

Humor's Place in Emotionally Healthy Living. (October 30, 2025)

The Bible speaks to the positive benefits of humor when it says,

“A merry heart does good, like medicine.” (Proverbs 17:22)

However, the Bible also alludes to the misuse of humor when it says,

“Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death,

Is the man who deceives his neighbor, And says, ‘I was only joking.’” (Proverbs 26:18-19)

Humor used appropriately is one of the signs of an emotionally healthy person. Laughter, playfulness, and fun are signs that a person doesn't take themselves too seriously. Humor can ease tense situations and lighten the relational mood causing people to relax and relate more openly and honestly. A line from Rich Mullins' song, “We Are Not As Strong As We Think We Are,” sums it up perfectly...“And if you make me laugh I know I could make you like me, 'Cause when I laugh I can be a lot of fun.”

However, there are downsides to humor too. Some use humor as an avoidance technique; when a conversation gets tense or serious, they deflect the discussion to a lighter topic with a quick joke or quip. Others use humor as a subtle form of criticism; in these cases, the laughs always seem to be at somebody else's expense. And still others attempt to use humor to cover over undisclosed anger; these conversations are often filled with sarcasm that is dripping with brokenness and pain.

Like most things in this world, humor can be used for good or for evil. Are we using humor to harm or to heal? When we are trying to be funny, is anyone laughing...and is anyone crying? Just because it is funny doesn't mean it is good. That joke may start a fire and prove that we are only madmen after all.