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Humor as a Learning Tool

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Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary (2009) defines humor as "something that is or is designed to be comical or amusing." You can find humor in many different formats, including comic books, jokes, chapter books, comedy movies, silly pictures, games, and TV shows. As students experience humor, their language and social skills can improve—they learn to understand and use inferences, sarcasm, and cause and effect. Many younger students learn to think "outside of the box" and not take what they hear so literally. When a student comprehends and connects language to humor and laughter, he/she opens a fun new world of communication skills with others.

What Are Some Benefits of Using Humor as a Learning Tool?

When students learn about humor and humorous situations, they laugh. Many individuals say laughter is "the best medicine," as it can be contagious and provide a connection to others. When people laugh, their stress level can decrease. This can make interactions with others more relaxed and comfortable. As well, using humor with students can provide motivation for them to complete activities, increase their memory skills through retelling of jokes and funny stories, and encourage participation in social language. The following are some examples for students to bring more laughter to a situation:

- **Finding humor throughout the day** – If a student complains of how difficult school is, the amount of work to do, or his/her "bad" day, try to get him/her to see the funny things in the day.



How Can I Use Humor in Speech/Language Therapy?

- **Articulation** – Use tongue twisters as a fun, motivating tool for practicing articulation sounds. Quick repetition can create funny and silly speech.
- **Reading** – Use comic books with students to identify the funny parts of the story. Then have the students tell you the story to practice narrative skills.
- **Language** – Use wacky and silly pictures to have students identify the unique features about each picture—have them say what is the same and what is different about the pictures.

- **Telling jokes with friends** – Students take turns telling each other funny jokes. When several people laugh at a joke, it encourages others to participate. Soon everyone will be laughing and having fun.

Resources:

humor. (2009). In Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. Retrieved October 1, 2009, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/humor>

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