



Facilitator's Guide

Rationale

Did you know laughter serves as a powerful tool for building and maintaining a healthy, happy marriage? It cultivates a positive atmosphere, strengthens emotional bonds, and helps couples navigate the challenges of married life with resilience and grace.

Program goal

To provide participants with the benefits of laughter in marriage, explore why laughter may not be present, and ways to increase the laughter in your marriage.

Program objectives

- Discuss the study of laughter and interesting facts associated with it
- Identify short- and long-term effects of laughter
- Explore what keeps you from laughing
- Share ways to increase laughter in your relationship

**“A day
without
laughter is
a day that
is wasted.”**

— Charlie Chaplin

Facilities required

- Meeting room with tables and chairs for participants
- Projector for PowerPoint presentation

Preparation

- Review PowerPoint and the speaker notes.
- Read and print copies of accompanying publication for participants.
- The program content should take 30 minutes to cover; however, schedule the program for 45 minutes to have flexibility with the schedule and time for additional questions at the end of the presentation.

Introduction

As the facilitator:

- Introduce yourself and the program topic.
- Share with the class housekeeping materials.
- State the objectives to the class.

Objective 1: Discuss the study of laughter and interesting facts associated with it

As the facilitator:

Ask the question: How many of you enjoy laughing? Well, then you will be pleased to know that it is actually good for you and your relationship. Today, we are going to explore the benefits of laughter, what prohibits us from laughing, and how to create laughter in our marriage.

Learning Activity 1: Pop Quiz

So, let's start with a pop quiz!

Reading the publication before the quiz can be helpful as some of the information is in the reading. Review the slide and be sure to refer to the slide notes to ensure you don't miss anything. Each answer is revealed with the advancement of the slide deck. More information is provided on each question in the slide notes.

Pop Quiz Answers with Explanation

- **False but True** – This is a trick question. A bit of a play on words — Gelotology (not Jell-Otology) is the study of laughter and its effects on the body from both a physiological and psychological perspective.
- **False** – Laughter is a social behavior. A researcher, Robert Provine, found that you are 30 times more likely to laugh with someone than when alone.
- **False** – Children learn to laugh through play – so we tend to use it as a sign of play.
- **True** – Children learn from the laughter of their parents the seriousness or threat of a situation or conversation.
- **True** – Laughter universally shows agreement and understanding.
- **True** – A 1974 study revealed that subjects were more likely to laugh and find jokes funny when the jokes were followed by the recorded sound of laughter. Laughter is contagious!
- **True** – The average adult laughs 17 times a day.
- **False** – Kids laugh way more than adults in a day. It is part of their development, they have more social time, less filters, and less worry and stress.

Objective 2: Identify short- and long-term effects of laughter

As the facilitator:

Advance the slide deck to reveal the short-term benefits of laughter. Be sure to share the slide notes for each bullet point on the slide as it provides more detail and clarity.

Short-term

Laughter relaxes the whole body. A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress, leaving your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after.

Okay, so it's no replacement for going to the gym, but one study found that laughing for 10 to 15 minutes a day can burn approximately 40 calories—which could be enough to lose 3 or 4 pounds over the course of a year.

Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.

Advance the slide deck to reveal the long-term benefits of laughter. Again, be sure to share the slide notes for each bullet point on the slide as it provides more detail and clarity.

Long-term

Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, which can help protect you against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease.

Laughter may even help you to live longer. A study in Norway found that people with a strong sense of humor outlived those who don't laugh as much. The difference was particularly notable for those battling cancer.

Learning Activity 2: Remember When?

Distribute items for activity. Each participant receives one sheet of paper and a writing utensil. Encourage each person to write their own responses to the questions on the slide. Allow 5 minutes to complete. Ask one or two participants to share what makes them laugh with their spouse and what gets in the way.

Here are the questions:

- Share a time you remember laughing together with your spouse.
- What were you doing?
- What was the source of laughter (i.e., something said, exciting event, etc.)
- What keeps you from laughing more in your relationship?

Objective 3: Explore what keeps you from laughing

As the facilitator, share:

Now let's look at some reasons laughter may not be present in our relationships.

Advance the slide to “What Keeps You from Laughing.” Go slowly through the five most common issues that keep us from laughing. Be sure to share the slide notes for each bullet point on the slide as it provides more detail and clarity.

- **Distrust** – Enjoyment is a luxury. It happens when we feel safe. For many people, the absence of fun in a relationship is a symptom of distrust. When we fail to build and maintain trust with our spouse, we lose the luxury of ever letting our guard down. Guarded people struggle to be fun-loving people. Humor, laughter, and playfulness all require a base level of trust. When distrust is present, fun is often hard to find.
- **Disrespect** – Just as trust is a prerequisite for enjoyment, respect is also a necessity. Trust allows us to lower our guard; respect empowers us to connect with the other person. Playfulness is born of equality. When we feel disrespect by our spouse, it is difficult to feel like their equal. When we are not on an equal playing field with others, we may struggle to enjoy time with them. The lack of respect prevents us from having fun.
- **Stress** – The higher our stress level, the less likely we are to see the good. When we feel pressed, our vision narrows and all we focus on is the source of the pressure. While it's fair to expect seasons where we are pressed by various issues, we must be diligent to avoid unnecessary stressors and make room for laughter. After all, didn't we just learn that a simple laugh soothes our tension and relieves pain?
- **Time** – Fun demands time. When we choose (although it rarely feels like our choice) to spend very little time together, the time we do have gets taken up by the demands of life—raising children, making money, discussing the details of who is going to do what and by when. Many couples never have enough time together to actually enjoy their interaction. Playfulness is often born in the down times. Carving out time for one another is necessary to keep the fun alive.
- **Habits** – Routines can be either good or bad. When couples get in the habit of not having fun, they will likely continue that habit until something changes. In the same way, healthy couples make enjoyment habitual. They develop the skills to continually find ways to have fun. When we prioritize positive interactions with our spouse, this focus can radically transform our relationships. Research indicates humor as one of the top five characteristics of attractive people.

It is also good to ask the audience if any of these issues have been present in their relationships.

Objective 4: Share ways to increase laughter in your relationship

As the facilitator, share:

The good news is if you are not laughing as much as you want in your relationship, all is not lost. Here are some practical ways to increase laughter in your marriage.

Be sure to share the slide notes for each bullet point on the slide as it provides more detail and clarity.

- **Be Intentional.** Without intention, time can erode our joy. We don't naturally drift toward positive mindsets or behaviors. When intention isn't present, we ease toward bad habits. Recognize that fun is an intended aspect of a healthy relationship and choose actions which will increase the likelihood of good times.
- **Be Adventurous.** Different people have different personalities. While some are more adventurous, others are more cautious. However, in order to increase the joy in our marriage, we would do well to step outside of our comfort zones. This doesn't mean we have to jump out of a plane, but it does mean we should try new things, attempt new ventures, and be willing to take risks. One of the best ways to have more fun in a relationship is to attempt something new together.
- **Be Playful.** Playfulness is a mindset. It's an appropriate attempt to lighten the mood even during difficult times. We shouldn't attempt playfulness as a denial of hardship, but we should attempt to laugh, bring humor, or create games to better carry a tough load. And when times aren't hard, playfulness recognizes those moments and attempts to have fun. Life is short and hard; we should seek the good and enjoy as much of it as we can.
- **Be Gracious.** Gratitude and fun aren't the same, but they are related. To the extent that we feel undeserving of the good we have been given, we will extend grace to others. Entitlement kills enjoyment, but grace makes it thrive. As we attempt to add fun to our relationships, we will succeed and fail. We must give grace to each other when things don't go as expected.

Learning Activity 3: Plan a Date with Laughter

Distribute items for activity. Each participant can either use the same piece of paper from the first learning activity or receive another sheet of paper and a writing utensil. Encourage each person to plan a date where laughter can join using the ways just discussed in the previous slide. Allow 5 minutes to complete. Ask one or two participants to share what date they planned.

Summary

As the facilitator, share:

Laughter is a powerful tool for building and maintaining a healthy, happy marriage. It's free and good for you. Make it a point to laugh at least once a day because just one minute of laughter can boost your mood and strengthen your relational bonds. If you cannot find something funny to laugh at, just look in the mirror.

References

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