

Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur

National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL)

**Course Title
Enhancing Soft Skills And Personality**

**Lecture - 27
Humour in the Work Place**

**by...
Prof. T. Ravichandran
Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences**

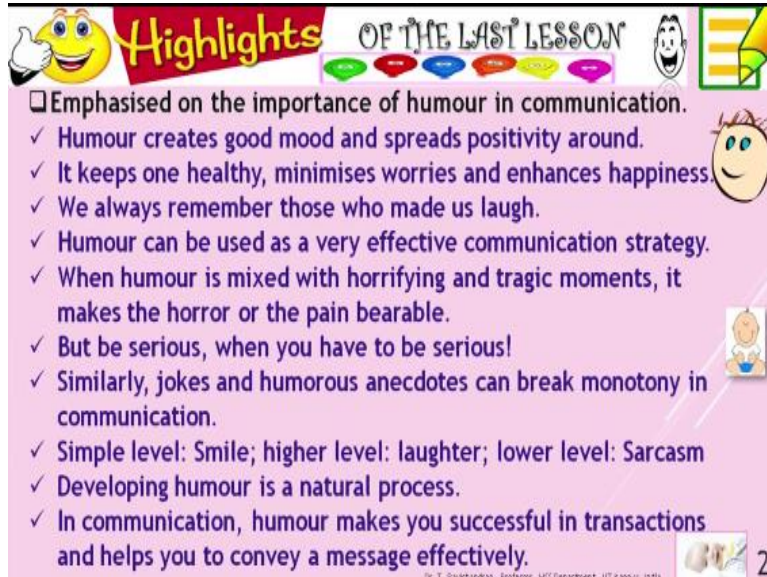
Hello all I welcome you back to this very interesting module on humor this is my course on enhancing soft skills and personality.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:24)



We are on lesson number 27 week six and unit 2 in the last lesson I introduced to you the most important and very beneficial component of human life that can be used for communication as well as professionally enhancement that is humor, so in the last one I discussed about humor in general that is in communication in general in this lesson let us look at humor in workplace so before I start let us take a quick look at what I did in the previous lesson.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:03)



Highlights OF THE LAST LESSON

- ❑ Emphasised on the importance of humour in communication.
- ✓ Humour creates good mood and spreads positivity around.
- ✓ It keeps one healthy, minimises worries and enhances happiness.
- ✓ We always remember those who made us laugh.
- ✓ Humour can be used as a very effective communication strategy.
- ✓ When humour is mixed with horrifying and tragic moments, it makes the horror or the pain bearable.
- ✓ But be serious, when you have to be serious!
- ✓ Similarly, jokes and humorous anecdotes can break monotony in communication.
- ✓ Simple level: Smile; higher level: laughter; lower level: Sarcasm
- ✓ Developing humour is a natural process.
- ✓ In communication, humour makes you successful in transactions and helps you to convey a message effectively.

In the previous lesson I emphasized on the importance of humor in communication so humor as you know creates very good mood and sprits positivity around so when you are able to evoke laughter around the people so you actually make them relaxed and then keep them in good mood also so humor keeps one healthy it minimizes worries and it enhances happiness so we always remember those who made us laugh.

Also we will not that easily forget those people who made us cry but we will always remember those who made us laugh and every time we see them again in our life we bring back those old memories and immediately we see like smiling or laughing at the person whenever we see at whatever circumstance it may be so that is the very positive thing about humor because it not only makes one lively but it also becomes contagious and spreads that happiness around.

In communication humor can be used as a very effective communication strategy I was giving example even some great playwrights like Shakespeare who were using humor both in very tragic situations and horrifying moments now they were deliberately doing that using drama itself as a kind of communication strategy in order to reduce the pain so those days tragedy used

to be so severe in terms of emotional impact so to make the pain bearable suddenly they will introduce something humorous okay and at the same time they also use this technique of juxtaposing so that you tend to see both emotions and they will be able to intensify by doing this contrasting technique but I also suggested that you should be serious when you have to be serious here although I said they try to use humor in communication as much as possible.

I hinted at the fact that you have to be serious when you should be serious what do I mean by that somebody sharing a very sad news a very bad news so that is not the time to crack jokes or something and then people are already very intensely faked emotion and then you cannot actually make them come out of it and it will look very awkward uncouth and then incongruous when you try to do that so if it is a real serious occasion so you should not attempt it.

But if you want to make somebody come out of a drama or a tragic situation and when the person is unduly giving time to this tragedy over a period of time so then you should try to use your reference of humor to make the person come out of it, in communication jokes and humorous anecdotes can actually break the mood even in class teaching even in lecture a very dry lecture can actually be made every lively by adding some interesting jokes humorous anecdotes in between.

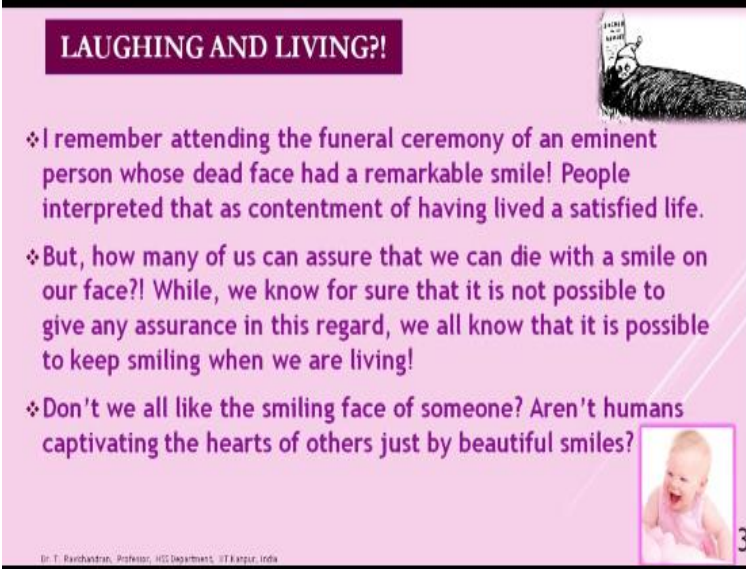
But at the same time I said that understand that humor can operate at three levels at the simple level it's just a smile even if you can evoke just a smile a very amused look at what you see so that is at a very simple or friendly level at a higher level if you can actually cause busy laughter make people roaring laughter so that is at a higher level but at a lower level humor can go as low as being sarcastic or poking fun at others or belittling people by making fun in terms of their height weight etc.

Or making fun of somebody's religion or color so these things can also come under humor but at the very low level which you should avoid if you want to become a very professional person and if you really are concerned about your soft skills you should avoid this kind of humor and if you ask me how to develop humor so I mentioned in the last lecture that it is a very natural process because we are all born with this innate sense of humor so it is always within us so it is only we

need to revoke that sense and in communication humor makes you successful in transactions and helps you to convey a message effectively so I was saying that whether it is even interview or any kind of transaction if you can make the person laugh so you will be able to win the situation and you will be able to gain control of the situation using humor in communication now in this unit as I said let us see how we can use humor in workplace.

And before we start going to the workplace I just want to say more about humor and then how we can make this laughter and living as part and parcel of our life so instead of creating humor as a kind of extra added element so why not we make it as part of our life now in this regard I remember attending the funeral ceremony of an eminent person.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:21)



LAUGHING AND LIVING?!

- ❖ I remember attending the funeral ceremony of an eminent person whose dead face had a remarkable smile! People interpreted that as contentment of having lived a satisfied life.
- ❖ But, how many of us can assure that we can die with a smile on our face?! While, we know for sure that it is not possible to give any assurance in this regard, we all know that it is possible to keep smiling when we are living!
- ❖ Don't we all like the smiling face of someone? Aren't humans captivating the hearts of others just by beautiful smiles?

Dr. T. Ravishankar, Professor, HSS Department, IIT Kanpur, India

3

Whose dead face had a remarkable smile so even when the body was kept for the mourners to come and pay homage what struck all of us was the smile that was on the face how could a person die smiling so was he aware of the death or was he taking it lightly so what was that that was making this person give that smile at the point of death actually the person just died of a very silent heart attack and like people got up in the morning and found that the person passed away.

But then the smile was something that everybody was talking about on a Dead face and people interpreted that as containment of having lived a satisfied life so people said that he was very happy so he was living a content life that is why the smile came on his face but I was thinking about that and I was wondering as how many of us can assure that we can die with a smile on our face can we say like even if I practice smiling every day the day I die will I have smile on my face.

So there is no guarantee that even if you want to deliberately you can do it and we know for sure that it is not possible to give any assurance in this regard but we all know that it is possible to keep smiling when we are living so we cannot guarantee that smile will be on our face after our death but we can guarantee that we can keep a smile on our face when we are living so that is the thought I want you to keep in your mind and as I begin this lecture I want you to think over this and then understand that laughing and living is possible okay also you cannot guarantee whether you will laugh at the time of your death or after your death that you will die laughing you are not sure.



And if you look at smile on people's face do not we all like the smiling face of someone so you will always remember someone some it could be even the face of a children or anybody whom you like but if you analyze closely you will find that the likeness is basically because of a very unique smile that you feel somewhat enchanted and attracted and orange humans captivating the hearts of others display beautiful smiles.

Sometimes just by giving smile so people are able to captivate the hearts of others so smile has this positive impact of capturing people and healing them connecting them binding them so the first lesson the first point that I am making is that let us laugh as we are living this life and then how do we do that.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:52)

LAUGHING AND LIVING?!

- ❖ So, every time you look at the mirror, just remember to add that smile! Remember, laughter can be therapeutic and contagious!
- ❖ Laughter originates from the Greek word *gelos*, which means, "laughter." *Gelotology* refers to the study of laughter and its effects on the body, from a psychological and physiological perspective.
- ❖ As Maya Angelou recommends: "Laugh as much as possible, always laugh. It's the sweetest thing one can do for oneself and one's fellow human beings."
- ❖ As Langston Hughes points out, "Like a welcome summer rain, humor may suddenly cleanse and cool the earth, the air and you."



4

Dr. T. Ravikiran, Professor, IIT Department, IIT Kharagpur, India

So every time when we look at the mirror so just to remember to add that smile you should remember that laughter can be therapeutic and contagious, so there is this laughter yoga where people do yoga and then laugh and then relax there is this laughter therapy where completely they make people smile and heal certain un-curable diseases using this laughter so it has even this medicinal value.

But apart from that you should understand that laughter generally tries to connect your mind with the body if you keep your mind cheerful automatically it is keeping the body healthy so in fact if you look at how the word laughter originated it originated from the Greek word GELOS that is GELOS which means laughter and you have this Gelotology, refers to the study of laughter and its effects on the body from a psychological and physiological perspective which simply means.

So Gelotology indicates the study that analyzes how laughter is able to connect both the mind and the body, so how somebody who is laughing is mentally as well as physically making him very cheerfully so that is for the study deals with as another famous poet Maya Angelou recommends love as much as possible always love it is the sweetest thing one can do for oneself and one's fellow human beings.

And as Langston Hughes points out like a welcome summer rain humour may suddenly cleanse and cool the earth the air and you so a room that is talked with let us say negativity and then lots of conflict suddenly somebody enters and then cracks very good jokes and then very bent positivity is generated through the jokes immediately people feel that the entire room is somewhat like the heat is cooled off and people feel more comfortable people gain trust with each other.

Now let us ask one simple question when I say that you should laugh and leave this life and then you should practice laughing I was curious and then I was trying to check this fact as how many times do we loss particularly in a day.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:58)



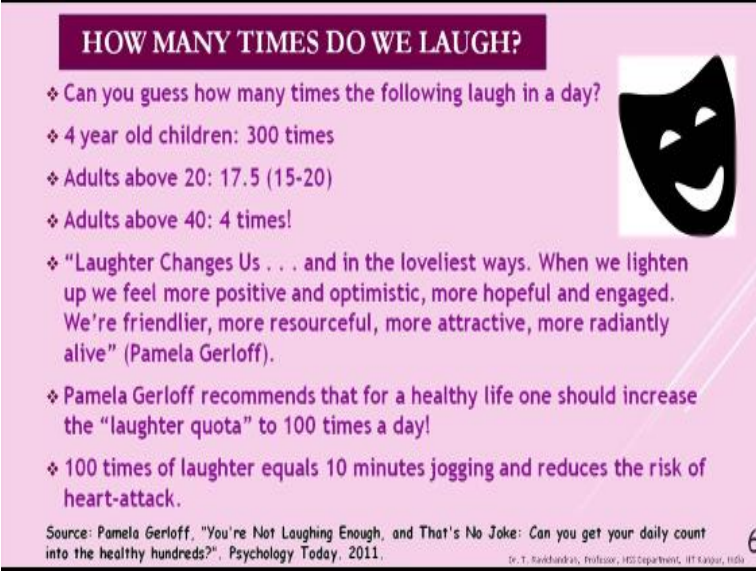
The slide has a light purple background. At the top left, there is a dark purple rectangular box containing the title "HOW MANY TIMES DO WE LAUGH?" in white, all-caps text. To the right of the title is a cartoon illustration of a man with black hair, wearing a black suit and white shoes, standing with his hands at his sides. Below the title and illustration, there is a list of three questions, each preceded by a purple diamond symbol:

- ❖ Can you guess how many times the following laugh in a day?
- ❖ 4 year old Children
- ❖ Adults above 20
- ❖ Adults above 40

So can you guess how many times the following people laugh in a day when it is a four year old children on an average and adult about twenty and adult above forty so how many times these people lost in a day just try to make a guess do they lost the same number of times or is there a difference and how much is the difference now when I try to find out answers to these questions so I found an article and it was discussing these ones which I had referred to at the end of it you

can go through that in detail later. But the answer is this the four-year-old children on an average loss for 300 times.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:46)



HOW MANY TIMES DO WE LAUGH?

- ❖ Can you guess how many times the following laugh in a day?
- ❖ 4 year old children: 300 times
- ❖ Adults above 20: 17.5 (15-20)
- ❖ Adults above 40: 4 times!
- ❖ "Laughter Changes Us . . . and in the loveliest ways. When we lighten up we feel more positive and optimistic, more hopeful and engaged. We're friendlier, more resourceful, more attractive, more radiantly alive" (Pamela Gerloff).
- ❖ Pamela Gerloff recommends that for a healthy life one should increase the "laughter quota" to 100 times a day!
- ❖ 100 times of laughter equals 10 minutes jogging and reduces the risk of heart-attack.

Source: Pamela Gerloff, "You're Not Laughing Enough, and That's No Joke: Can you get your daily count into the healthy hundreds?". Psychology Today, 2011.

Dr. T. Raghavakrishna, Professor, IIT Department, IIT Kanpur, India

6

The adults above 20 they laugh for about 15 to 20 times in a day so and in average it is like 17.5 times a day the adults above 40 they laugh only four times a day on an average see the difference from 300 times to four times and we all started with maybe even 500 times 400 times a day when we were very young infants and then as we grew up 300 times 200 times 100 times and then slowly it reduced to 20 times than 10 times then hardly four times all these psychologists and others try to tell us that it is important that we are to bring back this laughter in our life and increase the frequency the number of times we can laugh.

Because as pointed out by this author Pamela Gerloff quote an quote she says laughter changes and in the loveliest ways when we lighten up we feel more positive and optimistic more hopeful and engaged we are friendlier more resourceful more attractive more radiantly alive so that laughter that cheer radiates from you and shows that you are fully alive so she recommends for a healthy life one should increase the laughter Kota to 100 times a day.

Because another research tells us that 100 times of laughter equals 10 minutes jogging or any kind of exercise and reduces the risk of heart attack reduces your calorie so it is important that you try to increase and then you try to keep yourself healthy let that blood circulation circulate in a very vibrant manner and then show that you are radiantly alive so keep this fact in mind that you need to increase this Kota and it should go at least up to 100 times a day.



Now one of the reasons why our laughter Kota reduced is because of the seriousness that is being associated with the workplace now I am NOT using business or professional place because today workplace means so many things the place where we go for working it may be a corporate office, it maybe a business center it maybe a gram the place anywhere even sometimes people work at home okay so the place where you work so that has been associated with lot of seriousness and generally people think that humor is forbidden in this area you cannot smile at all.

Now as the work pressure keeps increasing in this globalized scenario we keep forgetting our ability to love and that is how this quota has been reduced from three hundred to four now some people view even their workplace as a kind of torture chamber.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:32)

HUMOUR IN WORKPLACE

- ❖ The place where one works is viewed as a serious area where humour is forbidden. Some view their workplace as a torture chamber. Mostly work is seen as generating more negativity.
- ❖ Nonetheless, this negative perception can be changed by introducing humour in the workplace. When we learn to laugh together, we will work happily together and generate a positive work environment.
- ❖ No special training is required to inculcate humour as it is inherent in human nature. In fact, humour is a defining characteristic feature that makes a human being essentially human!



Dr. T. Sankaralakshmi, Professor, PPT, Proactive, Creative, Skills

They are afraid of even going to work so whenever Monday starts so all headache all tension fever so all negativity comes and then the workplace itself is seen as a place where you go and then charged with negativity and it is a place where more negativity gets generated now this is actually a perception it is a myth and this negative perception can be changed by introducing humor in workplace then they learn to laugh together we will work happily together and generate a positive work environment.

So the key is to join the workforce and make people laugh together not all the time but occasionally to break stress to break monotony and create that how many in work environment now again if you ask do I need some special training so sometimes there are some internet sites which are also saying that they can give you training in humor and all that but in my opinion no special training is required to inculcate humor because it is inherent in human nature all of us know what is a good joke all of us know how to laugh.



And as I said as babies we have all laughed we have all smiled we are all amused at some situation or other okay there is no human being who can claim that he or she can never laugh in fact humor is a defining characteristic feature that makes us human being essentially human it is your ability to laugh it is your ability to smile but showing that you are not an animal you are a human being and that ability to radiate liveliness prove laughter is something that is special in human beings.

So if you are able to use that to generate the positivity and harmony in the workplace so then you will be able to change their negativity however when I say this some people are afraid of being humorous.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:54)

HUMOUR IN THE WORKPLACE

- ❖ People are afraid of being humorous thinking that other people might think that they are crazy or are not serious about work. These are all false perceptions and myths perpetuated by insecure people!
- ❖ Culturally, humans try to find occasions for laughing together because it fosters bonding within groups. Hence, we cannot neglect someone for being very serious in office.
- ❖ When we see a comic sense overlapping all our chaotic routine, we will be able to handle problems easily.



8
Dr. T. Venkatarao, Professor, HR Department, IIT Kanpur, India

Thinking that other people might think that they are crazy or are not serious about work so this guy comes and cracks jokes all the time so how will he be doing work now this is just a myth or just a perception because very intelligent people and peak achievers you will find them just working rigorously and then sparing some moments for joking and breaking that monotony and refreshing themselves so if high achievers peak performers believe in humor why not a normal person emulate that.

So when people say that oh! this guy may not be really serious about work you do not have to bother about that but try to inculcate this sense of humor in your workplace culturally also humans try to find occasions for laughing together because it fosters bonding within groups so if you look at the reasons for people finding some occasion whether it is a birthday party whether it is anniversary any happy occasion to get together they just want to come and then share happiness loss and make this merriment together.

So we cannot neglect someone or being so serious in office thinking that or this person is not interested in being happy or laughing it may not be true because it is there in the gregarious nature of human beings to socialize and use humor as a function of socializing and normally our



life is very chaotic but if you are able to see a comic sense overlapping all our chaotic routine we'll be able to handle problems easily because in all chaotic pattern if you are able to just find something funny so it will make you take a different perspective about the situation that is trying to overwhelm you in workplaces today in big multinational corporations and all that humor is used very effectively in problem-solving.

One of the methods that is used for generating new ideas or resolving conflicts is brainstorming so people sit together and then they are given off an hour.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:35)

HUMOUR IN PROBLEM-SOLVING

- ❖ In workplaces, often brainstorming is used to think out of the box and resolve problematic issues. Sessions which had lot of fun and laughter generated more creative ideas and solved problems quickly!
- ❖ A research indicated: "Those who watched a comedy were measurably better at the task using insight than those who watched a horror film, or worse yet, a lecture about quantum electronics. . . . What this means for the innovation manager and brainstorm facilitator is that humor, lightened mood, and mental spaciousness are important when it comes to encouraging creativity, ideation, and problem solving." (Moses Ma).



9

Dr. T. Ravibhaskar, Professor, IIC Department, IIT Kharagpur, India

Or one hour and then they are supposed to come out with random thoughts now often brainstorming is used to think out of the box and resolve problematic issues but the brainstorming session which had lot of fun and laughter generated more creative ideas and solved problems quickly so much research has happened in this area identifying whether use of humor has actually helped in solving problems quickly coming out with creative ideas.

And one such research which I have coated here indicate those who watched a comedy where measurably better at the task you using insight then those who watch the horror film, so in this

research people were made to watch horror films and comedy and then both were put in different brain storming sessions but the ones who watched comedy they were able to come out with original fresh insights again from the quote or was it a lecture about quantum electronics so a lecture about quantum electronics can be as uninspiring as a horror movie in terms of thinking creatively what this means for the innovation manager and brainstorm facilitator is that humor lighten mode and mental spaciousness are important when it comes to encouraging, creativity, ideation and problem-solving.

Now I try to convince you that it is important to introduce humor in workplace and then I also mentioned to you that even in brainstorming those people who used humor and fun came out with lot of forging ideas and there are enough research to indicate effect now as a concluding thought I just want to quote from a small poem by Ella wheeler Wilcox two kinds of people.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:46)

Two Kinds of People

There are only two kinds of people on earth today
Two kinds of people, no more I say.
Not the rich and the poor, for to know a man's wealth
You must first know the state of his conscience and health,
Not the happy and sad, for in life's passing years,
Each has his laughter and each has his tears.
No, the two kinds of people on earth I mean
Are the people who lift and the people who lean.
In which class are you? Are you lifting the load
Of some overtaxed lifter who's going down the road
Or are you a leaner who lets others share
Your portion of toil and labor and care?

- Ella Wheeler Wilcox

10

Dr. T. Rajkumar, Professor, HCS Department, IIT Kharagpur, India

And I just want you to decide which kind of people you want to be so first let us try to know what are these two kinds of people there are only two kinds of people on earth today two kinds of people no more I say not the rich and the poor for to know your minds failed so what the poetess is saying she is saying that when I say two kinds of people I do not mean the rich and the

poor people so I am NOT talking about wealth you must first know the state of his conscience and health not the happy and sad foreign life's passing years has his laughter and each has his tears so again she is saying that no I am not talking about the happy people under sad people because in life you will get your share equally happiness for some time and sorrow for some time if I am NOT going to talk about that, no the two kinds of people on earth I mean are the people who lift on the other people who lean.

Or the people who lift and the people who lean in which class are you, are you lifting the load of some overtaxed lifter who is going down the road or are you a leader who lets others share your portion of toil and labor and care so she says she is talking about only two kinds of people one the lifters the other who are the leaner's the lifters they lift the burden from others, the leanness they leave and suck the energy from others okay so what type of person are you now I would like to add here when she says lifters.

One of the effective way of lifting somebody's burden is using humor making them loss so if you belong to the lifter kind if you want to reduce human problems and if you want to be the lifter so use laughter and one more concluding thought from Michael Pritchard a very interesting quote he says you do not stop laughing because you grow old you grow rolled because you stop laughing so how nice it is you do not stop laughing because you grow old so do not think that you grow old.

Because you have stopped laughing but he says it Is the other way around you actually grow because you stopped laughing there are some interesting links from the internet two of which already are used here in this one and then generally if you want to know more about managing conflicts with humor so you can go to this hype guide dot o-r-g which is lot of materials so thank you for watching this video in the next one I discussed more on how we can use humor and what is its role in work environment thanks.

Acknowledgement

Ministry of Human Resource & Development

Prof. Satyaki Roy
Co-ordinator, NPTEL IIT Kanpur

NPTEL Team

Sanjay Pal

Ashish Singh

Badal Pradhan

Tapobrata Das

Ram Chandra

Dilip Tripathi

Manoj Shrivastava

Padam Shukla

Sanjay Mishra

Shubham Rawat

Shikha Gupta

K. K. Mishra

Aradhana Singh

Sweta

Ashutosh Gairola

Dilip Katiyar

Sharwan

Hari Ram

Bhadra Rao

Puneet Kumar Bajpai

Lalty Dutta

Ajay Kanaujia

Shivendra Kumar Tiwari

An IIT Kanpur Production

©copyright reserved