humor" as including "stories of endearment", memories of laughs that have been shared--truly shared, stories that remind us that humor is part of a community and a relationship.

This "compassionate humor" contrasts with jokes that are harmful to a group of people, from dumb-blond jokes to those with ethnic, racial, and religious overtones; jokes that make assumptions that may not be true. The youth developed the following guidelines for using humor.

- Remember that people have feelings.
- Develop the ability to laugh with and not at another person.
- Be willing to be surprised at how well your own ideas and those of others might turn out.

- Think before you speak.
- Make jokes that expand rather than impose on a person's right to search for what they believe.
- Accept, honor, and celebrate--rather than make fun of--differences.

**QUOTES TO PONDER**

**10 min**

If I had no sense of humor, I would long ago have committed suicide. *Mahatma Gandhi*

Kindness and a generous spirit go a long way. And a sense of humor. It's like medicine--very healing.  
*Max Irons*

Humor is an affirmation of dignity, a declaration of man's superiority to all that befalls him.  
*Romain Gary*

Good planning is important. I've also regarded a sense of humor as one of the most important things on a big expedition. When you're in a difficult or dangerous situation, or when you're depressed about the chances of success, someone who can make you laugh eases the tension. *Edmund Hillary*

There is a thin line that separates laughter and pain, comedy and tragedy, humor and hurt.  
*Erma Bombeck*

Like a welcome summer rain, humor may suddenly cleanse and cool the earth, the air and you.  
*Langston Hughes*

Your attitude is like a box of crayons that color your world. Constantly color your picture gray, and your picture will always be bleak. Try adding some bright colors to the picture by including humor, and your picture begins to lighten up.  
*Allen Klein*

Comedy is simply a funny way of being serious. *Peter Ustinov*

Everything is funny, as long as it's happening to somebody else. *Will Rogers*

From there to here, and here to there, funny things are everywhere. *Dr. Seuss*

Most comedy is based on getting a laugh at somebody else's expense. And I find that that's just a form of bullying in a major way. So I want to be an example that you can be funny and be kind, and make people laugh without hurting somebody else's feelings.  
*Ellen DeGeneres*

It's your outlook on life that counts. If you take yourself lightly and don't take yourself too seriously, pretty soon you can find the humor in our everyday lives. And sometimes it can be a lifesaver.  
*Betty White*

My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.  
*Maya Angelou*

Humor disarms people. It opens them up to starting a dialogue about things they wouldn't normally talk about. I don't understand how people who don't have a sense of humor get through life.  
*Zach Anner*

Try to find someone with a sense of humor. That's an important thing to have because when you get into an argument, one of the best ways to diffuse it is to be funny. You don't want to hide away from a point, because some points are serious, but you'd rather have a discussion that was a discussion, rather than an argument.  
*Ed Sheeran*

Humor is by far the most significant activity of the human brain. *Edward de Bono*

A sense of humor... is needed armor. Joy in one's heart and some laughter on one's lips is a sign that the person down deep has a pretty good grasp of life.  
*Hugh Sidey*

Humor must not professedly teach and it must not professedly preach, but it must do both if it would live forever.

*Mark Twain*

Imagination was given to man to compensate him for what he is not; a sense of humor to console him for what he is.

*Francis Bacon*

A well-developed sense of humor is the pole that adds balance to your steps as you walk the tightrope of life.

*William Arthur Ward*

Humor is the most important thing in life. It trumps everything else, and it's the only thing that helps me deal with everything else.

*Paul Rudd*

A person without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs. It's jolted by every pebble on the road.

*Henry Ward Beecher*

Analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog. Few people are interested and the frog dies of it.

*E. B. White*

Humor distorts nothing, and only false gods are laughed off their earthly pedestals.

*Agnes Repplier*

Humor, for me, is really a gate of departure. It's a way of enticing a reader into a poem so that less funny things can take place later. It really is not an end in itself, but a means to an end.

*Billy Collins*

You know those things that you throw the twigs into and it spits them out? That's what I do. The branches are like life, and I throw them into my head and some of it comes out as humor.

*Steven Wright*

When humor can be made to alternate with melancholy, one has a success, but when the same things are funny and melancholic at the same time, it's just wonderful.

*Francois Truffaut*

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR FOCUSING

2 min

- Share a time when you laughed with someone, or laughed at yourself in a way that was refreshing and healing.
- When do you consider humor to be constructive and when destructive?
- What is the role of humor in politics and in our cherished beliefs about what is right and wrong?
- What part does humor play in your religious identity and in your religious beliefs?
- How do you respond to the following statements about religion and humor:
  - Mark Twain: The secret source of humor is not joy, but sorrow; there is no humor in heaven.
  - *The Koran*: He deserves Paradise who makes his companions laugh.
- Share a time when how you have been hurt by humor, yours or another's.
- Share humor that did not need words to be funny.
- Where do you find humor? Has your source of humor changed over the years?
- What other connections do you make to the subject of humor?

**BREAK**

**10 min**

**FOCUSING / DISCUSSION****40 min**

In your own words, explain your thoughts about the roles that humor and comedy play in life. If you wish you may talk about one or more of the discussion considerations, or which of the quotes spoke especially to you, OR, tell your favorite "compassionate" joke!

**SESSION FEEDBACK****3 min**

What went well for you, this time or in general. How can we improve the sessions? Are there any reasons to revisit our covenant?

**CLOSING SONG****2 min**

Sing this song to the tune of *Holy, Holy, Holy* (the tune is called *Nicea*; look in the tune index of the grey hymnal for UU hymns to the same tune).

Holy, holy, holy! Holy is our humor.

Early in the morning light, life's laughter  
do we hear.

Holy, healthy laughter we offer to each  
other.

Cel'brating humanity, the joy behind the  
tear.

Holy are the hurts that cutting humor  
brings us,

Healing is the love we choose to set our  
humor right.

Holy, healthy laughter always will be with  
us.

Humor was and is, and evermore shall  
be.

**CLOSING WORDS****1 min**

Grant me the eyes to see humor that opens a heart.

Grant me the heart that can to be warmed by the smile.

Grant me the smile that makes others wonder what secret I know.

Grant me the gentle humor that engages other beings--human and otherwise--in seeing the wisdom of the universe.

**SOURCES**

Most of the content of this session was taken from a 4-session series of workshops given by the Reverend Helen Zidowecki at the New England District Workshop in April 2011; the quotes are taken from the <Brainyquotes.com> website.