

## Why Do We Laugh?

When was the last time you laughed hard, really hard? Can you remember a time when you couldn't stop laughing? Babies first laugh when they are three and a half or four months old. The age people laugh the people laugh at simple statements that people use to begin a conversation—for example, "Here comes Hasid." Questions like "How did you do on your test?" can also cause laughter. This shows people laugh to be social. They want to make a connection with other people. In addition, this is why babies laugh. It's not that they are laughing at a funny face, but they too want to connect. Laughter is one of the first steps we take to be social. As an example, consider this joke: *What did the 0 say to the 8? Can I borrow your belt?* Did you laugh out loud? Probably not. We may read something or think something and laugh to ourselves. But laughter, the laugh out loud kind, is usually only done when other people are around. We laugh to be heard. We laugh to feel happiness and share it with others.

Laughter is not just a way to be social. It can connect or divide social groups. Someone laughs after a pause or after a sentence in a conversation. It's not a word but a way to respond, or say something back, and it communicates something. What does laughter say? "You're funny." "We share the same sense of **humor**." "I like you." "I'm listening to you." "I want to hear more." "I'm interested in you." There is a reason

most is five or six. Maybe you remember a time from this age. What was so **funny**? While people often tell a **joke** to be funny, research shows people most often laugh at things that aren't so funny. For example, why one of the most used text messages that people send is an abbreviation for "laugh out loud": LOL. Of course, when we send this text message, we are not actually laughing out loud. We are communicating that we think the person is funny. However, laughing at someone is different. Laughter can be not nice. People use it to let someone know they don't belong. Laughter can make people feel part of a group or *not* part of the group.

When we hear someone laugh, we laugh too. Laughter is a response that we don't have to think about. It is passed from person to person. This is why TV shows use laugh tracks. The show includes a recording of an audience laughing. When TV viewers at home hear this, it makes them laugh too. And the laughter has an effect on our body. When we laugh, our face **muscles** move and our breathing changes. Muscles all over our body in our arms, core, and legs are affected. Laughter releases chemicals in the brain. They make us relax. We laugh and we feel good. We laugh and we feel a connection with others.

Laughter is a response we don't control. When we hear someone else laugh, we laugh too.

## Do Video Games Teach?

Are video games bad? Some people say there is too much bad behavior in games, especially action video games. They say that children should not play these kinds of games and that young people should concentrate on communication and other important skills. However, more than half a **controls** working memory, where we store information we learn. We use working memory to make decisions. The other area controls hand-eye coordination. This is our physical **reaction to** things we see. Another study also showed the benefits. In this **experiment**, people completed a **task of identifying** patterns. People who played action video games did better than those who did not play the games. Why is this? The study said that people are always **predicting** what will happen. This is true for any task throughout the day. For example, if you are in a conversation or listening to your teacher, you often predict what the person will say. You also do this when driving. You predict how other drivers will move. The idea is that people are always creating **models** using their past experiences. This

billion people in the world play video games for more than an hour each day! What is the effect on people? Are there any **benefits to** playing video games?

One research study showed that playing action video games causes changes in some areas of the brain. One area helps people react quickly because they have an idea of what will happen. For example, after hearing a teacher talk, you may predict that she will now assign homework. Because of this, you get out your notebook and prepare to write the homework assignment down.

Action video game players get lots of practice predicting. They play a game and build models for what happens in different situations. The result is that they become good at quickly predicting what will happen. Due to this, they do better on video games and at other learning tasks. Some people point out the negative effects of video games, but the numbers show the world will continue to play them. And if it's an action game, it may help us learn.

## What Is Culture Shock?

According to the United Nations Population Fund, in 2013, 232 million people, 3.2 percent of the world's population, lived outside their home country. In 2009, the United States and the United Kingdom

social opportunities. There's a phrase for the effect making your home in another **society** and **culture** has on you: *culture shock*.

A shock is a bad surprise, but that's not actually how most people experience culture shock. Culture shock is when someone feels he or she doesn't **belong** in a new country. First, most people feel excitement at being in a new place: There are opportunities and possibilities. However, the second stage is different. People now notice how the new place is different from home. Everyday things like ordering food in a restaurant, shopping, and using the train are different. These small things can seem big. People get upset. It's **human nature**. They compare their new place to home. They think of home as better. When you know how to do things, like communicate in the language, it's easier. At this point, many people feel **lonely**. And feeling lonely can affect how you communicate with others. Lonely people often see other people as a danger. They don't trust them. As a result, they don't talk to others. There are people all around them, but they feel that they don't belong.

A university website gives tips for people to **follow** to help with culture shock:

were the most popular places to move to. However, people also leave these places. In 2013, the United Kingdom lost 400 citizens a day. Many of these people were college educated and looking for other job and

- (1) Do not think things will be like they are at home. How people do business and communicate and what times of day they eat are often different.
- (2) Talk to people. Show you want to learn about them and their culture.
- (3) Do not let one person's actions affect your idea of the whole society.
- (4) Understand that everyday things, such as how close people stand to one another, how people wait in line, and how long people pause in conversations, are different. For example, during conversations, most Americans do not let much time pass before they feel the need to start speaking. Other cultures are much more comfortable with pauses in conversation. People in different cultures have different **values**. Try to notice these things and understand the new culture you are in. You may want to connect with others from home. While it can be helpful to be with people from your country, try to identify with others. This doesn't mean you have to change who you are to **fit in**. Think about what you can share and what you can learn. If you concentrate on these things, then you can begin to feel less lonely. Maybe you are different, but you can be different and also belong.