

A large, expressive black brushstroke graphic dominates the center of the slide. The background is split horizontally into a light purple top half and a light pink bottom half. The brushstroke is irregular and textured, with many fine, radiating lines extending from its right side.

THAT'S NOT FUNNY!

HOW TO USE HUMOR
APPROPRIATELY IN THE
WORKPLACE

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Ground Rules

- It is impossible to discuss appropriate humor without discussing inappropriate humor. In these discussions we ask participants to be thoughtful about what they share, but understand that there will be moments when people discuss inappropriate material that they have found humorous. Be kind to others and thoughtful about what you share and endeavor to hear the person's learning through these topics. It is 100% okay to opt out of a discussion if you need to take care of yourself.



Overview

How Humor Works

Why we need humor in the workplace

Targets

Risk

Assessing the factors at play

What to do when it works

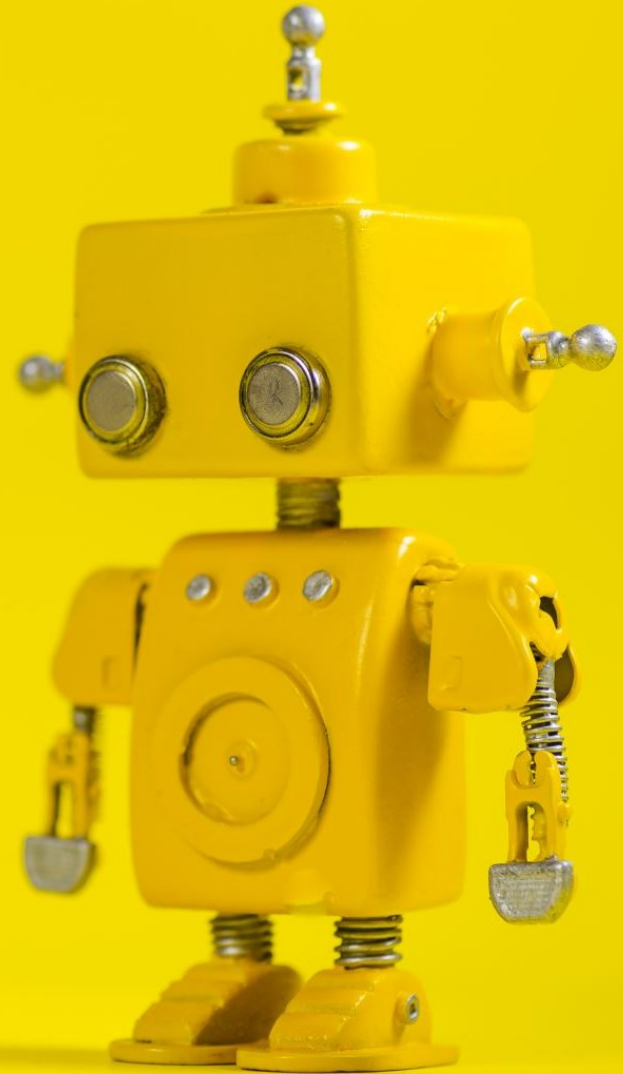
What to do when it doesn't

Who are you to tell me about this?

- Actor
- Director
- Writer
- Professional Stand-up
Comedian
- Student Affairs
Professional



How Humor Works



How Humor Works

- Physiologically – Brain connects two unrelated concepts in an unpredictable way, resulting in an instant of euphoria.
- Socially – People connect with each other over shared experience of trauma, embarrassment, self-acknowledgement, relief.
- Spiritual – Humor allows you to cause a physical response in another human being without physically touching them.

Violation Theory

- The presence of some sort of norm violation, be it a moral norm violation (robbing a retirement home), social norm violation (breaking up with a long-term boyfriend via text message) or physical norm violation (purposefully sneezing directly on a child).
- A “benign” or “safe” context in which the violation takes place (this can take many forms).
- The interpretation of the first two points simultaneously. In other words, one must view, read or otherwise interpret a violation as relatively harmless.

Breakout Group

WHAT MAKES YOU LAUGH? WHAT MADE YOU
LAUGH THAT YOU WERE SURPRISED THAT YOU
WERE AMUSED BY?



*Why We Need
Humor in the
Workplace*



What it does for us

CONNECTS US TO EACH
OTHER

RELIEVES TENSE
SITUATIONS

MAKES POINTS IN AN
INTRIGUING AND
COMPELLING MANNER

SPEAKS TRUTH TO POWER



Universality of Humor

MUCH HUMOR IS BASED IN THE UNIVERSALITY OF EXPERIENCE. THIS VIDEO COULD EASILY BE ABOUT HOW MANY EMAILS I GET.



Breakout Group

DISCUSS A TIME SOMEONE SAID SOMETHING AT
WORK THAT MADE YOU REALLY LAUGH.



Targets



Who is the target of the humor

- Avoid humor at the expense of someone's (Including your own)
 - Race
 - Gender or Perceived Gender
 - Color
 - National Origin
 - Religion
 - Age
 - Disability
- Avoid humor that intends to
 - Shame another
 - Paint someone as a target of ridicule
 - Ridicule financial means
 - Questions deeply held beliefs
 - Make light of important issues

Breakout Group

DISCUSS A TIME SOMEONE MADE AN ATTEMPT
AT HUMOR THAT WAS INAPPROPRIATE OR
OFFENSIVE AND HOW THE TARGET RESPONDED.





Risks

What we risk with inappropriate humor

GENUINE OFFENSE

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

PRIORITIZING OUR OWN
NEEDS AND EMOTION
OVER OTHERS

CAUSING GENUINE HARM





Assessing the Factors at Play



The need to be on the edge

- The closer to the edge of violation, the richer the result. People laugh harder at things that violate norms, but there is a thin line between laughter and offense.

How to be sure you don't offend.

- There is no way to assure you won't offend someone with your attempt at humor.
- What is funny to one person, may not be funny for another and they get to decide for themselves.
- The only way to be sure you don't offend is don't attempt to be funny, but you still might offend people soooooo . . .

When it works!



When it fails.





Questions & Answers