

Humor Training



Intervention Overview

Evans-Palmer(2010) discovered that educators who had developed a sense of humor had a stronger belief in their ability to succeed in teaching tasks and were more resilient in combating stress. It is recommended that schools involve humor training as part of professional development to help improve staff self-efficacy and resilience to adversity. You may choose to have your staff humor training led by a psychologist, acting coach, or stand-up comedian, or to use the 7 Humor Habits program outlined in Paul McGhee's (2010) book "Humor as Survival Training for a Stressed-Out World: The 7 Humor Habits Program." The training resources in McGhee's book are generally intended for individual use, but each chapter includes a section on leading and directing group training sessions based on the chapter's content.

The 7 Humor Habits program includes activities and tools to help you and your staff develop humor as a coping mechanism for stress. The 7 Humor Habits include: "surround yourself with humor; cultivate a playful attitude; laugh more often and more heartily; create your own verbal humor; look for humor in everyday life; take yourself lightly and laugh at yourself; find humor in the midst of stress" (McGhee, 2010, p.vii-x). Ruch and colleagues (2018) provide a list of activities to help support each of these seven habits. Such activities include spending more time in social laughter situations (comedy clubs and shows, sitcoms, etc.), laughing louder and more fully than you normally would (even if it feels forced at first), generating puns, and spending time intentionally doing things that you find fun.

Intervention Guide

Materials:	A professional to lead the humor training, such as a psychologist, acting coach or comedian. You may also consider using McGhee's (2010) 7 Humor Habits program found in the reference section.
Duration:	A single session lasting 3+ hours, or shorter weekly sessions.
Implementation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Determine when you will hold the humor training(s).2. Decide whether to invite a professional to lead the training, or to purchase an existing training program such as McGhee's (2010) 7 Humor Habits.3. Hold the training(s) and follow up with staff on their humor development.

Does it work?

One recent study assessed the impact of humor training on the stress felt by nurses (Bartzik et al., 2021). The training program had a sample size of 104 nurses (majority female) who were randomly assigned to the 3 hour humor training or a control group. Participants in the humor training group received training on communication skills and emotion recognition, while also receiving training in clown and theater techniques and exercises. Nurses reported significant increases in positive emotion immediately after the training, and significant increases in work enjoyment and experiences of flow while at work (Bartzik et al., 2021).

In a study of McGhee's 7 Humor Habits program, a group of 110 adults were randomly assigned to the humor training or a control group (Ruch et al., 2018). After 8 weeks of completing the training program, participants in the humor training group reported higher levels of positive emotions, such as cheerfulness, and life satisfaction. It was also found that a sense of humor is indeed malleable and can be learned and developed (Ruch et al., 2018).

References:

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