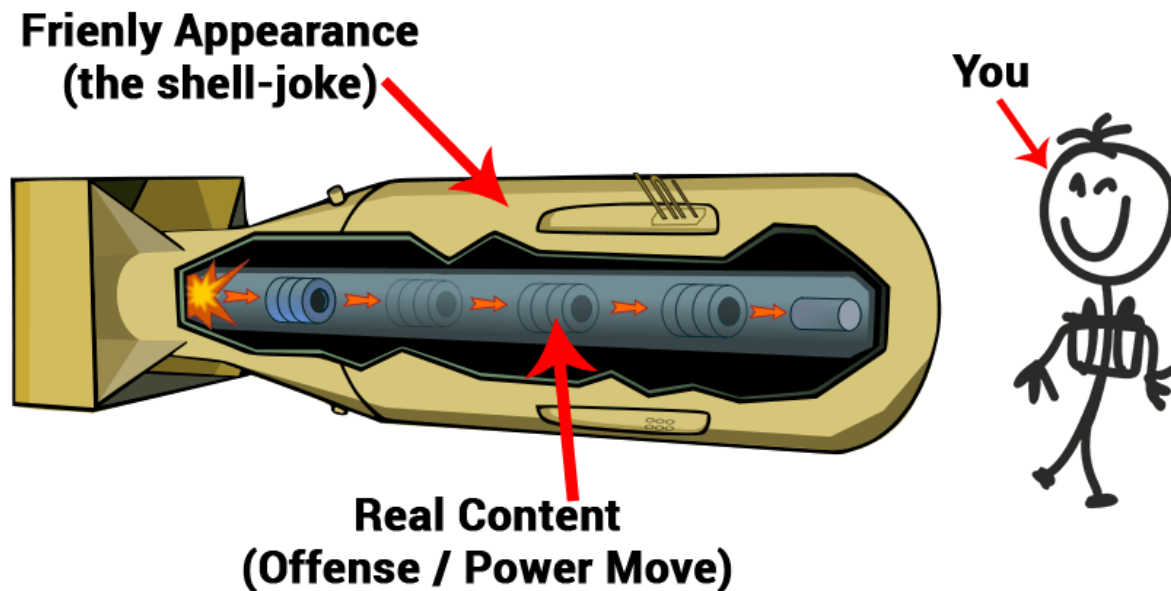


5. The Power Dynamics of Joking & Teasing (& How to Deal With Them)



How many times have you heard this:

I'm just joking!

Don't ever believe those words.

A joke is rarely just a joke and it often hides an attempt to ridicule you, isolate you, decrease your status or increase the joker's status.

This lesson will teach you how to tell apart "real jokes" from "power moving jokes".

1. The "I'm Better Than You" Type Of Joke

Imagine a white guy in Indonesia, a nation where whiter skin is considered a status symbol.

The two are standing side by side, their arms next to each other, and he blurts:

Him: we look like a black and white picture

Her: so what, you think you're better than me?

Him: ahaha I'm just joking, why are you taking it so personally

The Real Meaning:

behind the joke's smokescreen -and helped by her offended reaction- he positions himself as the superior party by virtue of skin color.

In the long run, if he keeps making similar "jokes" she will feel insecure and inferior to him.

Notice that her overreaction proved to him that she indeed has skin color hang-ups. Now, if he wants to keep her one down, he knows one of her thumbscrews.

Beating "I'm Superior" Jokes:

Don't laugh because that's the equivalent of accepting the message behind the joke.

People who laugh at these kinds of jokes become the cool friends who "know how to laugh at themselves", but who are really just there to make the power mover feel superior.

And don't push back either like the girl in the example.

What you want to do is to either completely let it go or frame back the joker's position as the "one down".

In the above example she could have said: "yeah, you really need some tan buddy".

2. The "You're Inferior" Type Of Joke

It might be difficult to differentiate "I'm better than you" VS "you're inferior".

As a matter of fact, they're two sides of the same coin.

But "I'm better than you" are more focused on pulling the joker above and "you're inferior" more focused on pushing the victim out.

This is why most racist jokes are examples of “you’re inferior” type of jokes.

Here is how you deal with them:

Draw him out

We have already seen this technique.

It consists of giving them space and ammo to shoot themselves. In this case, it’s asking questions to make clear to everyone that their joke is not really a joke and that they are simply being offensive.

Here is how it would look like:

Him: *So my neighbor popped his head above the picket fence and asked me “what’s going down brother”. And I said “the value of my house since you moved in you fucking nigger”*

You: *Oh, I’m not sure I get it..*

(you want to make it clear here that he’s engaging in blatant racism)

Him: *It’s about people not wanting to buy properties when black people move in a neighborhood*

You: *Oh, really. I suppose that only concerns white people though. I didn’t even know about that. Is that still happening today*

Him: *Yeah..*

You: *And you find it funny?*

“I suppose that only concerns white people” move the needle from “everyone VS black” to “this specific group”.

I didn’t even know about that” is the first hidden counter-attack, painting him as old school racist.

Finally, by asking if he finds it funny you back him into a corner where he has to fess up or justify himself (the typical defense being “it’s just a joke”).

Negate the joking frame (& deny their retreat)

The technique of more passive-aggressive players is that of hiding their snarky remarks behind the “just joking” shield.

By adding “just joking” they deny you of a target and rob you of your ability to hit back or get offended because, “hey, they didn’t mean it, it was just a joke”.

The problem if you keep telling them that “it was not a joke” is that it becomes a battle of wills and you risk looking overly aggressive. And you don’t want to end up with the people around jumping in trying to contain *you*.

A great way of handling this situation then is to denying them the easy retreat.

Here is how:

Him: *So what brings you to Germany from Italy man. Except of collecting unemployment benefits I mean. Ahahah just joking man, but no seriously, what brings you here*

You: *Collecting unemployment benefits?*

(you want to pin them down here on their nasty remark)

Him: *Yeah, you know what they say of Italians coming to Germany, but I was just joking*

You: *Yeah, I know you were just joking, but it’s not really funny. What do they say of Italians coming to Germany*

You know they were *not* really just joking, but pretending to accept their excuse blows off their cover.

You steal their shield and they can’t use it anymore.

If they try again, you will say:

You: *Yeah, I know you were just joking, but it’s not funny*

Him: *I was just joking man*

***You:** Of course you were just joking, you're quite a joker, but this one was not funny*

Go meta

Going meta means you explain what they have just done.
Take this example:



I sometimes deal with these funny “jokes”.
Sometimes it’s a question of frenemies and envy, but if they are done in public, their effects can still be harmful for you.
Consciously or unconsciously, their effect is that of ostracizing you from the dominant group and pushing you down. It’s like saying “you don’t belong here, you’re different”.

Here is how it would look like if you wanted to deal with it going meta:

***You:** That doesn't make any sense. Randomly picking two products and comparing them to end up with sweeping generalizations says absolutely nothing (or: “is the epitome of racism”)*

***Him:** I know, I know, it was just a joke*

***You:** Well, you know what psychology says about jokes: jokes are simply a shield to share our uglier but very real feelings.*

If you feel superior by virtue of your nationality that's how you feel, but don't take it on me and please don't do these “jokes” (make quotation mark gesture with hands) with me from now on

When you explain to them exactly what they are doing like this, you score a huge win and will send them scuttling in an embarrassing retreat.

Personally, I didn't go meta in that situation because I don't allow these people to get under my skin.

But I did take note on it: you always want to take note.

Tit for Tat

Tit for tat consists of delivering the same message back to them. In the example of Porsche/Fiat "joke" it would go like this:

***You:** The Romans did their best to civilize the barbaric Germanic tribes. It's been a while since then, but obviously not everyone has joined the civilized and racist-free world yet*

I strongly recommend you avoid tit for tat.

Why?

Because you end up playing within their frame of reference and you lower yourself to their level.

With tit for tat you are *reacting*.

You let yourself drag down in the ugly swamps of bitterness and unless you can pull it off really well and with a truly detached demeanor, you also end up looking bad.

Switch From General to Individual

Remember: people who attack you at a *general* level, often feel bad at a *personal* level.

The personal level is what you have done and who you are.

The general level is your skin color, your nationality, your religion, your political affiliation and anything which can be grouped together.

Attacking the general level is often effective in making people overreact because it's demeaning and depersonalizing: it feels like you are branded for life and there is nothing you can do... Except lashing out in anger.

But that's the wrong way to deal with it because, again, you let yourself drag down to your level, you react, and you play within their frame of reference.

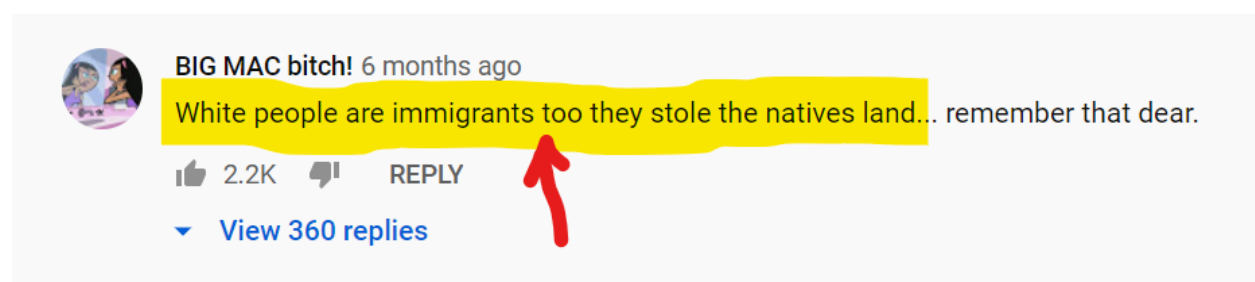
First of all, here is what you must know to handle these situations well: people happy with themselves and content with their lives rarely go around calling black people "nigger" or making fun of "Italian immigrants".

It's usually angry and bitter people or people who feel like they're doing better than they are and resent you.

[Case in point.](#)

That's why, if you want to hit back effectively, you must avoid the general level they're at, and play at the individual level.

The general level in the example above would be this comment:



It's reactive and it stays within the attacker's frame of reference: bad. Where are you going to go with that? Not only you stay within her frame and legitimize it, but you create a pointless race of "who was there first"?

You don't need that.

That's why, if you want to go tit for tat, you should attack her at an *individual* level.

But, again, I don't recommend you descend at their level.

Call out Rudeness

Simply say “that feels very rude to me”.

If their apology is not enough you can add “it’s OK”, but without looking like you really mean it.

You want to say “it’s OK” very flatly with an attitude of “that was really out of line” (we will hear an example of this tonality later).

Blank stare

Look at them with an expression as if to say “really?”.

Or alternatively utter “wow”, as if to say “can’t believe that was you”, which is very shaming.

Sarcastic approach

She does it very well, not much to add:

<https://youtu.be/Bg1aTLsS69Y>

3. The Bottom Feeder Racist Joke

The bottom feeder racist jokes are only funny to very young, very inexperienced or very low IQ individuals.

Bottom feeders’ jokes make “fun” of the most basic stereotypes. Here is one example from the movie “L’Auberge Espagnole”:

<https://youtu.be/Em6Qds4yTh4>

Any person who's traveled, read or interacted with an international crowd will cringe at the stupidity of these jokes.
But those who haven't... Still might find it funny.

And if you're aiming high, you don't want to mingle with those.

Don't even address them: if there are high-quality people around these jokes are the shoves with which the jokers are digging their own social grave.

And if the people around enjoy those jokes, take it as the sign you need to change friends.

4. Personal Attack Jokes

They leverage a (supposedly) trait of yours in a way that can be very offensive.

For example:

Him: Oh it was easy. OK, Jane didn't get it, so let's say it wasn't too complicated for anyone with an IQ above 30

Here are a few ways of dealing with it:

Battle humor with humor

This is best for people with great humor.

Example from the show "Weakest Link":

<https://youtu.be/oOd0TxEnel>

But even if you lose the war of jokes, don't worry.

Smile when you have no more comebacks and move on. You might even say "well done" and look like a real winner.

Look at Trump doing it when he was losing to Bush:

<https://youtu.be/Pr1D-HjSZ7Y>

Hit them back with the same medicine

If you can find a way to use the same criticism back on them it's golden as you show them, and everyone around, what type of game they are playing.

See Jay Leno doing here when being accused of being “the weirdest looking person”:

https://youtu.be/8Q_BVIVPdHY

Leno uses humor to show that his guest is hiding behind humor to be a little bit too nasty.

Perfect!

Say “we have a joker here”

If nothing comes up, you can always resort to these proven and tested retorts:

We have a joker here!

What a funny guy..

Scarface uses it in this scene:

<https://youtu.be/1d8Fs08GkXs>

You can power-up this retort by pointing your finger at them, as if to say “listen to this funny guy”.

5. Snarky Comments

Snarky comments are barbs barely veiled with humor.

Some people around might laugh, but they are *not* laughing at the joke itself but at the social power move and the daring of the individual delivering it.

It happened once to me when I went back to my place after a long time and one woman said:

Her: Oh my God, I saw you walking by and I barely recognized you with a bald head

What a cunt, eh?

And this was my replt:

Me: Hey, yeah I know the feeling, I had the exact same when I saw you. I remembered you so much thinner. Not in a bad way eh, you look even better now with some more kilos.

“Not in a bad way” is there not really to soften the blow, but to make it more socially acceptable and not to make it seem like I was escalating and replying out of nastiness.

That’s exactly what you gotta do when you want to reply with social grace to nastiness: you make a comment back which *is* nasty, but then you pretend to take some of the sting out to so that people can laugh about it.

And indeed, big laugh from everyone around.
Bald heads 1 : Chubby Spitefuls 0 :).

Note on beating snarky comments:

I could care less about being bald. As a matter of fact, I like a bald

head. But this is the ultimate level of social power: you don't react only when you care: you react when you want.

You react to the social power move and to defend -or increase- your social power from those who are trying to tear you apart.

As a matter of fact, you should take yourself to a point where nothing that people could ever say really gets to you. But you still hit back because you want to defend your status, enforce your boundaries and teach the assholes of this world a lesson.

Remember: standing up to assholes is a favor you do to the world.

6. People Laughing At You

The dynamics of people laughing at us can be extremely painful.

Being laughed by a group usually comes in two different social flavors:

1. Everyone in the group is piling up in a mutually reinforcing cycle
2. There is a clear leader that function as the group-buffoon

This interview of McGregor and Diaz is an example of the second type:

<https://youtu.be/S6wn99sp4Tc>

Usually, the buffoon has good standings in the group, but it's an easier situation to control.

As Robert Greene writes in [The 48 Laws of Power](#): strike the leader and the sheep will scatter.

Solutions:

Strike the leader

If you can take out the leader, you solved the issue.

As we have seen the good news is that sometimes you can even lose and *still* solve the problem -as long as the leader sees you're not easy pickings.

Isolate the leader

Work on becoming good friends with the members who are not as sanguine towards you.

Little by little you can carve your own sphere of influence and if you keep growing in the group you might even be able to overthrow the leader.

Abandon the group forever

Here is the truth:

It's not easy changing the dynamics of a group that has chosen you as the scapegoat for their frustrations and small-time status-jockeying.

But that should be a wakeup call as to what type of groups you are being part of.

Usually, these people are very stationary in life and if you're reading here you want to go places.

Start by leaving the idiots of your behind.

Just as a learning opportunity, you can use them to try different things though: use them as free social training.

Abandon the group, work, come back like a G

As we've said people who pick on others usually don't go very far in life.

Work on yourself. Don't try to forget their derision but use them as fuel to become better and better.

Then if you want you can go back improved and upgraded, maybe saying hi while you drive from a Ferrari.

But chances are you will care very little about them in the future -and I recommend the "leave behind path", including emotional disengagement-.

Change dynamics, then lead

Groups that pick on people rarely do so out of strength, but because they need their own psychological boost.

If the group moves to a novel situation and environment where you can show strong skills and leadership, suddenly you're no laughing stock anymore.

Example:

I remember as teenagers when we went go-carting and the shy guy people liked to pick on whooped everyone's ass. Not many jokes on him that day.

Achieve big where they are failing

People usually pick on the ones that have the least skills and power.

But achieve some big goals in life and there won't be much for them to laugh about.

I remember when the kids in my group stopped laughing Gabriele. Gabriele was the first among us who got a girlfriend. If the one some loved to mock as the least among us got a girlfriend, what did it say about us, all busy masturbating?

People stopped laughing about Gabriele.

7. But Do Laugh At Good Jokes

As a final note, don't see all jokes as power moves.

Even if almost all jokes *are* at least somewhat connected to power hierarchies, you will still gain from a more relaxed and open stance towards the world.

Even from a pure power point of view, a clear, unemotional mind will always operate at a higher level than one fuming with rage and indignation.

Learning not to take yourself too seriously and learning to laugh about your shortcoming and the stereotypes of your race/religion/country is an immensely powerful trait to develop.