HUMOR
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LIVING BUOYANTLY

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I the humidity so high that nothing dried. Each\n\n\\n\nAmid swarms of flies curiously we had to amass firewood for the barbecue pit near our cabin so as to cook dinner quickly before sunset. And then the peacocks came running, attracted by the aromas. On other occasions, the sight of the peacocks would surely have been a delight, their colorful plumage providing aesthetic pleasure. To our dismay, however, we found that the birds defecate freely and plentifully as they wander about, and their bounty is less birdlike and more akin to dog poop. The rickety tables we had set up in front of our cabin to enjoy the tropical outdoors and spare our air conditioners from overwork were soon surrounded by mounds of odiferous manure. As those regal, nonchalant birds continued their evening strolls around us, we furiously tried to sweep away their mess while yelling and throwing tropical tree debris at them to hold them at bay. I vividly recall the sweat, the stench, the unbearable anticipation of long nights of tossing and turning in our cramped quarters with sweat-soaked sheets, and the despair of hot showers taken late at night in the wistful hope of a slight cooling before bedtime.

It was while walking back from the showers one night that my son, looking at the recreation vehicles and tents where steam and smoke rose thickly from the barbecues, said, “Well, here we go back to the Taj Mahal of Outback Heaven.” Just like Derek Maitland’s father’s response to his son’s agony, this zany comment that encompassed the agony of all the campers at the park and expressed commiseration with my palpable misery, bred a wonderful feeling of closeness with my son, to whom I’ll always be grateful. In that one remark, humor coupled with social support rescued us from the despair that so often accompanies the experience of absurdity in our lives. I like to think that this little joke not only made that moment more bearable but also enhanced the pleasure of our time together, leaving us feeling healthier and happier than we otherwise would have felt.

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APPENDIX A

THE COPING HUMOR SCALE (CHS)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the appropriate number.

1. I often lose my sense of humor when I am having problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(strongly)</th>
<th>(mildly)</th>
<th>(agree)</th>
<th>(strongly)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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2. I have often found that my problems have been greatly reduced when I try to find something funny in them.

| 2         | 3       | 4         |

3. I usually look for something comical to say when I am in tense situations.

| 3         | 4         |

4. I must admit my life would probably be a lot easier if I had more of a sense of humor.

| 2         | 3       | 4         |

5. I have often felt that if I am in a situation where I have to either cry or laugh, it’s better to laugh.

| 3         | 4         |

6. I can usually find something to laugh or joke about even in trying situations.

| 2         | 3       | 4         |

7. It has been my experience that humor is often a very effective way of coping with problems.

| 3         | 4         |
APPENDIX A

GUIDE FOR SCORING OF THE CHS

1. All questions are scored positively with the exceptions of questions 1 and 4, which are scored in reversed direction:
   \[a = 1, b = 2, c = 3, d = 4; \]
   \[a = 4, b = 3, c = 2, d = 1 \text{ (for questions 1 and 4)}\]

2. Omitted response is coded as 2.

3. Add scores for 7 items to get total CHS score.

APPENDIX B

THE SITUATIONAL HUMOR RESPONSE QUESTIONNAIRE (SHRQ)

Humor and laughter mean different things to different people. Each of us has our own conceptions of what situations are funny, our own notions of the appropriateness of humor in various situations, and our own sense of the importance of humor in our lives. In this questionnaire you will find descriptions of a number of situations in which you may have found yourself from time to time. For each question, please take a moment to recall a time when you were actually in such a situation. If you cannot remember such an experience, try to imagine yourself in such a situation, filling in the details in ways that reflect your own experience. Then indicate the phrase that best describes the way you have responded or would respond in such a situation.

1. If you were shopping by yourself in a distant city and you unexpectedly saw an acquaintance from school (or work), how have you responded or how would you respond?
   a. I would probably not have bothered to speak to that person.
   b. I would have talked to the person but wouldn't have shown much humor.
   c. I would have found something to smile about in talking with him/her.
   d. I would have found something to laugh about with the person.
   e. I would have laughed heartily with the person.

2. If you were awakened from a deep sleep in the middle of the night by the ringing of the telephone, and it was an old friend who was just passing through town and decided to call and say hello...
   a. I wouldn't have been particularly amused.
   b. I would have felt somewhat amused but would not have laughed.
   c. I would have been able to laugh at something funny my friend said.
   d. I would have been able to laugh and say something funny to my friend.
   e. I would have laughed heartily with my friend.

3. If you had accidentally hurt yourself and had to spend a few days in bed. During that time in bed, how would you have responded?
   a. I would not have found anything particularly amusing.
   b. I would have smiled occasionally.
   c. I would have smiled a lot and laughed from time to time.
   d. I would have found quite a lot to laugh about.
   e. I would have laughed heartily much of the time.
4. When you have been engaged in some lengthy physical activity (e.g., swimming, hiking, skiing) and you and your friends found yourselves to be completely exhausted . . .
   a. I wouldn't have found it particularly amusing.
   b. I would have been amused, but wouldn't have shown it outwardly.
   c. I would have smiled a lot and laughed from time to time.
   d. I would have laughed.
   e. I would have laughed heartily.

5. If you arrived at a party and found that someone else was wearing a piece of clothing identical to yours . . .
   a. I wouldn't have found it particularly amusing.
   b. I would have been amused, but wouldn't have shown it outwardly.
   c. I would have smiled.
   d. I would have laughed.
   e. I would have laughed heartily.

6. If a friend gave you a puzzle to solve and you found, much to your friend's surprise, that you were able to solve it very quickly.
   a. I wouldn't have found it particularly amusing.
   b. I would have been amused, but wouldn't have shown it outwardly.
   c. I would have smiled.
   d. I would have laughed.
   e. I would have laughed heartily.

7. On days when you've had absolutely no responsibilities or engagements, and you've decided to do something you really enjoy with some friends to what extent would you have welcomed humor during the day?
   a. The activity we were engaged in would not have involved much smiling or laughter.
   b. I would have been smiling from time to time, but wouldn't have had much occasion to laugh aloud.
   c. I would have smiled frequently and laughed from time to time.
   d. I would have laughed aloud quite frequently.
   e. I would have laughed heartily much of the time.

8. You were travelling in a car in the winter and suddenly the car spun around on an icy patch and came to rest facing the wrong way on the opposite side of the highway. You were relieved to find that no one was hurt and no damage had been done to the car . . .
   a. I wouldn't have found it particularly amusing.
   b. I would have been amused, but wouldn't have shown it outwardly.
   c. I would have smiled.
   d. I would have laughed.
   e. I would have laughed heartily.

9. If you were watching a movie or T.V. program with some friends and you found one scene particularly funny, but no one else appeared to find it humorous, how would you have reacted most commonly?
   a. I would have concluded that I must have misunderstood something or that it wasn't really funny.
   b. I would have "smiled to myself," but wouldn't have shown my amusement outwardly.
   c. I would have smiled visibly.
   d. I would have laughed aloud.
   e. I would have laughed heartily.

10. If you were having a romantic evening alone with someone you really liked (girlfriend, boyfriend, spouse, etc.) . . .
    a. I probably would have tended to be quite serious in my conversation.
    b. I'd have smiled occasionally, but probably wouldn't have laughed aloud much.
    c. I'd have smiled frequently and laughed aloud from time to time.
    d. I'd have laughed aloud quite frequently.
    e. I'd have laughed heartily much of the time.

11. If you got an unexpectedly low mark on an exam and later that afternoon you were telling a friend about it . . .
    a. I would not have been amused.
    b. I would have been amused but wouldn't have shown it outwardly.
    c. I would have been able to smile.
    d. I would have been able to laugh.
    e. I would have laughed heartily.

12. You thought you recognized a friend in a crowded room. You attracted the person's attention and hurried over to him/her, but when you got there you discovered you had made a mistake and the person was a total stranger . . .
    a. I would not have been particularly amused.
    b. I would have been amused, but wouldn't have shown it outwardly.
    c. I would have smiled.
    d. I would have laughed.
    e. I would have laughed heartily.

13. If you were eating in a restaurant with some friends and the waiter accidentally spilled a drink on you . . .
    a. I would not have been particularly amused.
    b. I would have been amused, but wouldn't have shown it outwardly.
    c. I would have smiled.
    d. I would have laughed.
    e. I would have laughed heartily.

14. If you were crossing a street at a crosswalk and an impatient car driver, who had to stop for you, honked the horn . . .
    a. I would not have been particularly amused.
    b. I would have been amused, but wouldn't have shown it outwardly.
    c. I would have smiled.
    d. I would have laughed.
    e. I would have laughed heartily.

15. If there had been a computer error and you had spent all morning standing in line at various offices to get the problem sorted out . . .
    a. I wouldn't have found it particularly amusing.
    b. I would have been able to experience some amusement, but wouldn't have shown it outwardly.
    c. I would have smiled a lot.
    d. I would have laughed a lot.
    e. I would have laughed heartily.

16. If the teacher announced that she or he would hand back the exams in order of grade, beginning with the highest mark in the class, and your name was one of the first to be called . . .
    a. I would not have been particularly amused.
    b. I would have been amused, but wouldn't have shown it outwardly.
    c. I would have smiled.
    d. I would have laughed.
    e. I would have laughed heartily.

17. In the past, if your girlfriend (or boyfriend) decided to break up with you because she or he had found someone else, and a few days later you were telling a good friend about it . . .
    a. I wouldn't have found any humor in the situation.
    b. I would have been able to experience some amusement, but wouldn't have shown it.
    c. I would have been able to smile.
    d. I would have been able to laugh.
    e. I would have laughed quite a lot.
18. If you were eating in a restaurant with some friends and the waiter accidently spilled some soup on one of your friends...
   a. I would not have been particularly amused.
   b. I would have been amused, but wouldn't have shown it outwardly.
   c. I would have smiled.
   d. I would have laughed.
   e. I would have laughed heartily.

19. In choosing your friends, how desirable to you feel it is for them to be easily amused and able to laugh in a wide variety of situations?
   a. The most important characteristic I look for in a friend
   b. Very desirable, but not the most important characteristic
   c. Quite desirable
   d. Neither desirable nor undesirable
   e. Not very desirable

20. How would you rate yourself in terms of your likelihood of being amused and of laughing in a variety of situations?
   a. My most outstanding characteristic
   b. Above average
   c. About average
   d. Less than average
   e. Very little

21. How much do you vary from one situation to another in the extent to which you laugh or otherwise respond with humor (i.e., how much does it depend on who you are with, where you are, how you feel, etc.)?
   a. Not at all
   b. Not very much
   c. To some extent
   d. Quite a lot
   e. Very much so

GUIDE FOR SCORING OF THE SITUATIONAL HUMOR RESPONSE QUESTIONNAIRE (SHRQ)

1. For questions 1 to 18, give numeric scores as follows:
   a = 1, b = 2, c = 3, d = 4, e = 5.
2. Questions 19 to 21 are scored in reverse:
   a = 5, b = 4, c = 3, d = 2, e = 1
3. Omitted response is coded as 3.
4. Add scores for 21 items to get total SHRQ score.

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APPENDIX C

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RESEARCH
WITH THE CHS AND SHRQ


