

Lesson 6

Sense of Humour

Introduction

Ever caught sight of your reflection in glass and been shocked to see how bedraggled you looked? Or the mirror in retail stores that you just happen to glance into when passing, only to be surprised by the dark patches under your eyes, the lines that seem to have appeared on your face that day, and the strained lips...? We've all been there...

How many times have you giggled at your reflection when it's been a less than flattering image? Were you alone or with someone?

Having a sense of humour and being able to laugh at yourself can help make you look and feel younger, and it's more attractive to others, so if you're trying to make more friends, or attract a partner, this is a good tactic.

Think about people you know... Are you more inclined to be with, or want to be with those who are jolly and realistic, or miserable and wannabees?

The good news is, that humour can be learned, but it needs to be on your radar in the first place. There's a reason for the saying, 'Laughter is the best medicine.'

The science

Extraverts, people who have high self-esteem, and optimistic thinkers all tend to use humour to help keep happy.

Studies on humour and happiness have found that people who use humour to strengthen interpersonal relationships, by entertaining others, enhance and maintain their positive psychological well-being. Their outlook on life is from a position of humour, and this is how they cope with difficult situations.

Humour and laughter trigger the release of certain neurotransmitters. Dopamine gives you the feel good factor and is important for learning and memory, and Serotonin helps control your mood in addition to your sleep, appetite and digestion.

So if you want to learn or experience something new and remember it well, make sure it involves an element of fun and humour, as this will help.

Why this helps

Individuals with a greater sense of humour can more effectively manage stress, relate to others well, and enjoy better mental and physical health. It can also reduce interpersonal tension.

Having a shared sense of humour with others can relax people in company and is great for connecting on a different level, as long as it's not at another's or your own personal expense.

Laughing can relax both muscle and mental tension.

Exercise

Take five minutes to remember a funny moment that gave you belly laughs, the kind that leaves you with a stitch and tears streaming down your face.

What happened to your mood? How happy do you feel? The fact is, that you can bring about a smile or a full on belly-laugh by simply thinking about a past funny moment.

Don't worry if you weren't able to remember the last time you laughed out loud, putting a smile on your face, by purposefully turning up the corners of your mouth can even be enough to trick your mind into thinking you're experiencing something fun or funny.

Forcing a laugh can feel stilted at first, but before long, it'll turn into spontaneous laughter.

Bonus Tips

Pay attention to what you find amusing and who shares your sense of humour. Is it seeing someone trip over? Catching how dire you look in the mirror on first waking up? Knock-knock jokes? Animal antics?

Whatever it is, gather some materials, photos, comic strips, videos and make them easily accessible to you. Write down a list of your favourite comedies and aim to watch one a week.

Make it a going concern to meet up with friends and have a 'Laughing slot,' perhaps using this time to share rib-tickling stories with each other.

What have you learnt?

Having a sense of humour can help you relate better to others, cope with tricky situations, and keep happy. Laughing does you good and is a great stress buster.

We're not suggesting that you stop taking life seriously, start teasing others, or engage in self-deprecation for the entertainment of others and to get a laugh, but to give yourself permission to look at the funnier side of life.

What next?

Over the last six lessons, we've covered a lot of ground on how to make yourself happier. In our last lesson, we'll look back at the key strategies and remind you of how to cultivate happiness in your life going forward.