

“Solve that Problem with Humor”

By: William D. Ellis

A lot of us lose life's tougher confrontations by mounting a frontal attack – when a touch of humor might well enable us to chalk up a win.

Humor is a most effective, yet frequently neglected, means of handling the difficult situations in our lives. It can be used for patching up differences, apologizing, saying “no”, criticizing, getting someone to do what you want without a battle. For some people, humor is the only tool that can succeed. It is a way to discuss sensitive or serious subjects that otherwise cause discomfort.

Humor is often the best way to keep a small misunderstanding from escalating into a big deal. The power of humor to dissolve a hostile confrontation often lies in its unspoken promise: “You let me off the hook, my friend, and I’ll let you off.” The trick is to assign friendly motives to your opponent, to smile just a little.

Occasionally, humor goes beyond saving arguments or saving face; it can save life itself. Viktor E. Frankl was a psychiatrist imprisoned in a German concentration camp during World War II. As a psychiatrist, Frankl knew that humor was one of the soul's best survival weapons, since it can create, if only for moments, aloofness from horror. Therefore, Frankl made a rule that once each day he and his friend must invent and tell an amusing anecdote, specifically about something which could happen after their liberation [humor mixed with hope].

If humor can be used successfully against such odds, what can't you and I do with it in daily life?

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