Trevor Coleman

Coping With Humor.

Why is humor important? Humor helps us communicate with others. Humor can also be used to help us shine a light on major issues like racism, sexism, politics, etc. Mary Hirsch said it best when she said “it allows you to make a point without drawing blood.” Humor can also help us confront an uncomfortable situation. Humor’s ability to help us do all these things is great but it’s most important role in our lives is its ability to help us cope with situations. How does humor help us cope? Humor shifts our perspective allowing us to see situations in a more realistic and less threatening way. Finding a humorous perspective in a situation also can help to create a psychological distance, which can make it easier to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Also with humor comes laughter and laughter releases endorphins that promotes a feeling of wellbeing and helps us relieve distressing emotions like anxiety, anger, and sadness that can build up and cause stress. A popular phrase states that “laughter is the best medicine.” From major tragedies to common mistakes, we make on a day to day basis, humor helps us. Humor’s ability to help us cope by helping us gain perspective on situations and its ability to relieve some of our stress caused by distressing emotions makes humor a necessity to life.

Death is a very stressful and overwhelming part of life that is happening every day. People that work in the medical field often have to deal with the tragedy of death more than most of us. Having to deal with death on a day to day basis can cause a lot of stress that can build up and cause many problems. Humors ability to let us gain perspective helps these people by letting them psychologically distance themselves from the constant dying and suffering they are surrounded by. Also being able to sit down and have a laugh with a coworker or friend can help relieve the stress caused by working in such a hectic work place. Even if you’re not around death every day when it does happen to someone you know or love it can cause us to become overwhelmed with emotions like sadness and anger. We can get so overwhelmed that it becomes hard to see anything but the bad. A play writer named George Shaw once said, “Life does not cease to be funny when people die any more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh.” Shaw is trying to inform us that even after the death of someone the world is still humorous. By remembering this it helps us to use humor to help us gain perspective by looking at the situation from a different point of view. By doing this it can helps not focus so much on the death of the person and more about the life they lived.

Humor can also help us gain perspective and relieve the stress of other major issues we have to deal with like losing your job, being evicted, or getting into a car accident. Let’s use getting into a car accident as an example. After getting into a car accident even if no one gets injured you still have to do a lot of tedious task that can cause you to get overwhelmed. You have to call the insurance company and relive the car accident, then you have to call the other person’s insurance company and relive it again, after that you have to find a place to get your car fixed and take it to the shop to get it fixed, Finally after all that work the repair shop informs you that it is going to take a week to get it fixed. Which means your left without any means of transportation. When we are forced to deal with a situation like this we can quickly become overwhelmed with distressing emotions. If we let these emotions start to build up this can cause us to fixate on all the bad things. A comedian named Erma Bombeck once said “If you can laugh at it, you can live with it.” Being able to find humor in a situation like this will help us dissociate ourselves from the situation. This will help us understand how much worse the situation could have been. Once we are able to understand this we will be able to laugh at how overwhelmed we had become due to the situation. In turn this relieve some of the distressing emotions that have built up during the process.

Humor can also be used to help us deal with are short comings and flaws. We are all human which means we all have flaws. For example one of my major flaws is being forgetful. I have lost or misplaced numerous items from my keys to my phone even my laptop. This can lead to a lot of stressful situation. For instance when I misplace my phone. The second I realize that I do not know where my phone is I start to get angry. The longer I go without finding my phone the more these emotions of anger and frustration start to build up. Soon I become super overwhelmed and start to fixate on life without a phone and it starts to feel like the end of the world. This is where humor comes in handy. When I notice I’m getting overwhelmed I have to stop and try to find the humor in me misplacing my phone for the millionth time. By doing this it helps me to look at the situation from a different perspective and realize how minute of a situation this really is. This lets me laugh at how I let such a small situation make me so overwhelmed. By getting a good laugh out of this it helps relieve some of the stress caused by this situation. A lot of us make big deals out of small problems. Without using humor to realize how small of a problem it really is it can lead to us making a bad decision. Mohandas Gandhi who is known “If I had no sense of humor, I should long ago have committed suicide.” Throughout Gandhi’s life he endured a lot of stressful situations like being imprisoned for two years. Gandhi shares his experience with humor here stating that it if wasn’t for his ability to use humor to gain perspective and relieve the stress he may have taken his life. But instead because he was able to use humor to conquer these distressing emotions and stop them from piling up he was able to continue with life and lead the Indian people to freedom.

Humor’s ability to help us gain perspective and relieve stress of any situation is why humor is one of the most important coping mechanisms we use. Humor is something we use every day to get through the day and also to get us through the rough patches in are life. Bill Cosby, an award winning comedian, has said "through humor, you can soften some of the worst blows that life delivers. And once you find [laughter](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/laughter), no matter how painful your situation might be, you can survive it." So next time you start to feel overwhelmed or stressed out about a situation just try to find the humor in it. It will go a long way.