

Humor ME!



the smallest distance

THE PROJECT BOOK

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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SPECIAL THANKS

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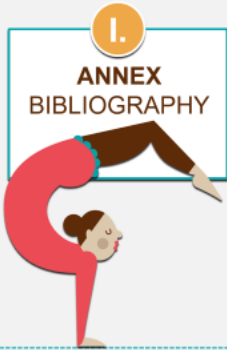
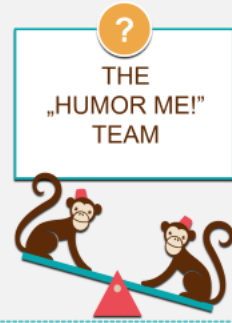
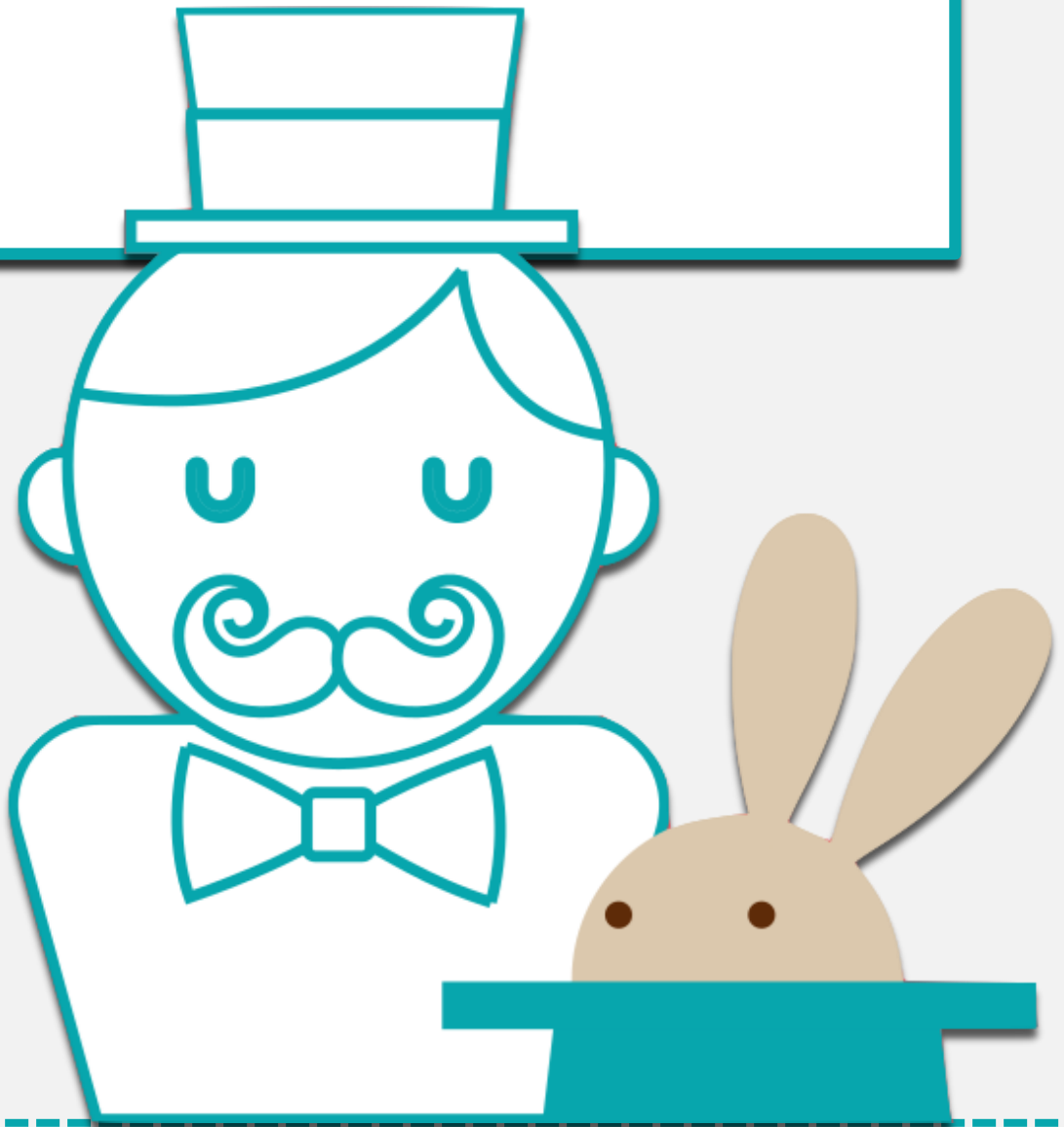
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INTRO



INTRO

The main aim for us to develop “Humor Me! - The Smallest Distance” was to have time to search, think, investigate, innovate and be able to understand and explain better why we believe that humor can be used in Formal and Non-Formal Education.

It seems like a long time ago, a group of people sitting on a table after dinner, starting to speak about working together and, after a funny and challenging process, an **Erasmus + Key Action 2 project** called "Humor Me! - The Smallest Distance" was approved by the Spanish National agency of the Erasmus + Programme. This booklet is the result of the work of people from 4 organisations: **Asociación Parkeri (Spain)**, **Cooperativa Sociale Muovimente (Italy)**, **Fundația Noi Orizonturi (Romania)** and **Birs OTI Hungary (Hungary)**.

“Humor Me!” was a **14 months** project with 3 transnational meetings, 1 desk research on 4 topics and 4 countries, an online questionnaire, a seminar, and a period of local implementation... Too many things for 14 months! We will never try again to finish a project in December!

We want to talk about the **process**, and not just about the results of the project because humor has a lot to do with authenticity and vulnerability, so we also want you to know from which "place" we are writing this booklet.

The project was developed by people connected mainly with **Non-Formal Education**, but some of the people participating were also coming from the **Formal Education** field. When we use the word facilitators, we also include teachers, educators, professors, trainers, and when we use the word participants, we also relate to pupils, youngsters, students. In the book, we talk about sessions, but we also refer to activities, classes, training courses, seminars - a learning context in general.



During the project, we tried to reflect on what, why, and how, humor can be considered an important part of one's approach towards supporting learning. For us, for the organisations that started "Humor Me!", for our teams, **humor is already part of our approach**, like no discrimination, Human Rights, equity, inclusion, self-directed learning, honesty, respect, authenticity, care, empathy, horizontality, etc.

With this project, we wanted to go one step forward, not just to have/develop awareness about the importance of humor, but also a sense of **ownership** of it. We wanted to see if humor is simply happening, or if, as facilitators of learning spaces, we can have the control of what's going on concerning humor.

In this document, we also want **to trigger your motivation** to find yourself some ground to help you integrate humor as part of your approach: ideas, connections, questions, facts that can support you further developing your point of view about humor in the learning context. We have some ideas and points of view, but we hope that this publication will help you to create and develop your own opinion about humor in learning environments.

During the project, we realised that a common element for all the people and the organisations involved in the project was that we already included humor actively in many different ways in our projects, within our organisations, in the way we work and understand learning. We also realised that we have a deep belief and a developed **inner readiness in regards to the importance of humor in learning contexts**. During the project, we also saw how the different organisations and the different members are dealing with various challenges and different approaches towards the use of humor in learning contexts. These differences about humor were even more significant when we bring into the picture the bunch of amazing people that took part in **"Humor Me – The Seminar" in Madarcos (Spain) in July 2017**, plus all the people that took part in the different workshops during the local implementation phase. We hope that by the end of this publication your inner readiness towards humor will also be increased.

While we were entering deeper into the project, we understood that not everybody else from the training and youth work community shares the same inner readiness that we have about the use of humor in learning contexts. We also realised that not everybody is as interested in the topic as we are, or values humor in a positive way. Let's see if in the next pages we can manage to explain you the points of view and the opinions that we developed during the project.

This booklet has a lot of questions, ideas and it is very condensed. In our point of view, it makes sense to read it in different moments, just a few pages at a time while **giving yourself enough time to digest it**. We encourage you to read this document with a little notebook near you, and maybe a pen. It may happen that you won't find a direct, clear, immediate answer to some of the questions that you find in this book, so we want to ask you to write them down for your future, and check if your answers will change in the next months after reading that.

If you have anything that you would like to share, send it to humorme@parkeri.org or share those questions on the [Facebook page](#) of the project.

Let's keep the discussion and the community alive!



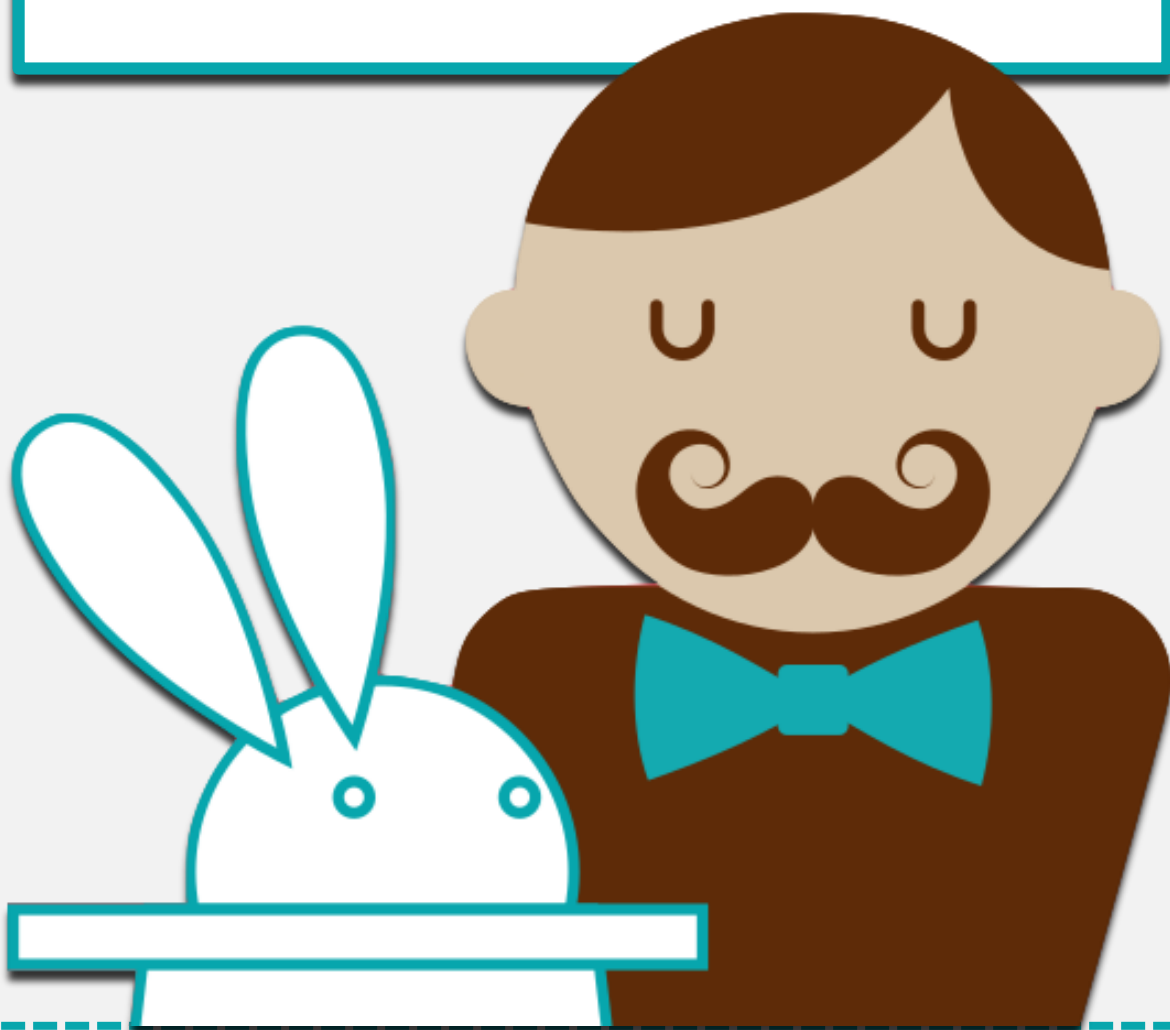
Photo Credit: Hunter, 2016. Madrid, Spain – 1th meeting



„I'm not funny. What I am is brave.”
LUCILLE BALL

2

AMBIGUITY



AMBIGUITY

During the last 14 months, we dealt with ambiguity and with different questions.

We want to share these questions with you before presenting some of our answers, to create space for you to keep developing, understanding and investigating this huge topic called humor. Then, only then, **you can find the correct answers: your own answers.**

We mainly faced **8 dilemmas**:

- 1. Is Humor positive or negative?** Humor can be a “weapon”, it can build or destroy things, depending on the way you use it. Humor is like “the force”. It can be used for what scientists call “good humor”, or it can have a dark side, the “bad humor”, depending on the results that this humor creates. For us, it is important that you find your own answers, not just according to the question, but mainly according to you, to your context, to your experiences, to the way you understand the creation of learning spaces.
- 2. Can Humor happen on purpose or does it just occur spontaneously?** Can we make humor happen, can we plan it? Is the momentum the only key to humor? Can we prepare situations in which humor can occur? Are we killing humor if we try to plan it? This was one of the first questions that came to us when we spoke about humor. What do you think?
- 3. Can humor be global?** Erasmus + (the programme that is funding this project) is promoting international work and learning. Can we use humor in a context with people from different countries, backgrounds? Also when we speak about learning context, very often even the age of the facilitators and the ones of the participants are very different. Considering all the diverse backgrounds, can we actually use humor in learning environments? For example Mr Bean, Charlie Chaplin, Leslie Nielsen, or films like “Scary Movie”, “Ace Ventura”, etc. Can what they do be considered as “global humor”?

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4. **Is humor a competence, or is it a tool?** When we think about humor, are we thinking about “knowledge, skills, attitudes & behaviours” or is it mainly a tool, a technique, a method?
 5. **Is humor innate or can it be developed?** Is humor something that you have or don’t have, or can we train our humorous skills? Can somebody that doesn’t consider himself/herself humorous use humor? Can this person become more humorous?
 6. **Is humor helping to create a comfortable space for the group, or should the comfortable space already be there to use humor?** One of our colleagues told us to think about that before using humor in training context, especially in the very beginning. What comes first: a safe space for making humor or humor for creating a safe space?
 7. **What’s the danger of using humor or not using humor?** Especially in a learning context, should it be used or not? Is it better to let humor go in a spontaneous way or is it better to stop it so that we are always staying in control of it? What’s more dangerous?
 8. **Can we use humor in international activities?** In which language? A common one? English? Should we use a translation of our own humor or is better to use the humor that the native speakers from Ireland/UK/US/Australia use? Is there a specific humor which is suitable for an international context? Is there such thing as an “English as second Language humor”?

We hope that thinking about these questions, you keep developing your approach towards humor. We hope you find your correct answers.



*Photo Credit: Darya Goga, 2017. Bucharest, Romania
Humor workshop*



„Humor is very subjective. There is no use of asking “Is this funny?” but rather “Is this funny to you?”.”

JOHN CLEESE

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CHALLENGES



CHALLENGES

While dealing with the 8 Dilemmas, we discovered that using humor in a learning context can bring at least 9 different challenges. We list them here just to highlight that it is something to consider before using humor, but we don't want them to stop you.

We mainly faced **9 challenges**:

- ❑ **Not everybody is comfortable with humor.** Not all the people are feeling comfortable using, listening, understanding, living humorous situations, or having a humorous approach. This can also be connected with the role or situation in which humor is happening. In the background, in the personal experience of many people, humor is something that is not connected at all with learning.
- ❑ People can think that **you as the facilitator are not serious**, that you are just joking, that what you are saying is shallow, not deep enough, that you are superficial. The way you use humor in a learning context, for some people can mean that your speech is “empty” that you don't have authority. Instead of producing something positive, it can create a negative image of the role of the facilitator in a learning space.
- ❑ Participants can think that you are **making fun of them, not having fun with them**. Especially in an international context, especially when people are not on the same level in regards to the common working language which is being used, some people might understand it, and others might not. Maybe “inside” jokes of the team of facilitators, which the participants are not understanding, are not generating a positive emotion for those who are out of the game, and many people may think that you are making fun of them, not with them.
- ❑ **Participants are not used to your humor in the learning context:** Especially at the beginning, it's possible that the participants are not used to it, and it's possible that the participants won't understand your humor in this specific context. Even those participants that are used to humor, who have a positive attitude towards its use, or who share with you a common background, they may need some time to understand your style and the reasons "why" you are using humor.



Sometimes people who are especially focusing on the results can dislike a process where there are “not serious things” happening. This situation can “block” them and can create a situation that generates a negative emotion towards the learning space.

- ❑ **Faking the humor:** If humor is not real, from outside it is possible to see that you are acting, that you are doing something that is partly fake, not 100% authentic. When we speak about creating a connection, the authenticity is an important element; it should be everywhere while creating learning spaces and it can be exceptionally evident while talking about humor when something is natural, authentic or not.
- ❑ **If humor is not adapted to the group** in regards of language, style, context and moment or it's not inclusive, just part of the people may be understanding, and this can create a division between the ones that are having fun, and those who aren't. Be aware of the kind of humor you are using. Humor which is not including the whole group is generating a fracture, creating different levels of understanding, bringing a situation in which some people may not feel comfortable and wonder “some people are laughing and I'm not... am I stupid?”.
- ❑ **There are types of humor that can be negative for the learning context.** Sarcasm is a kind of humor that can increase the stress. When irony and sarcasm are in the room, it can happen that a vast part of the audience, especially in international context, won't be understand it. This not-understanding situation can bring discomfort, or make people feel upset. Sarcasm and irony are part of this kind of humor which researchers call “bad humor”. Take care of that, and take special care if you decide to use it. We are also trying to open the gate to "normalize" this kind of humor.
- ❑ **Humor as a mechanism of defence:** If you ask about humor to people coming from the psychological/therapeutical background they will possibly refer to humor mainly as a tool for denial, for getting attention, to escape, or a mechanism of defence. Humor can be a way to avoid facing the emotions that someone is feeling. Humor in therapy is denying, is a way to show that something was too much. For a therapist, it is a "sign", in order not to push the people too far.



- ❑ **Humor can distract the process:** Humor can happen, and maybe the whole group is even enjoying it, but there is always a point when humor is not serving the process anymore. Humor is not always useful, too much humor or humor used in the wrong places or with bad intentions can kill your sessions. It can happen that the good humor mood will be destroying the learning atmosphere which you tried to create, it can take a lot of time, and it can end up controlling the learning. The balance in between humor as something positive for the learning environment, or as something that is overtaking the learning depends mainly on the way you manage to facilitate this process.



*Photo Credit: Valters Melderis, 2017. Madarcos, Spain
The Humor Me! seminar*



„Humor is the ability to see three sides to one coin.“
NED ROREM

4

THEORIES OF HUMOR



THEORIES OF HUMOR

At the beginning of the project all the team members of "Humor Me!" were very enthusiastic about the topic. We had a lot of curiosity, bunch of questions and absolutely no idea about how to approach humor in the learning context. So, we decided to educate ourselves to spread the message (and love) of humor in the world.

We wanted to discover what other people have found about humor in the existing research, publications, articles, books and videos and how can we use it when talking about humor in the learning context. We called this part "Desk research". To keep some focus we set on a journey in the humor world in 4 directions – **teamwork, intercultural context, conflict management and humor as a competence**. At the same time, we tried to understand in which way humor is being used, especially in non-formal education, but also in formal education.

Also, we were curious to discover what do other people working in the field of youth work and education think about the topic. So, based on the findings of the desk research, we developed an online questionnaire and invited our colleagues, friends and people we have never met to spend 10 minutes and fill it in. We called this part "Online research" (Unexpectedly, we know!)

It appears that the topic is way broader than we expected so, be brave enough and dive into next pages – we have tried to make sense of our findings and make them as concise as possible.

What is Humor?

Humor (or humour in British English) is the tendency of particular cognitive experiences to provoke laughter and provide amusement.

People of all ages and cultures can respond to humor. Most people can experience humor, be amused, smile or laugh at something funny and thus are considered to have a sense of humor. Though ultimately decided by personal taste, the extent to which a person finds something humorous depends on a host of variables, including geographical location culture, maturity, level of education, intelligence and context.

More sophisticated forms of humor such as satire require an understanding of its social meaning and context and thus tend to appeal to the mature audience.

The word "Humor", in the beginning, meant blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. In the Middle Ages, it was believed that a person's health and disposition were the results of a balance or imbalance of this four fluids in the body. These fluids were called "humors" after the Latin expression humor (moisture).

Nowadays humor lost its wet character, but it's still a concept with multiple dimensions. According to Martin (2003), sense of humor can be conceptualised as:

- a cognitive ability (you need to understand jokes, etc.)
- an aesthetic response (you need to like certain types of jokes)
- a habitual behaviour pattern (some people have the habit of laughing often, or of telling many jokes)
- an emotion-related temperament trait
- an attitude
- a coping strategy or defence mechanism

□ Types / Styles of Humor

In the different research about humor, we found that for the researchers there are some kinds of humor considered "positive/benign" and some humor considered "negative".

Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, and Weir (2003) argued that not all types of humor were equally beneficial, and classified humor into four styles, of which two are healthy and adaptive (affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor), and two are unhealthy and maladaptive (aggressive humor and self-defeating humor). In this book, we call healthy and adaptive humor **positive** and unhealthy and maladaptive humor, **negative** humor.

Specifically, affiliative humor refers to a tendency to amuse others, reduce tension, and facilitate relationships by telling jokes, saying funny things, and often involves spontaneous, witty banter (Martin, et al., 2003). Self-enhancing humor refers to one's tendency to maintain a humorous outlook on life and cope with stress or adversity by amusing oneself with life's incongruities (Martin, et al., 2003).



Aggressive humor refers to a tendency to criticise or manipulate others by using sarcasm, teasing, ridicule, derision, or disparaging humor. Self-defeating humor refers to a tendency to use self-disparaging humor excessively or say funny things at one's own expense (Martin, et al., 2003).

□ Laughter

When we think about humor as something that provokes laughter, we cannot jump over that laughter is a physiological effect. But what comes first the laugh or the feeling?



*The average child laughs about **400 times** a day while the average adult laughs about **15 times** a day.*

The James–Lange theory refers to a hypothesis on the origin and nature of emotions. It was developed independently by William James and Carl Lange. The basic premise of the theory is that physiological arousal instigates the experience of emotion. The theory (Cannon, Walter, 1927) proposes that instead of feeling an emotion and subsequent physiological (bodily) response, the physiological change is primary, and emotion is then experienced when the brain reacts to the information received via the body's nervous system.

For example, while most would think the order of emotional experience would be that a person sees a bear, becomes afraid, and runs away, James thought that first, the person has a physiological response to the bear, such as trembling, and then becomes afraid and runs. According to James, the physiological response comes first, and it is perceived as an emotion and followed by a reaction (Ellsworth, P. C., 1994).

This theory is questioned by for example from Barrett, Lisa Feldman (2012), but it also found supporters. It got to be one of the bases of the Facial feedback hypothesis. The hypothesis states that facial movement can influence emotional experience. For example, when we are forced to smile during a movie, we will actually find the film funnier.



Several experiments check this theory, and scientists keep rechecking it all the time with different results. One of the biggest supporters of the hypothesis is the experiment of Strack, Martin, & Stepper from 1988. The participants of the research had to fulfil a task and to fill out a test while holding a pen. Till now it's not too unusual, isn't it? But the researchers, not only for their amusement but also for scientific reasons divided the participants into three groups. One group had to hold the pencil in their lips, which resulted in a frown. The other group had to keep the marker between their teeth, which caused a smile. The control group had to hold the pencil simply in the non-dominant hand. The participants had to rate the funniness of some comic. The ones who had a smiling facial expression because the pencil between the teeth's found the comics funnier than the others.

How can this help us to get nearer to our topic?

In conflict situations, we should think about the effect that a facial expression like a smile can have on our feelings and that it can smoothen the stress in the conflict situation. If we can't smile from the heart, we still can find a pencil, place it between our teeth, and at least we can't shout to the others and get in bigger trouble than we were before. By the way, we will also look quite funny, which can affect the mood of the others too.



To have a more in-depth and funnier understanding of laughter, we recommend you to watch [Sophie Scott's TED talk "Why We Laugh"](#)

❏ Humor as a defence mechanism

Joseph Klatzmann in „L'houmor juif“, define humor according to a "laugh instead of crying" need. There are different studies about the use of humor in difficult situations, in crisis, in the holocaust and also studies of psychologists about the humor as a defence mechanism.

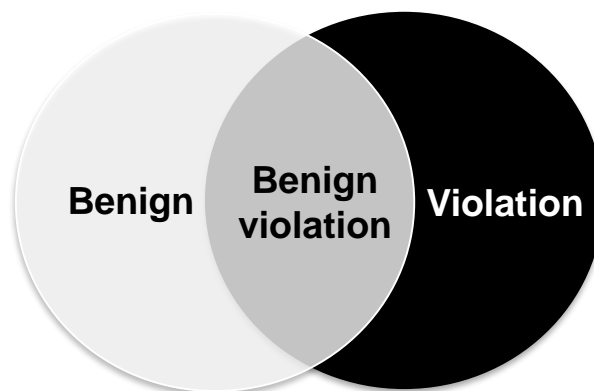
George Vaillant described the use of humor as a "mature" defence mechanism - a primarily adaptive technique to help us to cope with tense or stressful situations. Looking for a funny aspect of an environment in which we lack control can help us to endure it, and can even be an altruistic act in helping others to better cope.

In a more pessimistic manner, Nietzsche said that "the man is suffering so terrible in the world that was obliged to invent the laughter". This way of thinking about humor is also related to the Cynicism Philosophy that considers humor as a kind of catharsis, a spiritual antidote that makes the existence not that hard, like the art.

Sultanoff (1997) describes resilience as the ability of the human organism to spring back from stressors in the environment. He goes on to suggest that humor can be an important contributor to creative thinking. Since it involves the escape from one pattern of thinking to another and it can help build physical and emotional resilience by changing thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

❏ Benign violation theory

One of THE books for entering the humor field is Peter MacGraw's & Joel Warner's book "The humor code", which is a "The motorcycle diaries" equivalent for people interested in what makes things funny. He travels the world together with his colleague and friend, talking to different people, trying to find out, what makes things funny and trying to find a confirmation of his benign violation theory.



He claims, that for something to be funny it should be benign (well-hearted, good, comfortable) and violation (something that is threatening, out of the ordinary, etc.) in the same time. He claims that violation can be made benign by adding the distance or time to it. "Mark Twain is famously credited with saying, "Humor is tragedy plus time." So maybe folks have it all wrong when they ask whether a joke is "too soon." Maybe a better way to put it is, "When is the subject matter too close for comfort, and when is it too distant to matter?" (McGraw P., 2014)

For example, you can laugh now about the moment when you broke a leg one and half years ago. Not so funny in the moment when it happened. Or it might be funny when somebody you don't know, slips and makes strange movements. Not so funny if it happens to your significant other.



A deeper explanation and more examples of the Benign Violation theory can be found in the TED Talk [„What makes things funny” by Peter McGraw.](#)

❏ Emotion and learning

We know emotion is important in education. It drives attention, which in turn drives learning and memory. Recent developments in the cognitive sciences are unlocking the mysteries of how and where our body/brain processes emotion. This unique melding of the biology and psychology of emotion promises to suggest powerful educational applications. Educators should develop a basic understanding of the psychobiology of emotion to enable them to evaluate emerging educational applications.

Studies show that our emotional system is a complex, widely distributed, and error-prone system that defines our basic personality early in life, and is quite resistant to change.

Far more neural fibres project from our brain's emotional center into the logical/rational centers than the reverse, so emotion is often a more powerful determinant of our behavior than our brain's logical/rational processes. For example, purchasing a lottery ticket is an emotional, not a logical decision. The odds are terrible, but where else can one buy three days of fantasy for \$1? Reason may override our emotions, but it rarely changes our real feelings about an issue. Our emotions allow us to bypass conscious deliberation of an issue, and thus to respond quickly based on almost innate general categorizations of incoming information.

Activities that emphasize social interaction and that engage the entire body tend to provide the most emotional support. Games, discussions, field trips, interactive projects, cooperative learning, physical education, and the arts are examples.

□ **Humor in the learning context**

We might ask: If it is so difficult to draw the line of when to use humor, what kind of humor to use, etc. why use humor at all?

Rebekka Krause in her paper discusses pros and cons of using humor in the classroom, which for the sake of this book, we will extrapolate to a broader context and call it "learning context" since non-formal education activities are all about learning.

Even though there is no concrete evidence of the influence of humor on the learning process, "many studies have identified the hippocampal region as taking on a central role during humor experiences (Vrticka, 2013 and Sambanis 2013)" and the "hippocampus is commonly understood as a novelty detector, responsible for the formation and retention of memory." (Krause R., 2015). There are also other studies that Krause refers to in her work, which shows that "humor helps to direct attention, which in turn enhances memory and facilitates learning."

One of the scientific arguments is that humor activates part of the brain called hippocampus, which is responsible for novelty and formation and retention of memory. So, one might conclude, that humor can help with

increasing the memory capacities. And it's true – sometimes you remember an event if there was a funny situation, person or anything else.

Humor also helps to create a positive atmosphere, which reduces stress. And since stress produces cortisol, which in high doses destroys hippocampal neurons, by reducing stress we can improve the novelty and memory capacity of participants of our activities.

One of the statements, which we love, since it connects with the name of our project – **the more laughing there is in the classroom, the smaller the distance is** between student and teacher.

Another reason for using humor in the learning context is the following observation – „Provine (1993) noted from observations of 1200 episodes of laughter expressed by people interacting in public places that most laughter occurred during routine comments rather than in response to joke-telling, which provides further evidence of the bonding functions of laughter." (PhD Wilkins J., 2009).

DESK RESEARCH

□ HUMOR AS A COMPETENCE

When we started to research on the concept of humor as a competence, we immediately noticed how the vast majority of studies, articles and resources related to the topic had been developed within the formal educational field, exploring especially the use of humor in teaching foreign languages.

This happens because these studies bind humor competence and linguistic competence tightly, and the humor competence somehow becomes a measurement tool of the actual knowledge and understanding of a specific language with all its cultural background.

In this perspective, Salvatore Attardo (2002) described humor competence as: "The capacity of a speaker to process semantically a given text and to locate a set of relationships among its components, such that he/she would identify the text (or part of it) as humorous in an ideal situation. This humor competence is analogous and in fact part of the semantic competence of speakers: being able to recognize a sentence as funny is a skill equivalent (but not identical, of course), for example, to being able to recognize a sentence as synonymous with another sentence.,,

However, the concept of humor competence is made of many other different components. For instance, Banas et al. (2011), in their review of four decades of research, identified the concept of "humor orientation", considered to be a communication-based personality trait wherein those high in humor orientation have a predisposition to enact humorous messages and perceive themselves as successfully funny across many different situations (M. Booth-Butterfield et al., 2007; S. Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1991; Wanzer, Booth-Butterfield, & Booth-Butterfield, 1995). Humor orientation is about the ability to produce humorous messages, not the ability to appreciate humor.

Another interesting concept that we found, collected as well by Banas et al. describes humor as an affinity-seeking behavior. The reason why we considered this specific concept worth mentioning is that it focuses on a



functioning aspect of the humor competence. Many researchers agree that the use of humor in a classroom can create a positive environment, helping people to trust each other and be more open to communication exchanges. Nevertheless, the debate is alive for what it concerns the effects of humorous communication on information acquisition.

There are numerous studies which claim that they found no improvement of learning with humor (e.g., Gruner, 1967; Kennedy, 1972; Markiewicz, 1972; Taylor, 1964; Youngman, 1966; Bryant, Brown, Silberberg, and Elliott (1981) but many more claim exactly the opposite (e.g., Chapman & Crompton, 1978; Gorham, 1988; Hauck & Thomas, 1972; Hays, 1970, Kaplan & Pascoe, 1977; Kelley & Gorham, 1988; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990; Vance, 1987).

During our research, we were fascinated especially by the findings which are reported in the article "Pedagogical effect of humor on learning" by Said Shiyab from the United Arab Emirates University (2009). He ran a study with students from the courses of Business Correspondence and Promotional Material, Basic Issues in Translation, Introduction to Linguistics, and Introduction to Language and Communication to investigate further their relationship with the use of humor in academic settings.

According to the students' responses in regards to humor being used in the delivery of the teachers in the classroom only 5% of the students answered that they felt that humor would block their thinking. On the other hand, 67% of the students claim that humor can both increase their understanding and comprehension of the subject-matter and motivate them more to attend class. It's worth also mentioning that 88% of the students believed that humor should be present or felt at times in the classroom environment and 80% answered that they could better understand the topic if they have a teacher who makes the class amusing and also indicated that taking a course with a humorous teacher encourages them to express their ideas without fear.

In general, the students were apparently in favor of a teacher with a sense of humor, as 93% indicated that teachers in the classroom must be humorous and should create a joyful environment. What was also interesting though, it's the fact that, on the other hand, only 4% of the students

reported that they could understand the topic better if the teacher tells jokes all the time, which shows that students clearly differentiated between teachers telling jokes and teachers creating a humorous environment where they feel connected with them.

For us, this was a turning point in our reflection about humor as a competence as it clearly shows that there's much more to humor than just being funny and telling jokes. There's the creation of a safe and productive learning environment, and that cannot be reduced only to a simple bunch of tricks and tools.

□ TEAM-WORK

While searching the connection in between humor and teamwork, we found a lot of text and articles related to humor and leadership. In most of them, humor was a tool for leaders to increase motivation and involvement of the people in the teams, and with creating a more productive working atmosphere.

The positive emotions generated by humor encourage us to work with greater enthusiasm and creativity. Fun, well-channelled humor, can help us to increase innovation and productivity by having a good time or at least with less suffering. But not just as an individual feeling, humor also enhances and encourages collective motivation.

Humor is also considered an element of cohesion and facilitates communication within a team: humor reduces the defences and fears among members, gives importance to spontaneity, helps to face problems better, encourages thinking more creatively and productively, dampen stressful situations, increase attraction and mutual support. Humor also generates a style and a sense of belonging to the team.

Like the grotesque mirrors of amusement parks, humor can act on an apparent threat to make it something ridiculous. Many types of humor are based on the transformation of reality. Avoiding stress or moderating it may be a matter of changing perspective because the fact itself does not cause us stress, but the way we interpret it.

Too often, the transition to adulthood means becoming more serious, more focused, more logical, more rigid, and so respectful of knowledge and experience that creative thinking is sacrificed. Any use of humor could either increase a sense of community within the team or painfully highlight the cultural differences. When and where the humor is used can strongly affect how it is received. The more a person experiences humor, the more that person is likely to greet and connect with others. Vance and Deacon assert that “high-level creativity and thinking out of the box occur when people are free enough to have fun.”

The famous doctor Hunter Doherty, also known from the film „Patch Adams” (1998), believes that humor improves all kind of relationships. He encourages people by saying "Improvise informal meetings with neighbours, co-workers, strangers, in which each brings something. Work to live in extended families". It shows us the importance of considering humor as an important part of the interactions in the informal moments, not just when working, or creating learning spaces, also "out of the office".

Negative people unconsciously limit their own abilities, discourage teamwork, and sabotage the results that could be achieved. Students frequently find themselves succumbing to or surrounded by negativity, and that works against creative thought and accomplishment. The sources of negative beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions vary among individuals and organisations. Negativity may result from personal dysfunction, stress, cross-cultural collisions, or dysfunctional teams and organisations. Negativity does not always present itself in the expected form of overt negativity. Carter-Scott (1989) describes four general types of "negaholics": (1) attitudinal, (2) behavioural, (3) mental, and (4) verbal. So, to be a useful member of a team, negativists need to recognise and control the tendency toward negativity.

As consequence of frequent changes in employers and workplaces, professionals are often faced with the challenge of having to learn "how to do things" in their new workplaces and "how to become fully integrated members". Findings illustrate that for newcomers, humor is a double-edged sword, which may be an advantage as well as a handicap: it enables them to participate without being entirely responsible for the consequences, but it may also exclude them from participation marking them as outsiders.

For researchers, however, investigating humor is an excellent way of gaining insights into workplace socialisation.

Humor has been identified as a multifunctional 'device' which may assist people in performing a myriad of different functions in a workplace context. In particular, humor was found to increase employees' job satisfaction and performance (Caudron, 1992; Clouse & Spurgeon, 1995; Consalvo, 1989), as well as their creativity and productivity (Caudron, 1992; Morreall, 1991). Furthermore, humor has been identified as facilitating teamwork and creating a sense of belonging (Caudron, 1992; Duncan et al., 1990; Morreall, 1991), boosting employees' morale, by, for example, defusing conflict and spicing up routines (Caudron, 1992; Clouse & Spurgeon 1995; Ehrenberg 1995; Morreall, 1991).

And it has been argued that humor may help employees deal with stress and change (Caudron, 1992; Clouse & Spurgeon 1995; Duncan et al., 1990; Morreall, 1991). Moreover, humor may also assist newcomers in learning the specific norms and practices that characterize their new working environments (Vinton, 1989; cf. Brown & Keegan, 1999), becoming fully integrated members, and even testing boundaries of acceptable behavior (Graham et al., 1992; Holmes, 2007; Linstead, 1985; Martineau, 1972).

The findings of this research are consistent with the literature in the field as it demonstrated that the use of humor does help improve morale, assist in the accomplishment of organisational goals, and relieve workplace stress. All three subjects provided examples of leaders (either themselves or others) that had improved their leadership style by incorporating humor as a part of their personality. While spontaneity wasn't explicitly mentioned, all agreed that humor was more effective when it was deliberately learned and later put into practice so that it seemed a natural part of their personality. Concerning how the use of humor was developed, each cited a mentor that they admired, and they had observed that deliberately used humor. Each used reference resources such as magazines, the Internet, books, humorous quotations, and other sources of jokes to enhance and initiate the deliberate learning process. No one believed the use of humor was a gift that you either had or did not have. Additionally, each leader had clear and definite ideas of knowing when NOT to use humor. Each worried about the inappropriate use of humor and how at times its use detracted from the seriousness of the situation.

□ INTERCULTURALITY

One of our team members Valters says:

"My first experience with humor in intercultural context was when I had a pen-friend for a short while when I was in the 10th grade. Our conversational English teacher, who was from the USA, had each of us set up with one of his students back home so that we could write letters to each other and practice our language skills. My pen-friendship ended quite abruptly, after an innocent answer to the question: "What movies do you like to watch?" to which I answered, that "sometimes I enjoy watching some stupid American comedies". I was not much aware of the intercultural communication (obviously!), but this experience taught me, that it's not very cool to put together the word "stupid" and your conversation partner's nationality, even if it is intended as a joke.

Years later while learning the Romanian language I've developed this theory, that there are 3 stages of learning the language: first you start to understand and speak in it, afterwards you begin to understand jokes and in the end, you actually start to find the jokes funny."

These 2 episodes show us that there is quite an area to work with when thinking about intercultural communication and humor. Indeed, we can find different types of humor in mass media – Adam-Sandler-type comedies from USA (not judging!), Monty Python black British humor, comedies from Russia, which for an outside observer might seem just about guys drinking, fishing, hunting or just sitting around, and not funny at all, etc.

Not only Valters' own experience tells us that humor is strongly connected to culture, but it is also an experience shared by people around him and a research effort in exploring this aspect of humor in the science field. As Bell N.D. (2007) writes, "while the occurrence of humor is universal, what is considered funny, as well as when, where, with whom, and under what conditions a person may joke, differs cross-culturally, and even between individuals of a shared culture (Raskin 1985: 2; cf. Hymes 1972)." Also, as Krause R. (2015) writes – "[h]umor is an integral and complex part of every culture that requires a deeper understanding of certain phenomena as well as factual knowledge" (Wagner and Urios-Aparisi 2011: 406).

So, if there are different types of humor in different nations, how can we use it in the non-formal education (further in text NFE) context – training, workshop, seminar, etc.? Can it help to consciously include humor in the activities or on contrary – unpleasant situations may arise? What kind of humor should we use and which should we avoid? What can we learn about other cultures through humor?

Communication between Native Speakers and Non-Native Speakers (Nancy Bell)

Nancy D. Bell did a long-term research about communication and humor between English language Native Speakers (NS) and Non-Native Speakers (NNS). One of her initial theories was that using humor can put NS in a "higher" position and belittle NNS since it can happen that NNS don't understand the humor. It can also be that, with good intentions to help NNS to understand what's going on; a NS would use more simple language when talking to a NNS, in such way putting himself/herself higher than the conversation partner. She writes that "the awareness of humor seems to cut both ways— on the one hand, it acts as an aid to communication, with both parties using caution in their choice of vocabulary, topics, and interpretations, but on the other it seems to be a place where L2 (English as second language) speakers can get positioned as limited conversational participants." And, that "native speakers who do not have experience in intercultural communication may actually overestimate the amount and types of adjustments that are necessary, thus underestimating the second language user's proficiency. The result is that the second language user sometimes gets marginalised and constructed as less than competent during playful interaction."

Humor can be used very harshly as an inclusion or exclusion tool. Have you ever been in the situation, where people around you are laughing about the joke, but you don't know what to do with your eyes, hands and life in general because you don't see the funny point? And then at one point, you start to think that laughing is about you, even if it isn't?

This is good to keep in mind when including humor in the NFE activities in intercultural context – how to make sure that well-intended humor doesn't turn out to be an exclusion trigger.

However, Bell N.D. also continues that in her observations and research "interactional difficulties around humor were not the case" and she also gives 5 reasons why – "avoidance of taboo topics, avoidance of potentially dangerous forms of humor, linguistic and interactional adjustments, clear contextualization of a play frame, and a general attitude of leniency (disposition to show kindness or compassion) (Meeuwis, 1994) toward the use and understanding of humor by both parties in this type of interaction.". There was adaptation process from both sides – NS and NNS, and there were no cases when NNS would feel belittled because of the humor used. However, her people with whom she was working were known to each other, which might warn us, that in order for the adaptation process to happen, we should go through the get to know each other and ice-breaking process before we can start to use more and more humor and more "harsh" forms of humor. Also, keeping the 5 reasons mentioned in mind can a helpful part of our "toolbox" to keep the learning environment positive and to encourage participants.

Humor comprehension - recognition, understanding and appreciation

An interesting idea by N.D.Bell, also concerning communication between NS and NNS, is how humor is being comprehended. She points out that there are few steps to comprehending humor – in the beginning, one should recognise that the said thing or action is intended as humor, after one should understand what makes it humorous/funny and in the end, one would laugh, in such way showing appreciation. It might seem that ideal humor is when all of these 3 steps happen at the same time. However, there are many cases when you would recognise that the thing said is meant as humor, you would show appreciation by laughing, but actually, the understanding part would be missing. Since it doesn't even need to be in the

context of NS and NNS. As well, you could recognise and understand what somebody is saying and/or doing as humor, but not appreciate it. These situations can be quite harsh, because, as Sophie Scott says in her TED talk "Why we laugh" – you laugh to show that you agree with somebody, however, if you miss the appreciation part, it can be taken as (and probably in many cases will be such) a fact that you don't agree with and/or don't appreciate the other person.

However, in many cases, it is the case that "partial understanding or non-understanding the humor does not preclude appreciation of it". (Nancy D. Bell, 2007). And keeping this in mind, we would try to use humor and make the group laugh with hope, that even if some of the people will not understand or recognise the humor used, they would appreciate it, even if it would be just by contagiousness of other's laughter.

❏ CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Humor is the solution to all types of problems. One can solve everything with a good laugh since humor is the magical unicorn of all human conflicts. No. Just kidding. We don't think that humor is the one and only answer. So, here is a question: How can and why should we use it in conflict resolutions?

To understand better what could be the role of humor in conflict resolution, and after understanding in the previous pages what humor is, we have to understand: What is conflict? And where is the connection between humor and conflict? After reading tons of articles, books and theories we realised that it's not quite easy to find one definition. So, we decided to make it easier, at least for us and we have chosen to give some premade answers to this question.

What's Conflict?

The word Conflict comes from the Latin expression *cōnfligō*. The etymology of the word is *con-* ("together") + *fligō* ("strike"). It means to argue, disagreement, confrontation, fight. To narrow down the topic in this article we use the following conflict definition by Rakhim (2010): Conflict is "an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance within or between social entities."

Styles of Conflict Resolution

"Conflict situations" are those in which the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible. In such situations, we can describe an individual's behaviour along two dimensions: (1) assertiveness, the extent to which the person attempts to satisfy his own concerns, and (2) cooperativeness, the extent to which the person attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns (Thomas; Kilmann 2015).

Based on this two basic dimensions of behaviour defined by Thomas and Kielmann, there are five different modes for responding to conflict situations:

1. **Competing** is assertive and uncooperative — an individual pursues his own concerns at the other person's expense. It's about simply trying to win.
2. **Accommodating** is unassertive and cooperative — the complete opposite of competing. When accommodating, the individual neglects his own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person.
3. **Avoiding** is unassertive and uncooperative — the person neither pursues his own concerns nor those of the other individual. Thus he does not deal with the conflict. It can be used for postponing the conflict or withdrawing from a treatment.
4. **Collaborating** is both assertive and cooperative — the complete opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with others to find some solution that fully satisfies their concerns. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights or trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.
5. **Compromising** The objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. It falls intermediate between competing and accommodating.

What are the benefits of humor in conflicts?

After Marcus Clarke (2017) humor:

- ❑ **Distracts:** Humor can lift your focus away from what is happening to you, essentially distracting you for a time from your stress and anxiety.
- ❑ **Relaxes:** Humor affects the autonomic nervous system by encouraging laughter which causes the body to slip into deeper breathing. This, in turn, relaxes the body's muscles and calms the sympathetic nervous system from the adrenalised 'fight or flight' response to the more sedate parasympathetic nervous system driven state of calm. Thus, humor physically relaxes away stress and anxiety.
- ❑ **Reframes:** regardless of the type of humor, humor can make us reframe our perspectives and view our problems from a less 'all-or-nothing' lens.



The peculiarity of humor is: to accept the contradiction of life and to form it to serenity.

BAGDY & PAPP, 2011

Role of humor in conflict resolution

Laughter and humor bring people together, break tension and awkwardness, lower stress level, and help attract others. Humor is also a weapon in conflict situations, but it matters who we target with it. As every tool humor can be used on a good or in a bad way depending on our intention and our conflict resolution style. Looking on Thomas-Kielmann conflict resolution styles and the four humor dimension by Martin we found the following parallelisms.

The **Competing** style fights for the win at the other person's expense. This type can use the **Aggressive** dimension of humor and can use jokes to beat the opponent. This style can make the opponent appear ridiculous, insecure, or humiliated by the winner. The Competing wins, but in our perspective, the conflict is not solved at all.

The **Accommodating** style neglects his own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order when you would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view. There is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode, as there is in the **Self-defeating** dimension of humor. We use humor to enhance relationships at the expense of self. With the help of new atmosphere we can back out from the conflict, but still, we are far away from the solution.

The **Avoiding** type is not dealing with the conflict, so it is not using humor as a tool for conflict resolution.

Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights or trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem. We see a connection with **affiliative humor**, which is defined as the style of humor used to enhance one's relationships with others in a benevolent, positive manner. Affiliative humor is also associated with increased levels of (explicit) self-esteem, psychological well-being, emotional stability, and social intimacy. They are also more likely to exhibit higher levels of implicit self-esteem (independently of their level of explicit self-esteem) (Stieger; Formann; Burger, 2011). This style of humor is associated with decreased levels of depressive symptoms and anxiety (Frewen; Brinker; Martin; Dozois, 2008).

Compromising is moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. In some situations, compromising might mean splitting the difference between the two positions, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground solution. Compromising style can be happy with a half win, and for this, it can use **Self-enhancing humor**. This type of humor is best understood as a way of coping or emotion-regulating humor in which individuals use humor to look on the bright side of a bad situation, find the silver lining or maintain a positive attitude even in trying time (Martin, 2001)

ONLINE RESEARCH

The main idea behind the development of the “Humor Me!” questionnaire was to **reach out to the community of youth workers, trainers and educators**, especially those active on an international level, in order to check what is their personal relationship with humor, how they use it and where do they stand in relation to humor in their work field. The final aim was to combine the answers to the questionnaire together with the data and resources collected during the desk research, **to get a wider picture of how the topic is perceived in the Non-Formal educational field** and find common ground on which to build the next steps of our work. The questionnaire was officially launched on the 7th of April 2017, and 116 people (61% of those being youth workers and/or trainers active within the Erasmus+ programme) contributed to it from 16 different countries.

Thanks to the results we were able to dig deeper into which kinds of humor people seem to feel more comfortable with and attracted to, both in their personal and professional life, but it also shed light on some interesting aspects which we didn’t consider before. A vast majority (86%) claims to love humor in its daily life, but **only 18% of the people consider themselves good at making humor**, while the percentage raises up to **57% when it comes to how good they consider themselves at understanding humor**. Somehow it seems that most people really enjoy humor and humorous situations if they are living them more from an audience position, rather than being under the spotlight themselves. Another data which emerged was that 55% of people claimed to consciously include much (31%) or very much (24%) humorous elements in their plans while preparing a training activity.

The idea that **humor can be perceived not only as something funny and unexpected which happens spontaneously but that it can be controlled and even somehow planned** turned out to be an interesting input for reflection for us, especially in regards of the further exploration of the possibility of identifying humor as a competence.



About this matter, two other questions gave us some food for thoughts: **93% of people expressed how they would very much (66%) or much (27%) like to improve their humor competence as a trainer, while 87% claimed that they believe that humor could be trained as a competence.** They also expressed which, in their opinion, were the areas they would need to improve/be more trained on to include more humor in their work (such as “using humor to deal with complicated situations - 80%”, “reacting fast - 65%”, “improvising - 63%”, “delivering information in a funnier way - 59%”, etc.).



The full data and statistics related to the questionnaire can be found in the [Annex I](#) included in this booklet.

The questionnaire allowed us to collect stories, establish contacts and get new insights and points of view. Thanks to it we started to think more of humor as a complex competence, with so many more elements and nuances besides the simple fact of just "being funny".



*Photo Credit: Darya Goga, 2017. Madarcos, Spain
The Humor Me! seminar*



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

E. B. WHITE

5

THE USE OF HUMOR



THE USE OF HUMOR

After some questions, dilemmas, challenges and some theory, we want to try to answer these questions:

What can humor be used for in a learning context? Which are the results that can make it worth to use humor? What are the advantages of using humor in a learning context and the creation of the learning spaces?

- ❑ **Create the environment, the learning space:** when we create a state of mind through a positive humor which is inclusive and makes everybody feel part of the same situation, we are creating a positive emotion, a group feeling. We increase the feeling of being part of something that is also positive. We can also use humorous elements when creating the setting of the learning space, not only when creating the emotional atmosphere.



„With sense of humor, the students, see that somebody cares about them, treat them like a human, not like a number, humanize the teacher.”

LAURA BORBE at Humor Me! - The Seminar

- ❑ **We can show humility through humor,** putting ourselves on the level of the others. Not all the kinds of humor are right to place ourselves on the same level of the group, not all of them work in a non-hierarchical way. If while using humor we make fun of ourselves, or we show our vulnerability, we are increasing our connection with the participants. We are dismantling fences; we are putting down the "teacher-student" barriers that are in the background for most of us. Humor can place us in a more accessible place for the participants.



- Having a humorous approach can help **us to gain attention and appreciation** of ourselves as facilitators. This trust can lead to bigger openness towards our message.



„People who laugh with you, are more likely to like you. And if they like you, they are more likely to take you seriously.“

CHRIS ANDERSON, 2006

- We can use **humor to stop a process**, to stop a routine, to create a break, to restart a situation, sometimes to break a process that is tiring or not working; it is the best way to go further. Humor can be this “pause” that will allow you to continue in a completely different state of mind.
- Many different people in different situations during “Humor Me!” said that **humor can help to “steam out” a crisis or a critical issue**. We spoke about humor as a way to escape, as a way to cope with nervous situations. Sometimes this way of using humor in this kind of situations can serve our process, it can help us to find a way out from a dead end way, or it can be useful to change activities, as well as the state of mind of the participants and the facilitators.



„People who use humor have been found to cope with stress more effectively, have greater enjoyment of life, experience less negative emotions, and have healthier relationships with others.“

KUIPER & OLINGER, 1998

- ❑ **Humor in informal moments:** Different people say that we connect better with people that have the same sense of humor that we have. In this way, humor can help you connect with the participants not just during sessions; it can also be helpful in the informal moments.
 - ❑ In these moments, especially in the beginning of the trainings, humor can help you to break those barriers and find connections in the group.
 - ❑ We think that including humor in your approach will help you to speed up the creation of the connection.
- ❑ When **delivering information**, or when the group is not focused during an explanation, humor can help us to focus. During long explanations, during theoretical inputs (*like at this point of our text*), humor can help us connect our explanations with emotions, that will help participants to remember. Also, humor can help us keeping the attention in longer speeches. Humor can be a tool to clarify or simplify information when people are feeling “stuck”.
- ❑ If we have to transfer information or messages, a way to make it easier for participants to **focus or to remember** is to transfer this information humorously, in a way that is breaking the routine and the monotony.
- ❑ During a session, a humorous atmosphere can give the participants, and us more **freedom to question things**, to criticise, to openly challenge points of view. Humor in this kind of situation will help people to let down our inner barriers and create a safer environment in which to share different points of view. A statement during a humorous activity is more likely to be less judged by the others.
- ❑ An important part of the creation of the learning environment has to do with the **trust building**. Trust can be built on many different levels: between the team and the participants, between the group of participants or within the team itself. If we use a positive kind of humor, in the beginning, a humor which doesn't diminish the status of the others, it can start to generate a group feeling. It will not only break barriers or break the ice, but it will also show that “we can play together”

that what you are proposing for this training activity is also going to be funny.

- ❑ If we can use humor to break barriers and to build the trust, we can also use humor in a more advanced stage to **include the participants** in the process and **increase their engagement**. Good emotions, connected by a humorous moment or a humorous approach, can also bring a bigger involvement.
- ❑ Besides supporting us in the creation of connections between the participants and the team, or in between participants, we honestly think that within a humorous environment, the **quality of the connections** will be higher if we relate those connections with emotions generated by “good humor”.
- ❑ Understanding how humor is working in between participants and how humor is working in our trainings can help us to better **understand group dynamics**, the relationships between participants, and which role power, leadership and connections are playing inside the group.
- ❑ Humor can also be used to **bring joy to a moment**, situation, to a group of people. Joy, but not just joy as a positive feeling for the group, but also smiles and laughter, and all the positiveness that smiles and laughter bring. Humor can help participants to enjoy more the process.



„Joy and laughter is a signal... humor is happening.”

GERGELY KISS, VALTERS MELDERIS
at Humor Me! - The Seminar

- ❑ Fran, an important man in “Humor Me! – The Seminar”, share with us his own point of view about humor. For him, humor has a deep meaning in his own life approach, and he connects it with surviving through adversity and dealing with difficult situations in life, so for him, humor can create a **cheerful view on adversity**.



- ❑ In the difficult times that we are living, with all the social media and many different inputs and connections that we have 24/7, to be “here and now” mindfully in a process is difficult. Humor can help people to be more “present”, to **focus more on the present moment**.



„I use humor to distract from distraction.”

LAURA BORBE at Humor Me! - The Seminar



*Photo Credit: Valters Melderis, 2017. Budapest, Hungary
The Humor Me! 2nd meeting*

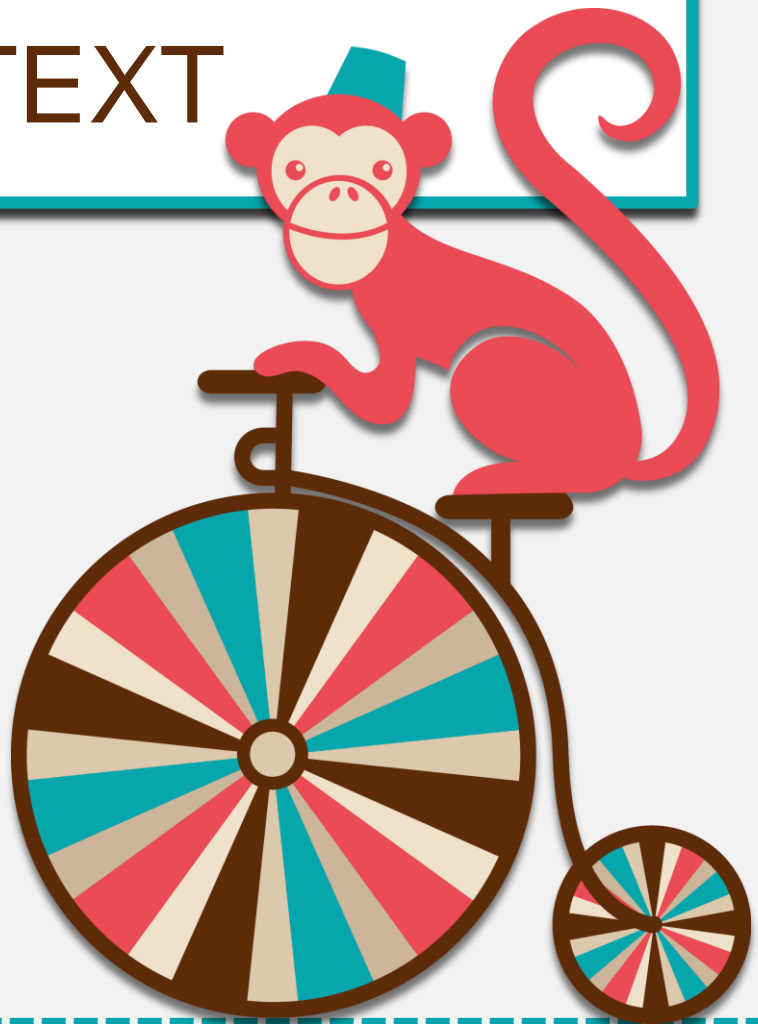


„Danger, take care, humor is not about recipes... use it with care.”

RÉKA SZÉPLAKI at Humor Me! - The Seminar

6

DO's & TIPS ABOUT HUMOR IN LEARNING CONTEXT



DO's & TIPS

Each person involved in “Humor Me!” project has their own way of using humor in learning contexts.

The key is that you find your own way, your own style of using it. Many of the sentences that are coming now could be useful for you, and many of them may be completely useless. There are some tips that are working for us, for the team of “Humor Me!” and for the participants who took part in the different activities inside the “Humor Me!” project.

- ❑ **Beware - humor should be progressive**, not too much in the beginning. A common base/safe space is important to use certain kinds of humor. Give the participants time to get used to the approach and the way of understanding the learning context. Some kinds of jokes, comments, activities may work quite well in the day 3 of an activity and fail completely on day 1.



„It's also a kind of contract between all people concerned - so that the environment is not disturbed too much early on.”

MARK TAYLOR

- ❑ If you want to develop your humor competence in the learning context, **focus first on understanding and developing your inner readiness about humor** in whatever context and situation. Inner readiness towards humor is the base. Try to discover which types of humor are the ones working for you, which style you actually like. Especially here be honest with yourself, you need to be comfortable to develop your humor competences, it is quite difficult to force yourself to learn anything, and even more when it comes to humor.



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- ❑ **At the beginning** of a training course **start making fun of yourself**. It's easier when nobody is hurt in this process, nobody would feel attacked, and you'll start creating these safe environments while using your humorous approach. This means that you have to be ready to laugh at yourself. If you begin with humor, it may happen that the others are continuing. Don't use humor if you are not ready to be the target of humor. If you make humor at your own expense and participants accept it, it will "open new doors" for you. This can help you to deal with "difficult" participants sometimes.
 - ❑ See how making fun of yourself can **increase your leadership** and generate a connection. Leadership can help you be more persuasive, in order to pass the message, to connect and create a connection, to steam out situations when needed, to convince. Having fun about yourself has to do with showing your vulnerability, and this will create connections with your participants and with the teams you work with, as Brené Brown says in her [TED Talk](#) "The Power of Vulnerability".



„A sense of humor is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with others, of getting things done.“

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

- ❑ It's really important to **adapt to the audience**, to the group of participants, pupils, colleagues you are working with. If you want to use humor, what is working well with primary school students, may not work with people from the business sector, or with volunteers in between 18 and 30. One of the challenges here is to find a humorous way in which you are authentic, but also that connects with audiences from far different ages or different backgrounds.



- ❑ It's easier when we **connect our humor with a common context**, a direct reference for all the group: that's why the common environment, many times create "spontaneous" or unplanned humorous situations because we have a common context to relate to. If we were having lunch together, a joke with the canteen can be part of the common context. Most of the stand-up comedians use "daily life situations" in their speeches.
- ❑ **There are ways how to improve** and learn to become more humorous. One of the ways is to learn different techniques how to present and structure the information. For example, use "the rule of 3" – start with 2 statements that are connected with each others and the 3rd one add something unexpected.



Do you need tips how to talk funnier? Check out the [tips of David Nihil](#).

- ❑ **Momentum is a key to humor.** In the correct time things can work, but out of time and context, they may not. Try not to force humor at a wrong time, or when the situation is gone.
- ❑ **Humor can be reused & recycled.** If it was working before, and you arrive in a similar situation don't hesitate to use it, to try it... maybe the first time was spontaneous, now is also spontaneous, but repeated. If you dare, you can even plan moments to reuse things that were working before.
- ❑ In the adaptation process of humor to the group and the situation, **go for the simple, basic:** go for what the people from the world of the mathematics call "the greatest common divisor", for the kind of humor that everybody can understand.



- ❑ The way of the use of humor should be, in the beginning, motivated by the facilitators. The first jokes, the kind of humor we start making will create a “style” in the group, and we have to be conscious, that also in the kind of humor we are using, **we are role models in the activities we facilitate**. A “good humor” is the kind of humor that should be used by the team. Then It will be more likely that participants will use this kind of humor, instead of self-defeating, or sarcasm.
- ❑ If in your approach towards learning environments, the group is important, we truly consider that the **co-responsibility in the use of humor**, in between the team and the participants, is also essential.
- ❑ **Be authentic.** It's okay to not to use humor if you are not in the mood, or you don't feel comfortable with it.



„Humor readiness: humor is the combination of awareness and practice, my job is to be authentic and true, but also to be in service of the group and in service of the learning process.”

MAFALDA MORGANTI at Humor Me! - The Seminar



*Photo Credit: Stiliana Petkova, 2017. Székesfehérvár, Hungary
The Smile flashmob*



„I realize that humor isn't for everyone. It's only for people who want to have fun, life, and feel alive.”

ANNE WILSON SCHAEF

7

CONCLUSIONS FROM “HUMOR ME!” TEAM



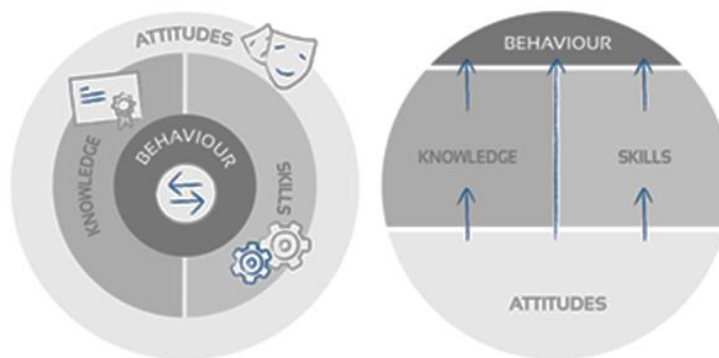
CONCLUSIONS

One of our main discoveries about humor is that the more we read, talk, watch, research, exchange; the more we think that is a very complex thing. After a whole year focusing on humor, not just inside the “Humor Me!” project, we found three main roads to keep exploring when speaking about humor in learning contexts:

1. The 14 months journey of our team on humor reinforced our idea of considering humor a 360° competence. This approach helped us to go deeper into the wide concept of humor. Considering it as a competence brings a lot of space and options to include it as a key part of the approach to learning, not just a tool to develop other approaches.

Since we see it as a competence, we could analyse the different parts of it: attitude, skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Picture: [European Training Strategy A Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally](#)



□ **Knowledge:** a basic knowledge could be a joke, but a deeper knowledge can have to do with the different backgrounds of the participants, jokes to do or not to do depending on the cultures that are in the group, the meaning of the words in different languages, the false friends. The knowledge in humor is something “huge”, so there’s always room for improvement. And it is important that humor is connected with the recent information, so is a kind of knowledge that should be refreshed. As a humor knowledge, we can also consider knowledge about humor theories, strategies and different techniques of using humor.

❑ **Skills:** we can read a joke, or watch a stand-up comedian and know what to say. But is important the practice, the use of the tone of the voice, the ability to use it in the correct moment, to understand the momentum, to be able to use your body or to expose yourself in front of a group of people, the ability to understand the situation and use it or not. So certain level of skills is also important and again is a huge field to keep learning.

❑ **Behaviours:** We can use humor, and we can let people understand our playful intention with showing “game signals”. We can show that we understood the joke, and we can also show appreciation. Smile, laughter, good mood, attention focus, turning points, physical body positions, verbal reactions are behaviours which can show that we are in the “game”. Being open and sensitive about the mood of the group, being ready to be vulnerable, avoiding making people feel too exposed or uncomfortable, finding elements which could be used to create a group feeling are important aspects of behaviours in learning contexts.

❑ **Attitude:** What do we want the humor for? Many questions of this booklet have to do with creating your own inner readiness towards humor in the learning context. If for us humor is just a way to steam out or is something that we want to include in the whole approach of our training course, or in our whole life, is a key to develop our attitude towards humor.

2. **Humor can become a personal approach**, a team approach or an organisational approach. It's important to clarify with your teams in which way are you using humor, to speak about that, to establish agreements, to incorporate it consciously in your approach. For the team of “Humor Me!” one of the main learning results is that humor in the learning context is something that we can steer, that we can have ownership of. It's not just something that happens now and then. Humor is something to prepare, take care of, understand and consciously incorporate into our approach towards designing a learning context.
3. **Sense of humor** appears when we have a deeper understanding and acceptance of ourselves and the others, and this state of mind **increases our perception and observation abilities**.

For us, humor is a part that can grow as part of your personality, that for some people is, and for some people can become a part of themselves. Humor can be considered as an approach to life, part of the way that you want to use to relate to the world, to relate to other people.

It is clear that it will remain the individual choice of each person when and how to use humor in a learning context. However, we hope that more and more trainers and educators will include more humor in their work. If not for the scientific benefits in the hippocampus region, then just for the sake of bringing more smiles in the world.

If you embrace humor fully, it helps you to question yourself, and to put people in a state of mind more able to question things, and to question themselves.



READY TO EXPLORE MORE?

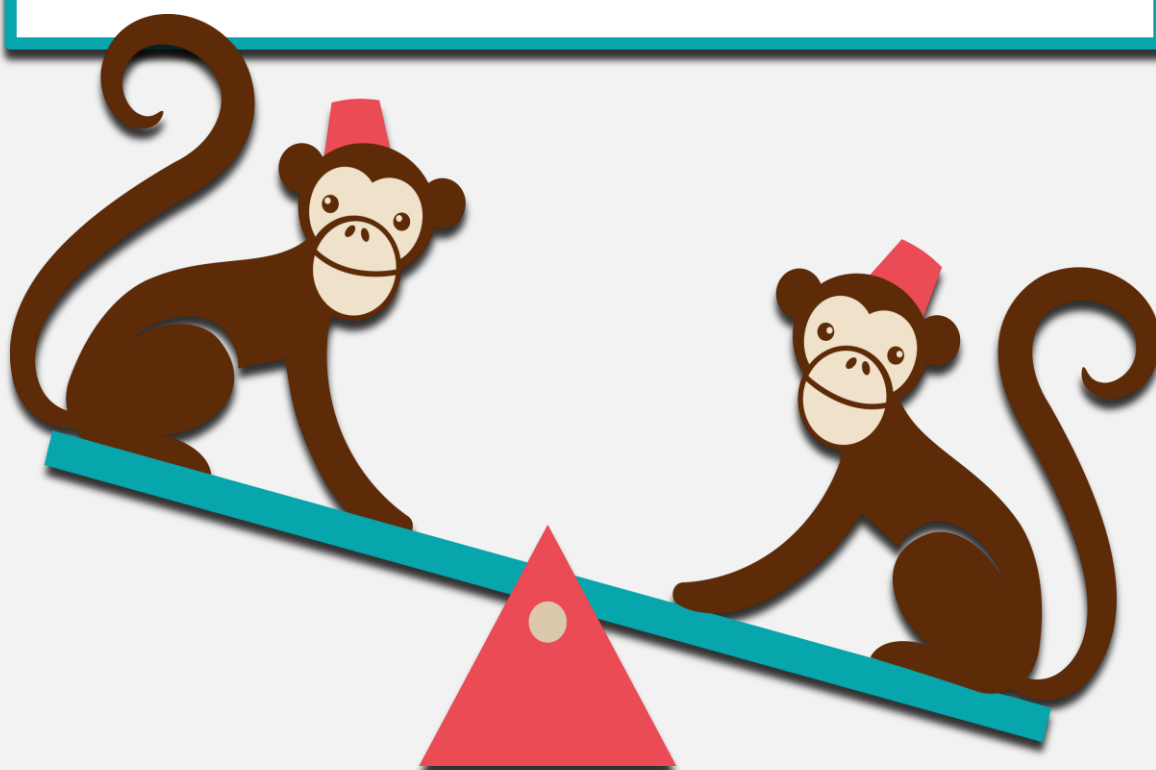
We questioned in the book everything that we know about humor. We hope it raised a lot of questions also in you. Let's keep our discussion alive and bring joy to learning!

JOIN US!





THE „HUMOR ME!” TEAM



BUT, WHO WE ARE?

Maybe you wonder who we are. Sometimes we wonder too, but now we tell you the secret.

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The PARTNERS

BIRS OTI HUNGARY - HU

BIRS was founded in 2010 by trainers and youth helpers with the aim of helping young people to solve their specific life problems, to help their social inclusion, and their development to healthy adult personality. Our objective is to share knowledges, information and methods in order to develop youthwork and support of youth participation and self-initiatives programs.

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PARKERI – ES

PARKERI, is an association created in 2014 to connect communities and social agents, to create learning bridges and collaborate with different cultures and collectives. With this and other purposes, socio-educational projects are designed and launched at the local, regional, national and international levels, training activities, information and participation campaigns, advice to entities and education professionals, as well as support for social and cultural initiatives.

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FUNDATIA NOI ORIZONTURI - RO

The mission of Fundatia Noi Orizonturi, which was founded in 2000 in Romania's Jiu Valley, is to inspire youth to lead and to produce social change. We do this by innovating and sustaining models of experiential education which empower youth to develop themselves, their communities, and the world in which they live.

Link: <http://www.noi-orizonturi.ro>

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MUOVIMENTO COOPERATIVA SOCIALE - IT

Born in 2007 from the vision of four partners and friends, Muovimento is engaged in sustainable development, non formal education, responsible tourism, human rights education, promotion of active citizenship.

Link: <http://www.muovimento.it/>

E-mail: info@muovimento.it



ANNEX BIBLIOGRAPHY



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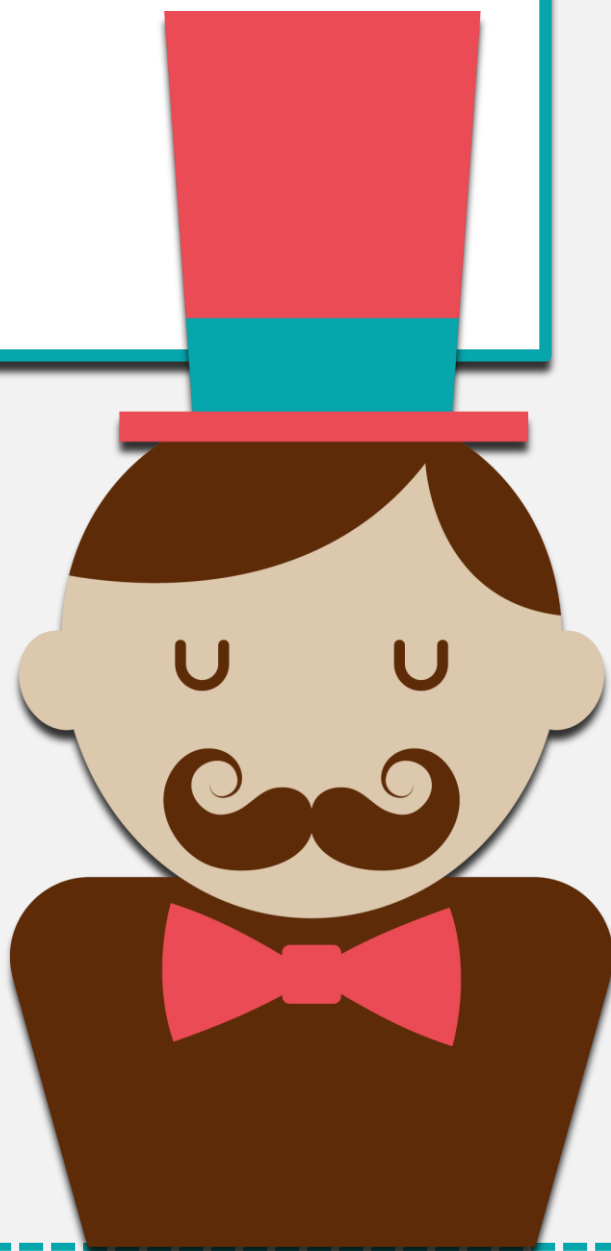
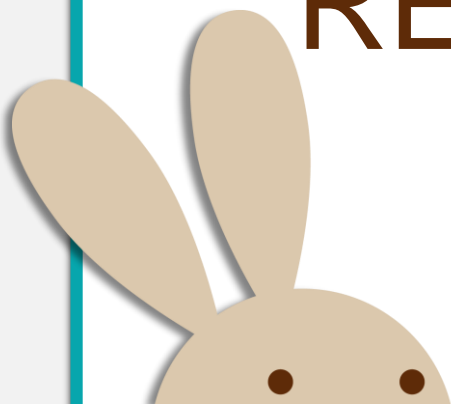
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ANNEX RESEARCH



THE „HUMOR ME!” RESEARCH

Quick report about the online questionnaire

The main idea behind the development of the “Humor Me!” questionnaire was to **reach out to the community of youth workers, trainers and educators**, especially those active on an international level, in order to check what is their personal relationship with humor, how they use it and where do they stand in relation to humor in their work field. The final aim was to combine the answers to the questionnaire together with the data and resources collected during the desk research, **to get a wider picture of how the topic is perceived in the Non-Formal educational field** and find common ground on which to build the next steps of our work.

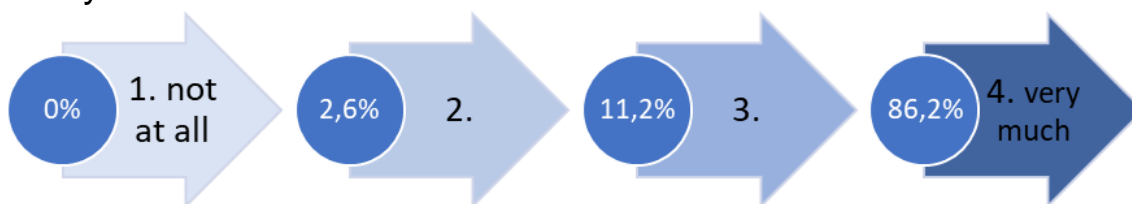
The questionnaire was officially launched on the 7th of April 2017, and 116 people (61% of those being youth workers and/or trainers active within the Erasmus+ programme) contributed to it from 16 different countries.

The quick report consists of the questions, and the answers of the online research.

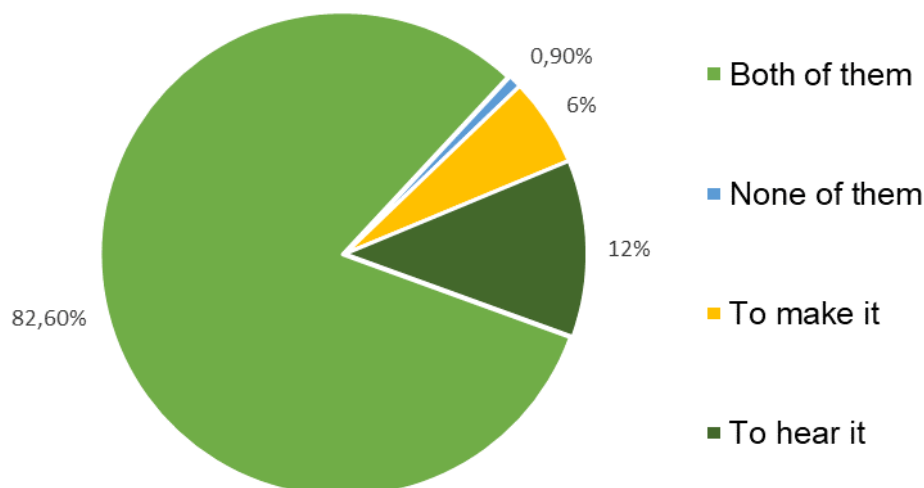
I. DAILY LIFE

1. Do you like humor in daily life?

Answers are placed on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is not at all and 4 is very much

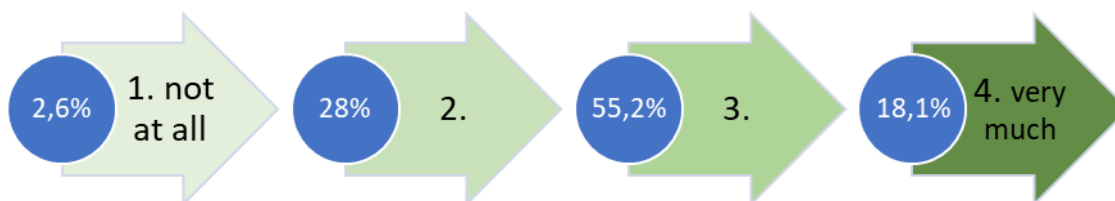


2. Do you prefer to make humor, or to hear it?



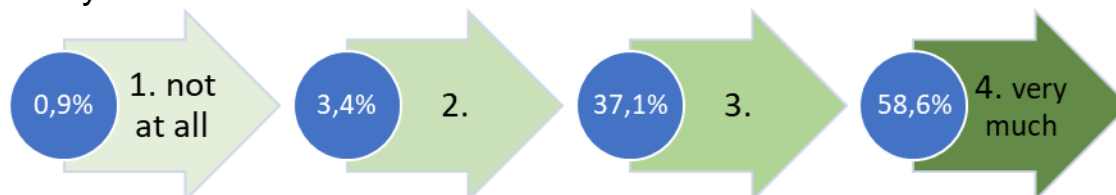
3. How good do you consider yourself in making humor?

Answers are placed on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is not at all and 4 is very much.



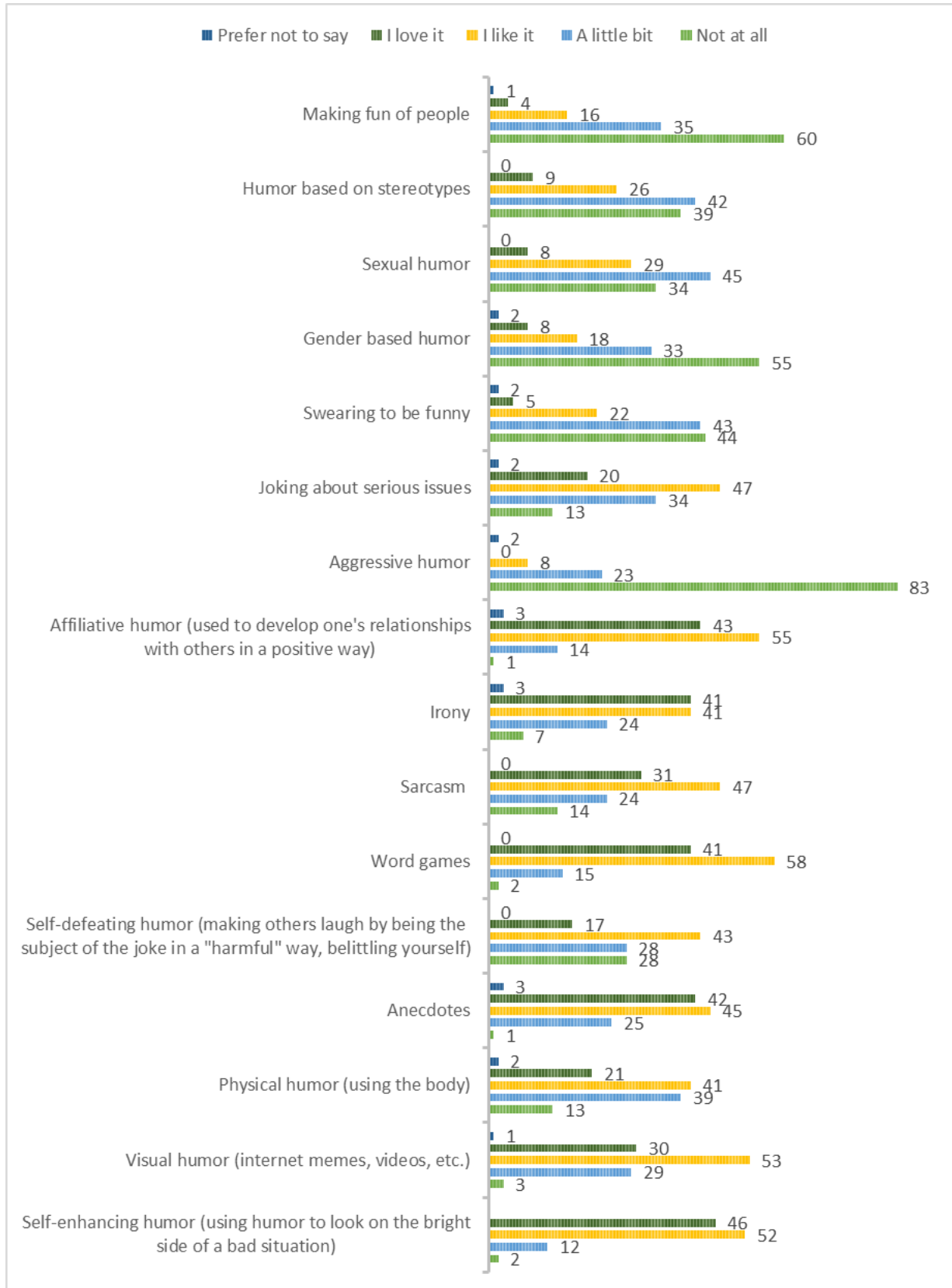
4. How good do you consider yourself in understanding humor?

Answers are placed on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is not at all and 4 is very much



5. What kind of humor do you like in your everyday life?

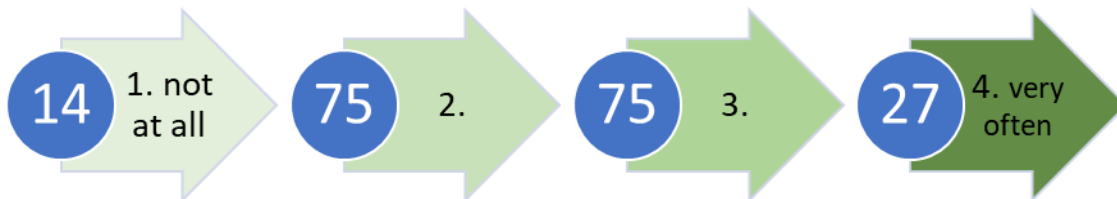
The data's show the number of people who choose the given answers from total number of respondents: 116.



6. To which extend do you use humor in the following situations?

Answers are placed on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is not at all and 4 is very often. The data's show the number of people who choose the given answers from total number of respondents: 116.

You feel stressed



You need to make a difficult decision



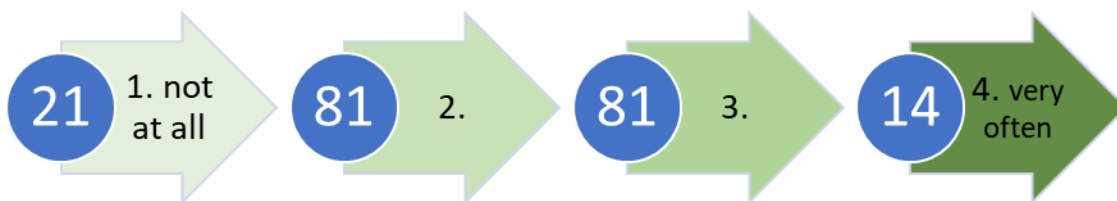
Conflict with a stranger



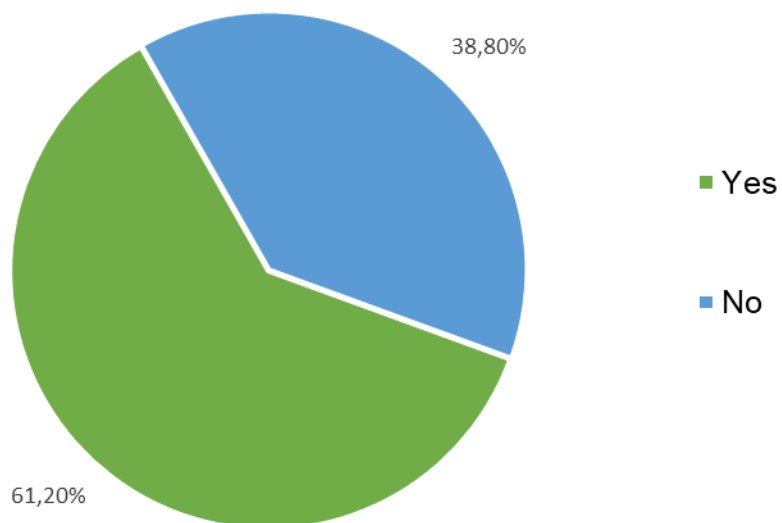
Conflict with somebody you love



You feel scared



7. Are you a trainer or a youth worker within the Erasmus+ field?

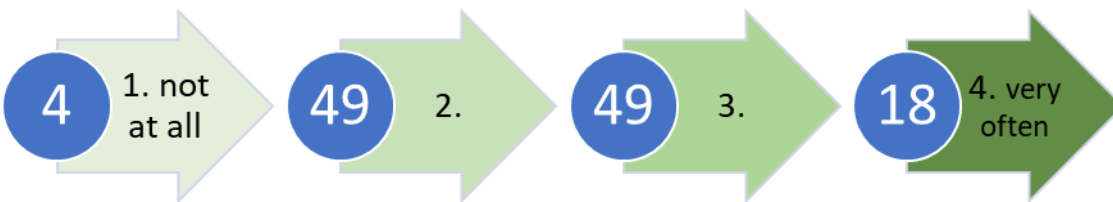


II. TRAINING EXPERIENCE

1. How comfortable do you feel in making jokes in an intercultural training context?

Answers are placed on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is not at all and 4 is very often. The data's show the number of people who choose the given answers from total number of respondents: 116.

As a trainer

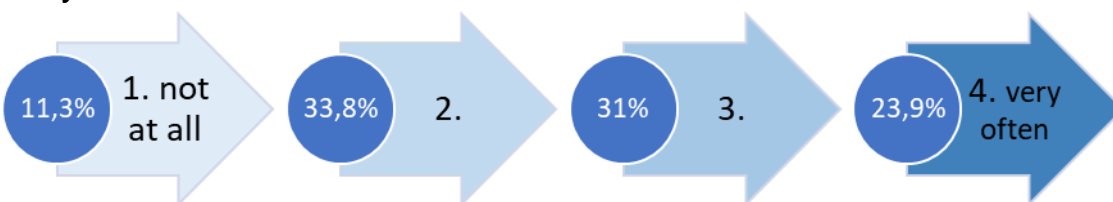


As a participant



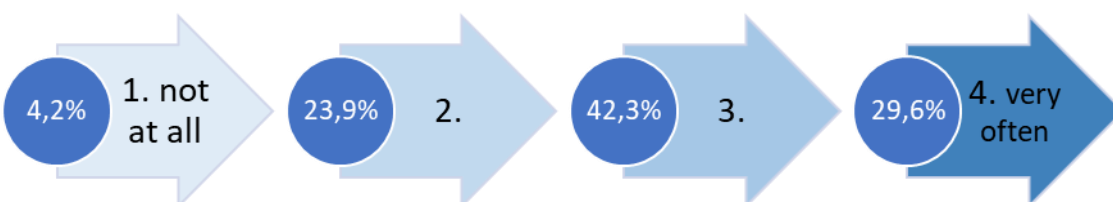
2. When preparing a training, do you consciously include humorous elements in your plan?

Answers are placed on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is not at all and 4 is very often.



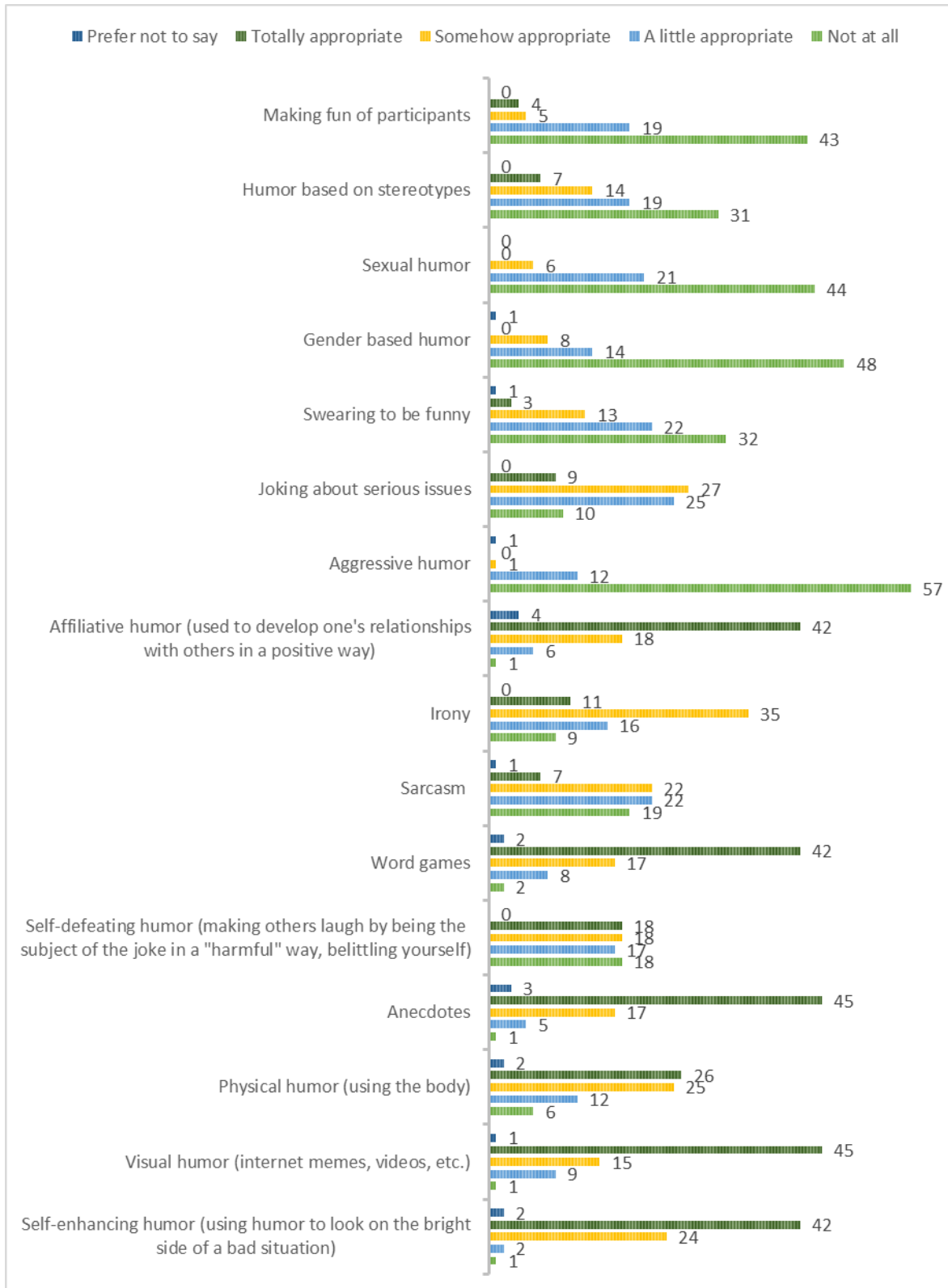
3. How much do you actually use it?

Answers are placed on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is not at all and 4 is very often.



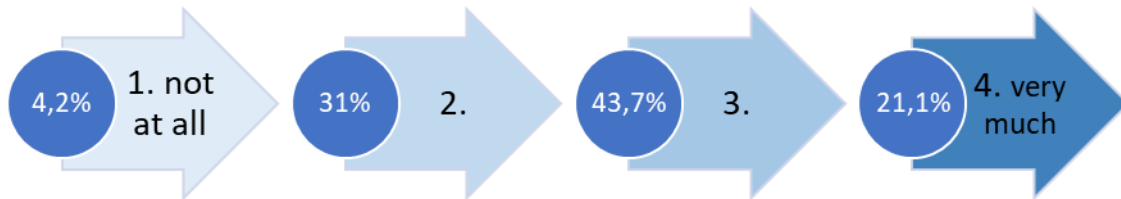
4. In your opinion, what kind of humor is appropriate in an intercultural training context?

The data's show the number of people who choose the given answers from total number of respondents: 71.

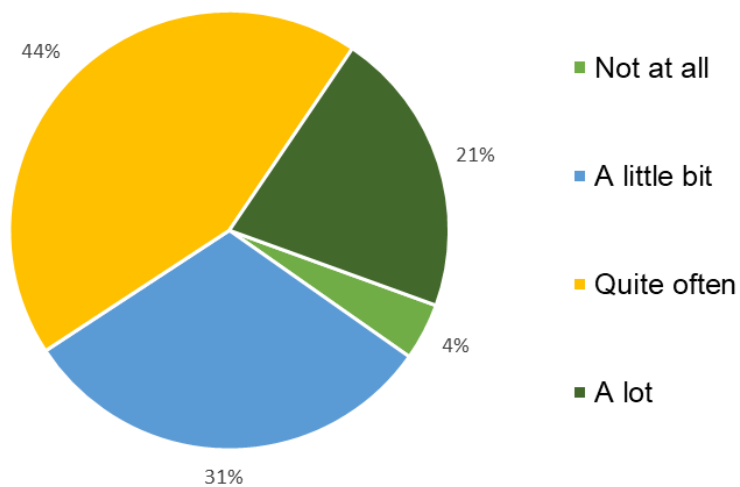


5. How comfortable do you feel in using humor in conflict situations?

Answers are placed on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is not at all and 4 is very much.

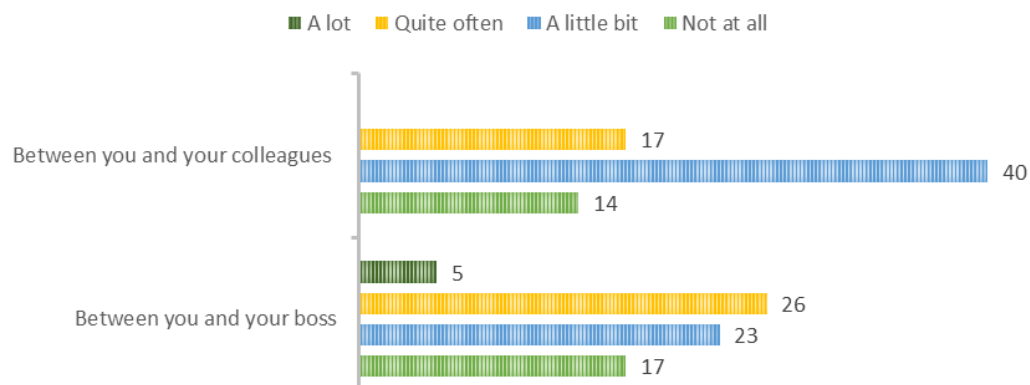


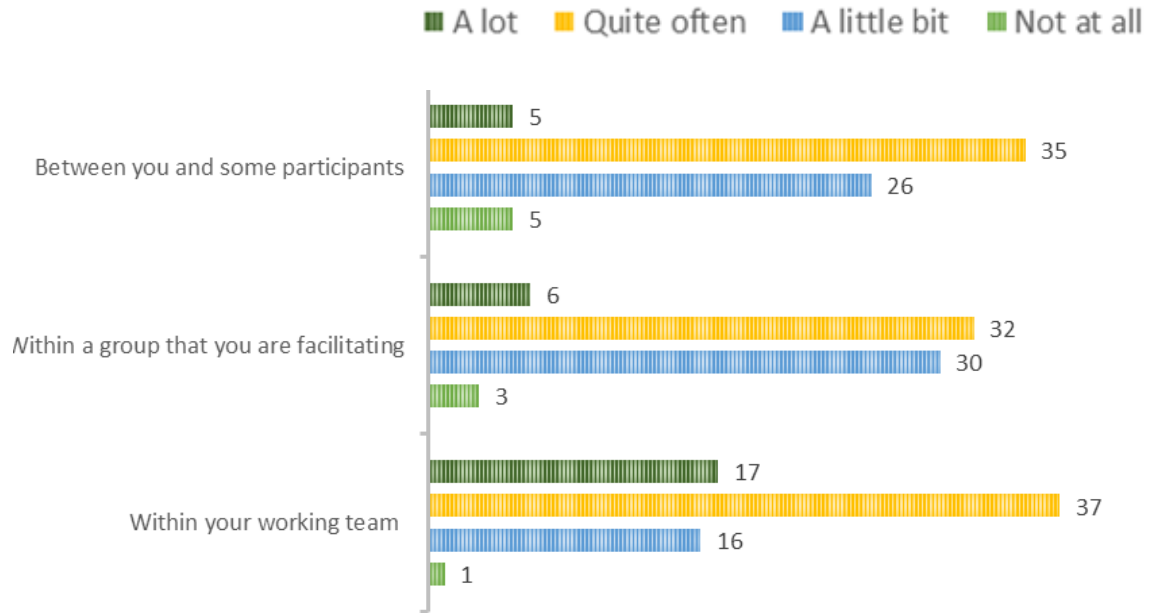
6. To which extend do you use humor in the following conflict situations?



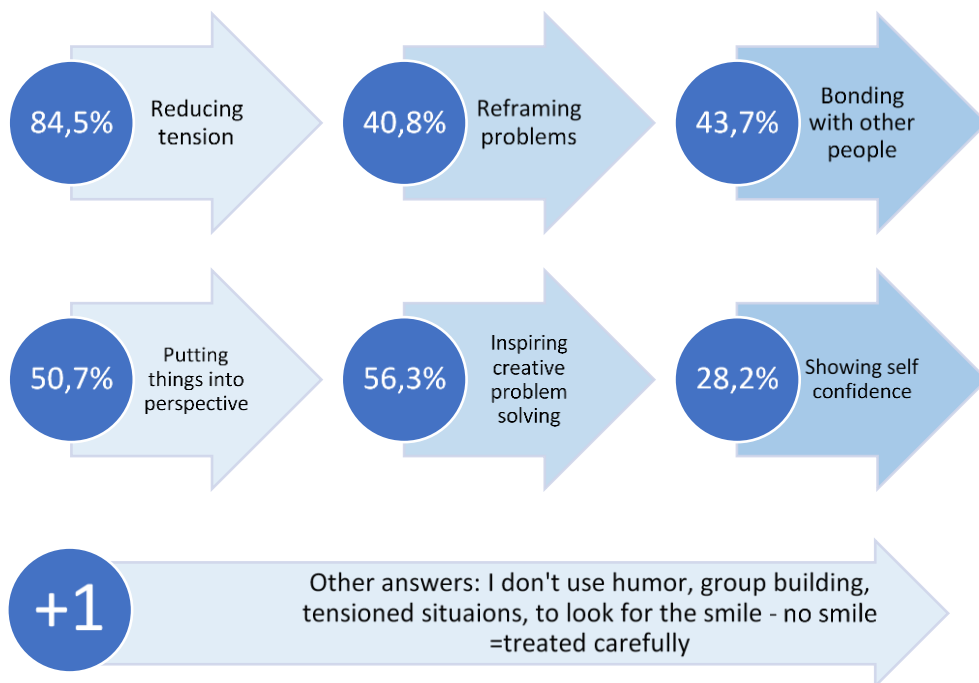
7. To which extend do you use humor in the following conflict situations?

The data's show the number of people who choose the given answers from total number of respondents: 116.

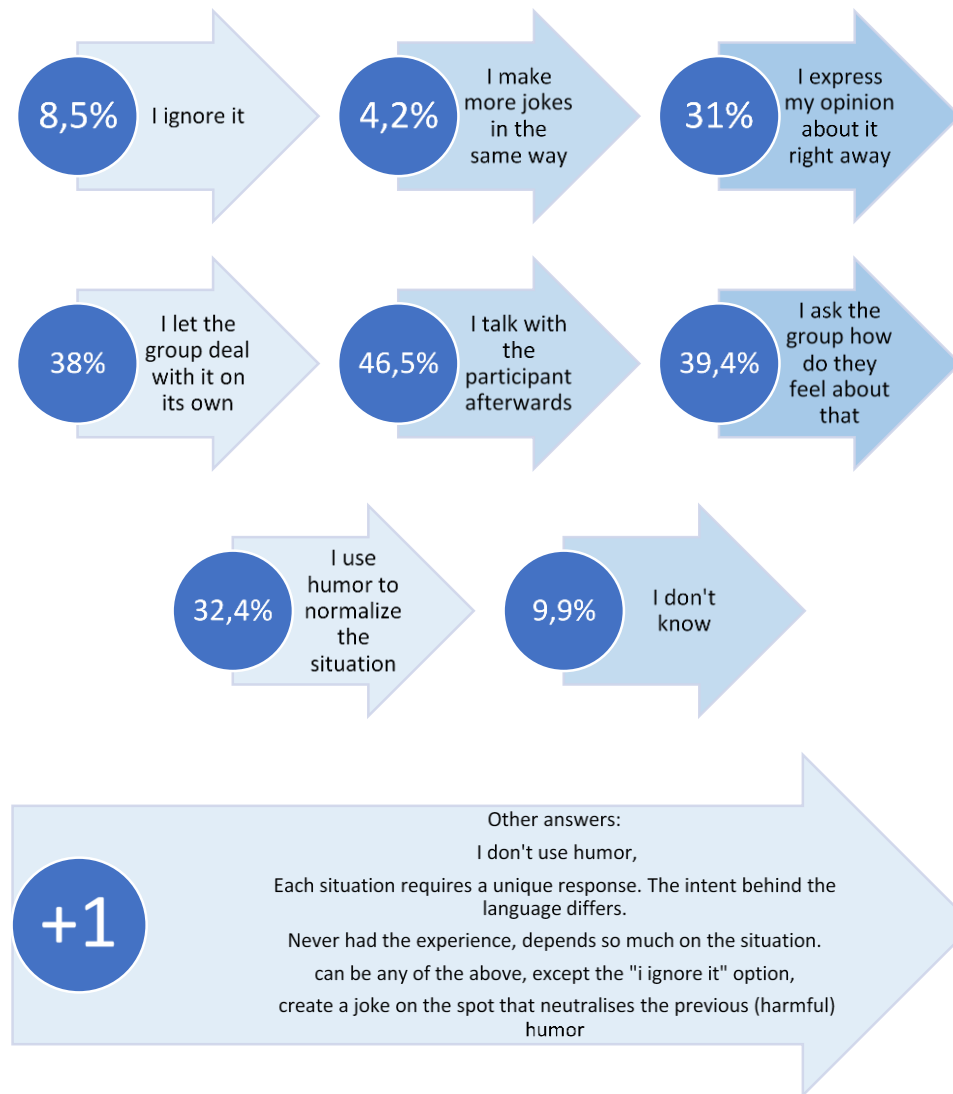




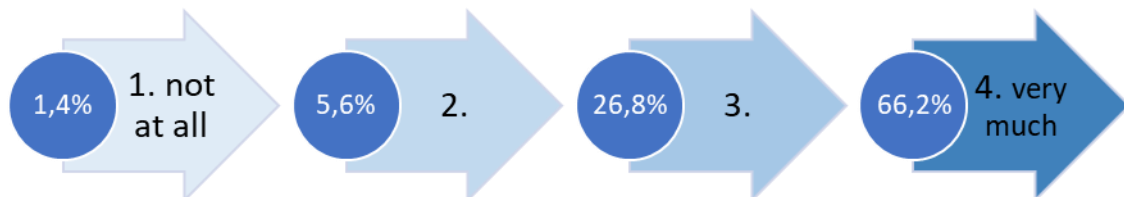
8. In conflict management, what do you use humor for?



9. How would you deal with humor coming from participants that is racist/homophobic/aggressive/etc.?

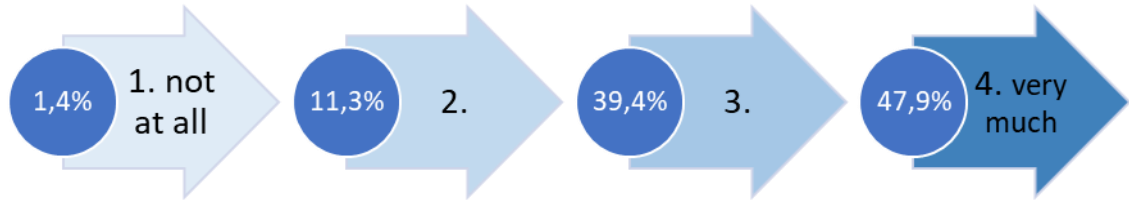


10. Would you like to improve your humor competences as a trainer?
Answers are placed on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is not at all and 4 is very much.

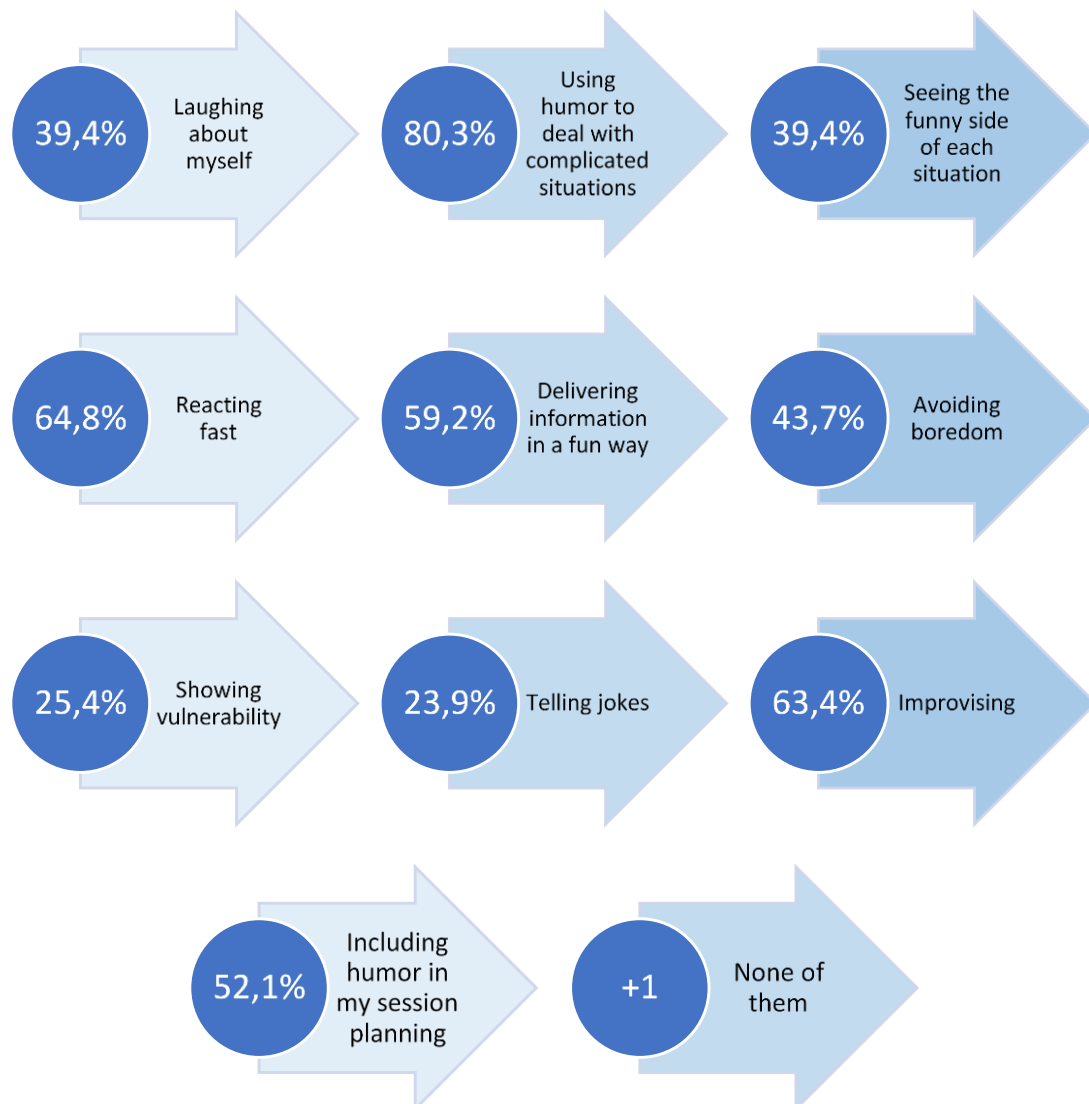


10. Do you believe that sense of humor can be trained as a competence?

Answers are placed on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is not at all and 4 is very much.

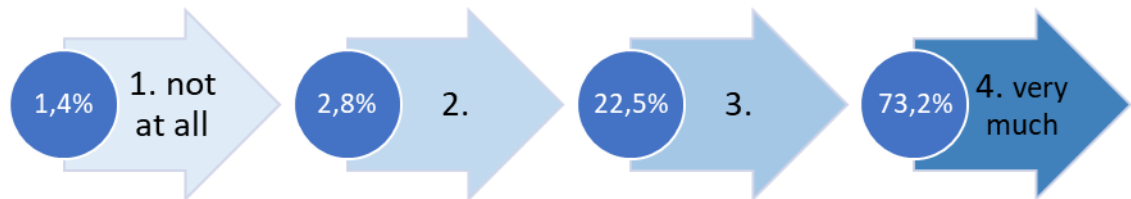


11. Which competences would you like to develop to include more humor in your training activities?



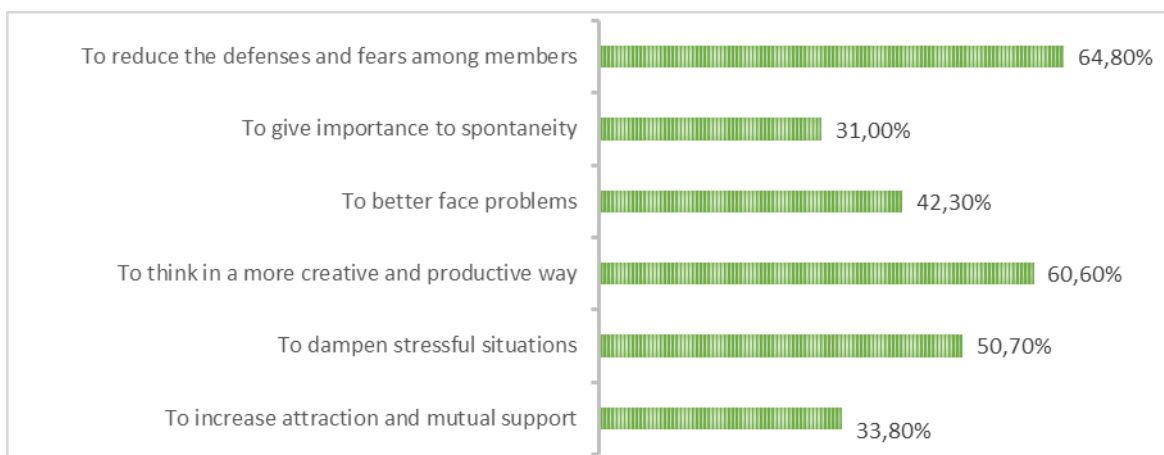
11. How much do you value humor as an important element for team work?

Answers are placed on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is not at all and 4 is very much.

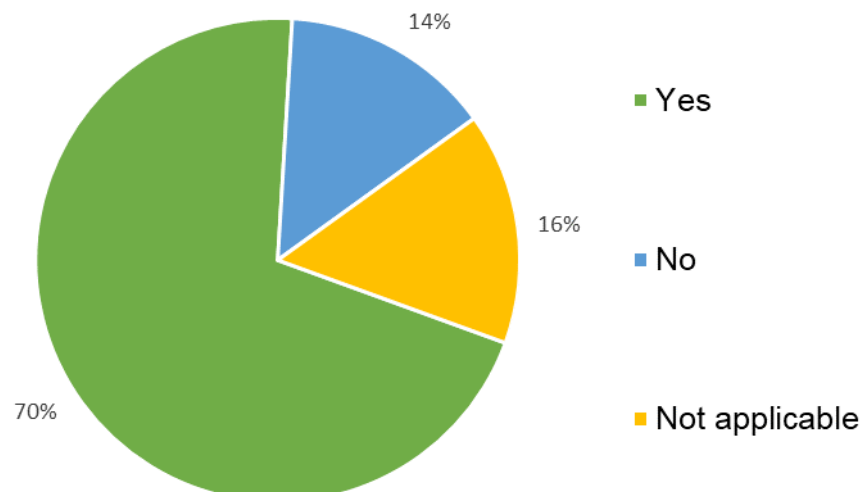


12. What humor can be more useful for, in a team work?

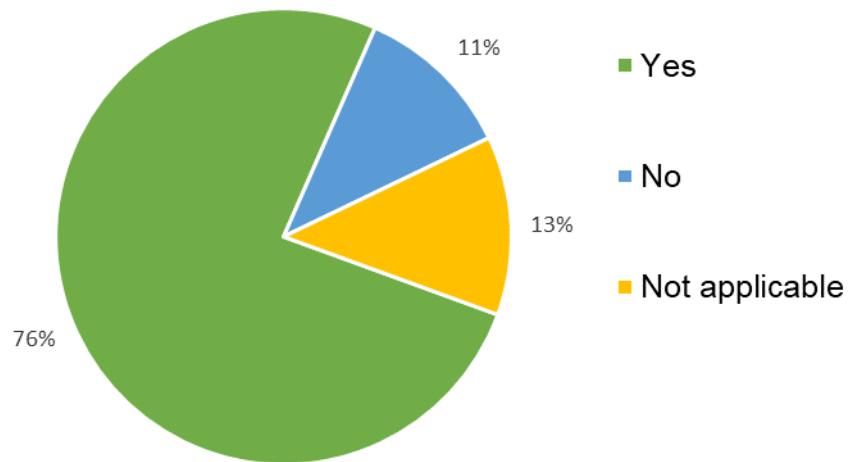
The data's show the percentage (%) of people who choose the given answers from total number of respondents: 71.



13. Are you satisfied with the humor in your work team?



15. Would you like to increase humor in your work team?



Last but not least, beauty and the beast

Please, tell us a story!

We asked the respondents to share a story with us connected with humor and learning. We publish some of the stories without any change.

” Olga Kyriakidou:

My colleague Buzz Burry introduced me a tool of giving feedback each morning to participants based of the practicalities announcements and the previous feedback that we are receiving from participants. Every morning we have "Morning News". With a humorous way two reports-journalist they are presenting the programme of the day. Creating funny stories of the feedback ie. Feedback: food was not enough -News: Participants taking part in a Training Course are starving. Hosting Organisation is now raising donations from locals to support the participants.

You can have external reporters, you can dress up, wear wings, having microphones etc to make it even more creative. In that way you start your day with smiles and with creativity.

For more information or examples do not hesitate to contact me.

**Maia:**

Well, a few year ago, back when I was teacher I remember telling my students something like: "If I do something nice for you, you should do something nice for someone else. If I do something not that nice, it's not me, it's my evil twin sister. Just ignore her and keep on doing nice stuff.

**Patricia Eguia**

In Spain we have a joke when somebody says or ask something and nobody answers we say you can hear the crickets (usually they come out in the night when it's silence and quiet). So I had this situation in a training, I had an app in my phone with sounds of crickets, so I put it to hear the crickets. Instead of that came the sound of what sound like a vomiting frog and nobody got the point and though I was crazy...I started to laugh and was not able to explain it ...it took a while. Then I explained it, everybody understood and we used this as a running gag during the seminar. I think it broke the ice, and got a nice, relaxed and accepting atmosphere for the seminar, where spontaneity, failure and humor were allowed.

**Tomás Mora**

I had a story prepared about a sea monster that haunts the inhabitants of one island we were visiting, after describing it I said I had a picture of it, in that moment I took it from my folder and I showed to people directly without checking it. The face of the youngsters were between "I don't understand" till laughing a lot, so I started to worry that the pictured monster wasn't scary enough for them... I turned the picture to me and I saw Donald's trump face very angry pointing with a finger. I immediately said sorry and took the good picture of the monster out of the folder. Of course, it was prepared ;) And they didn't know me neither... Yet.



Anonymous stories:

” When I explain very boring or theoretical content, I ensure that participants have understood and not missed information by preparing for them a "Who want to be a millionaire?" show by asking them about real concepts explained mixed with other funny answers. I also play the role of speaker and put music as in a tv show. In some questions, I cheat them with funny word games.

At the end of a session, subject: motivation.

” I stuck, with duct tape, a candy, on the bottom seat. I said it had a sweet surprise, but they have to look somewhere very close to them. They found it.

The conclusion was: sometimes if you want to achieve something in life, you have to lift your bottom of the chair!

They laughed!

This is a little game, it is not invented by me, you can publish, but not with my name.

” I use a joke as an ice breaker in training or team building programs. And one time I was delivering for a management team and started with it. I was certain of failure because of their seniority both in work and in life and still said what the heck!? I went on and asked them: "Do you know how much a polar bear weights?" Of course they started saying numbers, one even said: "It depends on whether it is a male or female, age and so on..". And when he heard the answer: "Just enough to break the ice between us", he figured out it was a joke and they all laughed. It worked. And humor works like that.

Title: When boldness answers to the question: What grades are you expecting?

” I remember there was a time when Elias, my now 17-year-old nephew, was at the second grade (7 years old). His teacher was Ms. Dina: a primary education teacher active for many years in our small village in the north of Greece. Ms. Dina apart from being a very well-liked teacher among pupils and parents, also happens to be the mother of my best childhood friend Ermioni.



When the 1st quarter of the school year was ending, Ms. Dina asked all the children in her classroom to self-evaluate their performance and to comment on what kind of grade (from 1 to 10) they were expecting based on their opinion. All the pupils were modest, considering their effort and performance, reflecting about this first quarter and they were between:

-“Yes, mathematics is not my favorite course, I am better at literature, a 9, an 8”,

-“I don’t know, whatever you consider best Ms. Dina”,

-“Sports 10 and the rest I don’t know”, etc.

When Elias’ turn was up Ms. Dina said:

-“What about you Elias? What grades do you expect?”

What was about to come, was of course not something that Ms. Dina would expect.

-“I expect 10 to all the courses!!!”

Elias is a street-smart kid, but -speaking honestly- not the most attentive student you would find. Studying actually bores him and he is more of the funny guy, very likeable to his teachers and classmates mostly because of his humor and good heart and not because of his studying efforts.

- “Really Elias? 10 to all the courses you are expecting? Can you explain to me how come?”, Ms. Dina asked in awe. After all, she knew him very well since the first grade.

- “I thought that it wasn’t necessary for me to enter into that kind of explanations in front of the whole class”, Elias said in a very confident and diplomatic way.

“But I will do it anyway”, he added.

“It’s very simple, isn’t my aunt Giota the best friend of your daughter Ermioni?”

-“Yes, she is!”, answered Ms. Dina.

-“Well, this is where “10 to all courses” comes from Ms. Dina!!!”

He waited a bit..

“Connections Ms. Dina! Connections!”, he added.

Both Ms. Dina and the whole class busted into laughing and Elias got his “10 to all courses” for that first quarter. He didn’t manage to keep “10 to all courses” for long though, however he was in Ms. Dina’s class till the end of primary school. He still keeps his boldness and great sense of humor and he is nowadays focused on adding to it sparkles of teenage-mood-swings-awesomeness.

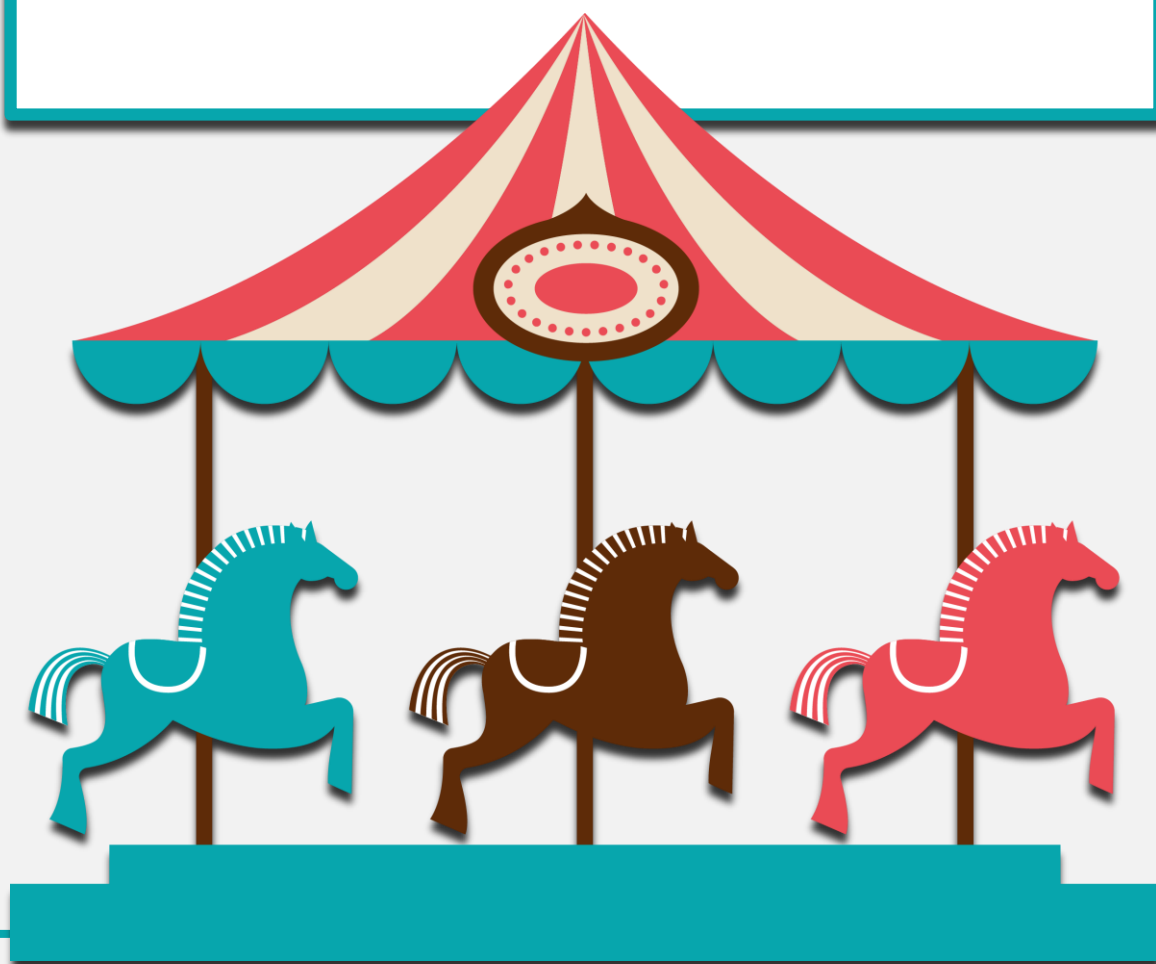




ANNEX

some **TOOLS** for

INSPIRATION



Can attitude change the image of facilitator?

An activity through which we can experiment how the attitude of facilitators changes the image that the group have upon them.

Aim(s)

- To experiment how the attitude changes the image of the facilitator
- To discuss how can we consciously bring positive energy to the group

Target group

- Youth workers
- Trainers
- Teachers

Description

Duration: ~ 1hr 30min

The method is taken from impro-theater „tool-box“. It has 4 parts and a discussion part in between and in the end.

I. Part:

- Ask for a volunteer, take him/her out of the room, where other participants can't hear you and give him/her an instruction – „When I will call you back to the room, your task is just to stand in front of the group and just to be there. You can observe participants, but don't engage in any kind of communication with them“.
- Return to the group and give instructions also to them: „When the volunteer will return, your task is to observe him/her. Don't try to communicate in any way, don't try to provoke any reaction. Just observe.“
- When the volunteer returns allow the time of 2-3 minutes for him/her to be in front of the group and give a signal for the end of the first part. You can ask group to applaud for the volunteer.



II. Part:

- Ask the same volunteer to leave the room with you again and give following instructions: „This time your task is the same, with the only change that you have to imagine that people in the group are the most amazing, beautiful and kind people in the world. The rule of not communicating remains the same”.
- Return to the group and give the same instructions as in the first part.
- Give again time of 2-3 minutes for volunteer to be in front of the group, give signal for the end of the part and invite group to applaud the volunteer. Ask volunteer to return to the group and lead a discussion. Don't reveal the instructions given yet. Potential questions to ask:
 - What did you observe on the volunteer in the first part? What did you observe in the second part? What changed?
 - What instructions do you think the volunteer received?
 - (for volunteer) How was it to be in front of the group in the first part and the second? You can invite a volunteer to share the instructions given.

III. Part:

- Ask for a different volunteer and leave the room with him/her. Give the following instructions: „When I will call you back, you should go in front of the group and act out a simple everyday activity of your choice. Something that you enjoy doing or do often, like (washing dishes, playing a guitar, dancing, doing gardening, walking a dog, etc.). You don't need to interact with the audience, just be on the stage and do your thing”. Return to the group and give the same instructions as in parts 1 and 2. Call the volunteer back.
- Give time of 2-3 minutes for a volunteer to „perform” and then give a signal for the end of the part.
- Ask audience to share their impressions of what the volunteer was doing. Who do they think the person is? What is he/she doing? What stories they came up in their minds about the person?
- Lead a discussion on how different impressions and stories are created in the mind of the different members of public, audience even if the action they observe is the same.



IV. Part:

- ask the same volunteer to leave the room with you and give following instructions: "When I will invite you back to the room, you will have to act out the same activity, only this time you need to entertain the audience with your action. How you do it, it's up to you."
- Return to the group and give the same instructions as in the previous parts.
- Invite the volunteer back and give time ~2 minutes to perform. Give a signal for the end of the part, ask group to applaud to volunteer and invite volunteer to join the group.
- Lead the discussion. Potential questions:
 - What did you observe different this time from the previous one? What do you think were the instructions? You can ask volunteer to share the instructions with the group.
 - Ask volunteer to share how did he feel in the part where he just needed to act out the activity and when he/she needed to entertain.
 - Which part created more energy? Which part managed to provoke more curiosity? How long did each part managed to keep your interest?
 - Can we make parallels of experience during this session and experience of being in front of participants of the training/classroom? How does our attitude as facilitator influence the mood of the group? How does it influence our image as facilitators?
 - What learnings can we take from this session to our everyday life?

Documentation and materials:

Gergő Kiss - <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toy/gergely-kiss.4017>

Grund theater", Hungary - www.grundszinhaz.hu

The tool was created by: Gergő Kiss - "Grund theater", Hungary

Context of the tool:

- Tool was presented to the participants of "Humor ME! – the smallest distance" seminar in July 2017, Madarcos, Spain
- Repeated experiment – local workshop „Humor in educational context”, Bucharest, Romania, October 2017.

Take the seat

A method borrowed from impro theater in interest to understand interest conflict and to explore ways of solutions.

Aim(s)

- to explore different conflict resolution strategies
- to understand better interest conflicts
- to build up inner readiness of the participant to deal with the topic conflict resolution

Target group

- EVS volunteers
- Young people
- Youth workers
- Teachers
- Working teams

Duration: ~ 1hr 30min

Description

Space: The space is setted in theater style. There is a clear division of the stage and the audience. On the stage there is only one chair, the participants form the audience.

The flow of the session:

- Explain the situation and the rules of the activity.
Situation: There is ONE chair on the stage. This is the most comfortable chair in the world. Everybody wants it. The participants need to find strategies to sit on the chair.
Rules: No violence. Only those one can act, who are on the stage, no comments from the audience. Let people finish the scene. Avoid speaking.
- The facilitator begins. Sit on the chair and go into the game with the participants.
- Let the game to go on, and if it's needed remember the participants on the rules, or encourage them with questions "Who's next? Who can take the seat?" to go to the stage.
- After ca. 30 min, or when they don't have any more solutions close the play. Ask everybody to step out from their "getting the seat" role. Step out from the situation also physically, form circle with the chairs.
- Debrief the activity! Main focus: Types of conflict resolution

Helping questions: How you felt during the activity? How you felt as seat owner? How you felt as somebody who wants to get the chair? Do you think the activity was connected with our topic conflict resolution? What kind of conflict was there between the one who sit on the chair, and the one who wanted? What kind of strategies did you have to get the chair? Which were successful? Why? From which aspect was it successful? Do you have similar conflicts during your project/work/in your team?

- Close with short, interactive input about the Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument.

Suggestion for facilitators of the session:

The tool needs some warm up exercises. Usually we use some intro in clowning. Since the tool itself is about understanding better interest conflicts, exploring different conflict resolution strategies, it's most effectively used after the participants already got some input about the types of conflicts.

Be familiar with the the Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument. The metaphoric description of the conflict management styles (Shark, Teddy bear, Turtle, Fox, Owl) supports the understanding. You can use examples from the "theater" play to build up connection between styles and the exact actions.

Needed materials

- 1 Chair

Documentation and materials

<http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/overview-thomas-kilman-conflict-mode-instrument-tki>

The tool was created by: the "Humor ME! – the smallest distance" project member Réka Széplaki. She learned the impro theater method which is the base of the tool in 2016., in Poland during the project Artist within- applied Emotions. It was developed in EVS trainings in Hungary in 2016-2017 with the help of Zsiday-Galgóczy Krisztina, Erika Karman.

Context of the tool

EVS on-arrival trainings in Hungary 2016-2017.

SMILE - Smile MY International Learning Experience YE - Pákozd, Hungary 2017.

“Tips&tricks” for bringing humor to a presentation

Experimental and interactive session in which participants have chance to try out techniques used by stand-up comedians in order to bring humor to their presentation.

Aim(s)

- to provide participants with practical techniques how to add humor to the presentation
- to experiment if adding humor to a presentation can improve it's quality

Target group

- Youth workers
- Trainers
- Teachers
- Public speakers

Description

Duration: ~ 1hr 30min

Using humor when presenting an information can be helpful to catch attention of the audience, to make your information more memorable and unique and to develop connection between you and people in the audience. This session is an experiment if using certain techniques can improve your way of presenting information and if it can be used in the learning context in which you work.

The flow of the session:

- Give short intro in how humor can be a help in improving a presentation
- Present „Tips&tricks”
- Give a task to participants to write a short story about the work that they do, which they should present afterwards to the rest of the group. The story should be around 3 minutes long and should try to include Tips&tricks presented. Time for preparing a story - ~30 minutes. (NB! Depending on the profile of participants, you can adapt the topic of the story)
- Depending on the size of the group and the time that you have, ask 4-5 (or more) people to share their stories.



- Lead a discussion afterwards. Potential questions to discuss:
 - Which tips and tricks did you recognize that presenters were using? How did they fit in the whole story?
 - How did you enjoy listening to the stories?
 - Do you think they would sound different without using „Tips&tricks“?
 - How was it to write your story and try to include the „Tips&tricks“?
 - How useful do you find including „Tips&tricks“ in a presentation? Do they bring humor to the presentation?
 - Do you consider that humor gives an added value when presenting an information?
 - How can we use these „Tips&tricks“ in our everyday work? Do you have any personal tricks that you use for bringing humor to your presentation?

„Tips&tricks“

- Start with a story from your experience. It will help you to create connection to the public, to raise curiosity and by bringing humor through your story you will show to your audience that you are ready to laugh about yourself.
- Talk about your own experiences, tell your own stories, rather than base your presentation on jokes found on internet. If you are going to use your stories, they are guaranteed to be original and the way how you present it is going to depend only on you, and even if you forget something, nobody will know.
- Think about “fails” and “first times”. As a saying goes “there’s nothing funny about a confident person who’s doing well” /Rita Rudner/. Each of us have experienced situations where we fail majestically or experience something for the first time – often these situations looked upon with a distance of time are quite funny. Maybe you didn’t think like that at the moment when it happened, but “comedy is tragedy plus time” /Mark Twain/. Even if you “fail” or “first time” will be unique, audience will be able to resonate with the emotions that you have experienced.
- Use the joke structure – “setup – punchline”. It doesn’t mean that you have to turn your presentation in a stand-up comedy routine, but keep the most important word/information of the sentence (in the jokes it’s “punchline”) for the end. Very simple example you can say “Youthpass



is very good tool for facilitating learning process”. Or you can “turn it around – “there is a tool, that can help you to structure and organize your learning process and it’s available to everybody. It is called Youthpass”. As you don’t start a joke with the punchline, you shouldn’t share all the key information in the beginning of the sentence/paragraph. Use “set-up” to build curiosity/tension and the “punchline” to make your point, to make sure that the information you really want public to remember sticks with them.

- Use “the rule of 3”, when constructing a way how you present information – start with 2 statements that are connected between themselves and the 3rd one put something unexpected. Why “rule of 3” is working? They say, that 3 is the smallest number that can make a pattern. And breaking patterns (adding surprise, incongruity, benign violation, etc.) is one of the ways how we can bring laughs in our audience. There is a quotation by Aristotle that says “One way for a speaker to get a laugh is to create an expectation in the audience and then violate it” and by Cicero that “the most common kind of joke is that in which we expect one thing and another is said; here our own disappointed expectation makes us laugh” So, if we wish to bring a laugh in the group we’re working with, we could try to use “the rule of 3”. The structure can include examples as “big, big, small”, “expected, expected, unexpected”, “normal, normal, weird”, “something strange, something strange, something normal”, etc. For example, “My biggest fears are from death, heights and standing next to an unknown person in an elevator”.
- Use “funny” words. There is no scientific proof, but some words are more funny than others. For example, words with letter “K” are more funny than words with “L”, or “M”.
NB! This applies to English language. If you are using these tips in another language, we invite you to experiment with this tip.
- Use metaphors, analogies, exaggerations to make your story more colorful, interesting and funny.

Important! Suggestion for facilitators of the session – make yourself familiar with the book or video presentation by David Nihil (link can be found below) in order to be able to explain the „Tips&tricks”.

Useful tips on using humor in a presentation can be also found in a Chris Anderson book „TED Talks: The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking”. To find out more about humor and what makes things funny we suggest you to read a book “The humor code: A global search to what makes things funny” by Peter McGraw and Joel Warner.

Needed materials

- List of the „Tips&tricks”
- Paper and pen

Documentation and materials

Website of David Nihil - <http://www.7comedyhabits.com/book/>

David Nihil “Do you talk funny?” - <https://youtu.be/oZmn7OTv6Go>

The tool was created by:

Original creator of the “Tips&tricks” is David Nihil. Adapted for the non-formal education context by a “Humor ME! – The smallest distance” team

Context the tool

The tool was created during the KA2 project „Humor ME! – the smallest distance”, November 2016 – December 2017 (IT, RO, HU, ESP)

- „Humor ME! – the seminar”, 24.-30.07.2017., Madarcos, Spain
- Local workshop „Humor in educational context”, Bucharest, Romania, October 2017.

Water fight

This activity is suitable for longer trainings that last for several days. It will work the best in the moment when participants are already familiar with each other. It can bring fun and energy to the group.

Aim(s)

- to energize the group
- to bring playfulness
- to have a common group moment, where participants share fun
- promoting fair-play principles, honesty and self-responsibility

Target group

- Youth workers
- Trainers
- Teachers
- Young people

Duration: ~ 1hr 30min

Description

This activity is a good one to start with after a longer break. It is an idea, to tell participants to come back dressed up in clothes which they are not afraid to get wet.

Depending on the time that you have you can choose to prepare the water balloons for the participants or let them fill the balloons themselves. Choose a territory big enough for people to run around.

Split participants in teams. For the number of 20 people it is ok to split them in 2 teams. If there are more participants you can also split them in more teams.

Each team should have 2 „flags” made out of paper (or any other material, that can be destroyed by water). They should be put in visible places. Area around flags in diameter of 1 meter should be „inaccessible” for the opposing team.

Each participant needs to have a „target” attached on an upper arm (or any other easily visible place). The target can be made from cutting a circle out of an A4 paper. It's a good idea to have a different color for each team. Each participant should have a water gun. Each team should have around 30-40 balloons filled with water.



The aim of each team is to destroy other teams flags. You can limit the time of the fight to 10-15 minutes, for example. Flags can be destroyed by using water from water guns or water balloons. Participants are not allowed to physically touch each other, to rip the „targets” off of each other's hand or to destroy flags in any other way but just using water.

Participants can „neutralize” opposing team members by shooting the water on the attached targets. If a person is hit, he needs to go next to one of his flags (or you can choose a special place in the area) and stay there for 30 seconds. In this time he is not allowed to shoot other people, protect the flag or be involved in any other way in the process. Participants are self-responsible for following this rule and not entering

You can stop the fight after a designated time or when flags of one team are destroyed.

NB! Make sure that you clean the place of the pieces of broken balloons.

Important!!! It's very likely that participants will get very excited and get into the „fighting” mood. As a facilitator your role is to put importance on following the self-responsible approach and not having physical contact with other participants in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts and „clashes”. As a good way to finish the activity is to make a group photo with everybody in their wet clothes and water guns.

If you feel that it is the case, you can facilitate a discussion after this activity and to discuss:

- How was the experience for participants? What did they enjoy? What they did not enjoy?
- Were the „fair-play” principles followed? Where the participants honest to themselves and others?
- What would participants like to keep for the future process of the group?

Needed materials

- Water filling points. If they are outdoors (like water pumps), that's perfect. If not, you'll need to use water faucets of toilets, bathrooms, etc.
- Water balloons (~100 balloons for group of 20-25 participants)
- Toy water gun for each participant
- A4 paper to make the „target” for each participant; string to attach it
- Paper or any other type of material for making the flags, which can be destroyed by water

Documentation and materials

humorme.eu – more about humor and the project during which this tool was developed

The tool was created by:

Tool was created by the “Humor ME! – the smallest distance” project member Valters Melderis

Context the tool

The tool was created during the KA2 project „Humor ME! – the smallest distance”, November 2016 – December 2017 (IT, RO, HU, ESP)

- „Humor ME! – the seminar”, 24.-30.07.2017., Madarcos, Spain



HA-SO-KO

Energizer to wake up and activate people. Moving, surprising, cultural context and fun.

Aim(s)

- Activate the group
- Have fun together

Target group

- Groups of people from 10 to 25 participants. Be aware about limitations in case somebody cannot sit on the floor, or is blind... This activity is not inclusive for them so... “find another one”

Description

Sit in circle on the floor crossing legs (like Lotus position in Yoga).

Duration: ~ 15-25 min

We introduce the game by saying a story. Like a storyteller we play with our intentions, silences and intensity of our voice and body expression. The story should be authentic from the trainer personal experiences. We are going to show our example but you have to create your own story:

- “this is an exercise to share energy inside a group of people, like us, that I learned when I was living in Vietnam. There, the feeling of community it’s very important, that’s why we are all sit now in a circle, at the same level. It’s important to breathe deeply “[facilitator actually do it: breathe deeply and by doing so invite the group to do the same and wait for them to follow. If this does not happen at once, take the opportunity to openly encourage the group to go for it!]”
- “Then I will show you the three movements and the three sounds that they do to share their energy together. They do this on special occasions, parties, festivities, any chance they have... and we’ll do it now” [the most serious the storytelling the better the contrast with the absurdity/simplicity of the movements; and the funniest the moment].



- “So now... I will make the first the movement and the first sound and you will have to repeat right after me the first movement and the first sound [In this story making the storytelling sounding like a “meditation/yoga class” has also an interesting fun impact]”

First movement is: put your right hand facing the sky (like if you are begging), and while moving it towards your belly (like karate style) you have to shout: “HAAAAA!” with a very loud and dry sound (again karate stile) [In contrast with your “meditation voice” this sound will surprise the people in the room... and that is the effect that you are aiming for; when people starts laughing you ask them to repeat after you, and you say it in the most serious way possible. Pretend that you are little bit offended, or disappointed if they start laughing instead of making the movement. Also move your hands and cover your face like if is so unexpected to you that they don’t know what to do.

- “I will now make the second movement and the second sound and you will have to repeat right after me the second movement and the second sound” [realize that here we use the same sentence used to deliver the first movement, and this too have a fun impact, keep the importance of the ritual]

Second movement is: Second movement is: put your right hand facing the sky (like if you are begging), and while moving it towards the top of your head like you are covering yourself from the rain (facing down) you say “SOOOOOOO” (again in karate style!).

- “Finally... I will make the third movement the third sound and you will have to repeat. This movement is a little bit more complicated, because you will have to look at the eyes of one person at the same time”.

Third movement is: put both hands together, arms straight and point with the two hands somebody will looking at the eyes of this person and shouting “KOOOOO!!”.

- “After the three movements and the three sounds we will start to move the energy in the room, and the energy will go according to the direction of our hands: right of left in the first two movements and to the person we are pointing in the first movement. Only one person is making the movement at the time. Let’s start to see how is it working.” [It may happen that the process is not clear and you have to explain it again to the group, while getting a little bit annoyed (funny annoyed). Is basic that this is happening in a moment of the training that is not the first day, is important that the group already know that you are joking, that you are not really upset, that is part of the game. Is better to do this activity after the second day of activity]
- “Is not acceptable anymore a mistake, we have to respect the Vietnamese culture, we have to respect the traditions. From now on, whoever make a mistake, has to leave the circle, and the punishment for this person, is that he has to stand up, cannot sit on a chair. But this person can disturb the other with two limits: not entering in the circle and not touching anybody of the circle”.

From this moment you start playing the game, and little by little they start to make mistakes and the people that is eliminated is leaving the circle. If the group that is eliminated is active, is good to keep trying to do it well. If the group of eliminated people is not active disturbing, sometimes is better to fail on purpose, and leave the circle and start disturbing from outside: shouting, saying “no no no”, “ha, ha, ha”, “ko, ko, ko”, singing happy birthday... (here you invent your own stuff).

The Game finish when there’s only 3 people in the circle. (earlier if you need it to finish faster!)

Feel free to make as many adaptations as you want, to make it yours. When you are trying to use humor in non-formal education has to be “yours” copying is not working that well.

In fact, the only true fact in about this “Vietnamese story” is that the facilitator was actually living in Vietnam, that’s all! The rest is part of the legend! Try to find a story that is real for you, that you can “defend” in front of the group, that they can actually believe is yours.



Context of the tool

I'm Álvaro Díaz Cuevas. First time I saw this energizer it was with Anita Silva, I'm not sure of the origin of it. While developing www.humorme.eu I realize that I'm making "mine" what I learnt from Anita. She did it differently, and after a while becomes something authentic in me. Thanks Anita!

It has been used in many training courses, seminars, by different facilitators of the youth field.

