

Funny people are more intelligent than unfunny peers

October 16 2017, by Lowri Douthwaite



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Albert Einstein attributed his brilliant mind to having a child-like sense of humour. Indeed, a number of studies have found an association between [humour and intelligence](#).

Researchers in Austria recently discovered that funny [people](#),

particularly those who enjoy dark humour, have higher IQs than their less funny peers. They argue that it takes both [cognitive and emotional ability](#) to process and produce humour. Their analysis shows that funny people have higher verbal and non-verbal intelligence, and they score lower in mood disturbance and aggressiveness.

Not only are funny people smart, they're nice to be around. Evidence suggests that having a good sense of humour is linked to [high emotional intelligence](#) and is a [highly desirable quality](#) in a partner. Evolutionary psychologists describe humour as a "[heritable trait](#)" that signals mental fitness and intellectual agility to prospective mates. In studies of attractiveness, both men and women rate funny people as more attractive, and cite having a good sense of humour as being one of the [most important traits](#) in a long-term partner.

In psychology we use the term "positive humour style" to refer to people who use humour to enhance relationships and reduce conflict. This type of humour is associated with [relationship satisfaction, extroversion](#) and [high self-esteem](#). Having a humorous outlook on life is also a good coping strategy. It helps people better manage stress and adversity.

More [negative humour styles](#), such as sarcasm, ridicule and self-defeating humour, do not offer the same benefits. Instead, they tend to alienate people and are more often associated with depressed mood and aggression.

Not only do funny people make other people laugh, they also laugh more themselves. And neurobiology shows that laughter leads to brain changes, which may explain the link between humour and intelligence.

Neuropsychological studies have found that experiencing positive emotional states, such as joy, fun and happiness, increases the production of [dopamine](#) in the brain. Dopamine not only make us feel

great, it also opens up the [learning centres of the brain](#), which enables and sustains more neural connections. As a result, we become more flexible and creative in our thinking, and better at solving problems. It also boosts our [working memory](#).

Humour for success

Evidence suggests that humour actually boosts perceptions of [confidence, competence and status](#), making funny people very influential. Humour gets people to listen, helps communicate messages and aids learning. It is a powerful tool that many successful leaders use to enhance [group cohesiveness and organisational culture](#). Studies of positive organisations suggest the more fun we have at work the more productive we are, and the less likely we are to [suffer burn-out](#).

The "[broaden and build](#)" theory also supports the idea that experiencing positive emotions through humour actually alters our thoughts, actions and physiological responses. It creates a [virtuous circle effect](#) that enhances well-being.

Research on the use of humour in education also supports the notion that humour is an effective aid to learning. [Several studies](#) have demonstrated that lessons that are delivered with [humour](#) are more enjoyable for students, and also enhance students comprehension and recall of the topic.

Given the host of benefits that being funny brings, perhaps we could all benefit from joining a stand-up comedy workshop. It seems like the smart thing to do.

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