

Your Humour Personality

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Have you ever wondered what humour personality you have? Most of us, at some time or other crack a smile, if not a gut wrenching guffaw. Having a sense of humour does not mean you are known for rousing others into ripples of laughing convulsion. It merely, requires the ability to look at life from a different and fun perspective. You can be the initiator of that humourous perspective or the appreciative recipient – the humourist or the humouree.

Professional humourists range from comic strip and cartoon creators to stand up comics, to late night show hosts to writers and philosophers. They use language that includes exaggeration, irony, satire, over literalness, jokes, fun lists, and word plays like riddles, rhymes and puns. They may employ observational incongruities, self deprecation, insults of others, mimicking, story telling and slapstick. Their presentation style may be eccentric, angry, gross, rude, child-like or idiot-like. Content is endless, though politics and sex are two favourites.

Your favourite smile makers will give you an indication of your humour preferences. Who in the following increases your laugh-o-meter?

Rich Little, the impersonator; Don Rickles and Joan Rivers with in your face insults and put downs; Anne Robinson from “The Weakest Link” with her degrading comments; Rowan Atkinson (Mr. Bean) with his mime and exaggerated calamities; Donald Duck’s temper tantrums; Red Skelton’s observational incongruities; Phyllis Diller’s stereotypical house wife lines with husband Fang; Bette Midler’s unpredictably outrageousness; The Three Stooges’ slap stick routines; Abbott and Costello’s misunderstanding repartees (“Who’s on Third?”); Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy’s angry and shocking attacking; Jim Carrey’s facial and body visuals; Robin Williams’s fast word plays; May West’s proactively sexual attitude (“I used to be Snow White but I drifted.”); Jack Benny’s self deprecation (“I don’t deserve this award, but I have arthritis and I don’t deserve that either.”); Woody Allen’s exaggerated life pessimism mixed with self deprecation (“I failed to make the chess team because of my height.”); Will Rogers or Mark Twain’s philosophic statements about life.

The above mentioned performers’ primary intention is to provide entertainment. However, there are a growing number of professional humourists like Patch Adams, Loretta LaRoche, Joel Goodman of the Humor Project and physician Dr. Steve Allen who focus on healing humour and give hope to those who are suffering from terminal seriousness. A sense of humour can connect, heal, humanize, instruct, degrade, demand attention, give attention, exclude or include.

Are you outrageous, reserved, intuitive, logical or irrational in your humour? There is no right way to have a sense of humour. However, political correctness has entered the humourist world with those in the therapeutic camp who encourage a form of joyful

kindness. Then there is the camp who believe “if it gets a laugh, it has value” especially in the culture and rawness of stand up comic bars where any gutterance is expected and so is the audience “shut up” heckling.

One’s humour choices reflect personality and often unresolved issues. When some one makes a wise crack he is saying volumes about his beliefs. Because all humour is based on an element of surprise, the sweeter and kinder presentations do not have the same walloping impact. Be aware that gross and attacking humour has the potential consequence of deeply hurting others. Just ask a victim of a playground bully about being teased. You do have a choice of what kind of humour personality you develop and when to use it. I doubt Don Rickles calls Barbara, his wife of 37 years, “dummy” or “hockey puck” as he does his audience. Either he doesn’t or she is regrettably a door mat or hinge.

In the end we long for humour to win. Serious personalities are not as welcome at work and home as the witty or fun loving person. It was Mark Twain that observed “Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand.” Don’t stand too long without declaring “I have a sense of humour!”

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