

The Science of Laughter

Upper Intermediate (B2-C1)



WARM UP

Part 1. Take a look at the pictures below. What do you see? Talk about what's happening and then discuss the questions.



1. "Laughter is the best medicine." – What do you think this means? Do you agree?
2. Can you think of a time when laughter helped you feel better physically or emotionally?
3. What kinds of things make you laugh the most?
4. Why do you think humans laugh?



Part 2. Match each word to its correct definition. Can you guess any before looking at the options?

Vocalisation	Inhibit	Reflexes	Contagious
Volitional	Endorphins	Cortisol	Ailment

1. Automatic responses of the body to specific stimuli
2. Chemicals released in the brain that relieve pain and enhance pleasure
3. The act of producing sounds with the voice, particularly when laughing
4. Referring to a deliberate, controlled action rather than a spontaneous one
5. To hold back or restrain an action or process
6. A hormone released in response to stress, often related to health issues
7. A physical or mental condition that causes discomfort or illness
8. Able to be easily passed from one person to another; infectious

Part 3. Complete the sentences with the correct words. Pay attention to how the words fit into the context!

Vocalisation	Inhibit	Reflexes	Contagious
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1. Regular physical activity helps release _____, which improve mood and reduce pain.
2. Meditation can lower _____ levels, which is important for managing stress.
3. A strong immune system can protect the body from almost any minor _____.
4. The flu is highly _____, so it's best to stay home when you're feeling unwell.
5. Deep breathing exercises can help _____ anxious thoughts before they spiral.
6. Unlike automatic habits, a _____ change in lifestyle requires conscious effort.
7. If you touch something hot, your body's _____ kick in before you even realise it.
8. Singing in the shower is a form of natural _____ that can boost your mood.



VIDEO ACTIVITY

Part 1. Discuss the question below.

Vocalisation

Inhibit

Reflexes

Contagious

Volitional

Endorphins

Cortisol

Ailment

We're going to watch a video about the science of laughter. How do you think the vocabulary words above might be used to describe what happens in our bodies when we laugh?

Part 2. Now watch the video "The Science of Laughter" and see how many of your predictions were accurate.

Part 3. Watch the video again and answer the following questions.

1. What physical changes occur in the body when we laugh?
2. How did researchers discover that other animals laugh?
3. What theories explain the evolution of laughter in humans?
4. Why is laughter considered to be contagious?
5. What differentiates spontaneous laughter from volitional laughter in the brain?
6. What are some of the health benefits of laughter mentioned in the video?

Part 4. Below is an extract from the video. Fill in the gaps using what you remember from watching.

Laughter is a _____ (1) human behaviour. Babies can laugh before they can _____ (2). Whether it's the best _____ (3) depends on your ailment. But as something that makes life more tolerable, strengthens bonds, and potentially improves aspects of your health, you can't go wrong with a _____ (4) laugh. Unless you have a broken rib or something. Then it's no laughing _____ (5). Certainly nothing to crack _____ (6) about.



VIDEO FOLLOW-UP

Part 1. Discuss the following questions.

1. Do you think laughter is a universal language? Why or why not?
2. Can laughter help build connections between people? Provide examples.
3. Share a time when you or someone you know laughed inappropriately. What was the outcome?
4. In what ways could laughter be promoted in schools or workplaces to boost well-being?

Part 2. Match each idiom to its correct definition. Can you guess any before looking at the options?

Laughing stock

Laugh something off

Be in stitches

Crack up

No laughing matter

Have the last laugh

1. To break into laughter, often unexpectedly
2. Something very serious that is not open to jokes
3. To try to diminish the seriousness of a situation by making light of it
4. To laugh so hard that you feel physical pain or weakness
5. Someone who is publicly ridiculed or made fun of.
6. To finally get an advantage from an argument or disagreement when it seemed that you would not.

Part 3. Discuss the following questions using the idioms.

1. Do you think fear of becoming a laughing stock stops people from taking risks? Why or why not?
2. Discuss a time when you had to laugh something off during a difficult situation.
3. Share a personal story where you experienced a moment that made you crack up.
4. Can you recall a moment when something was no laughing matter? Explain why it was serious.
5. Can you think of a situation where someone was underestimated but ended up having the last laugh?

REVIEW ACTIVITY & FINAL THOUGHTS....

Part 1. Use each of the words in a sentence related to laughter. Try to make your sentences as creative as possible!

Vocalisation

Inhibit

Reflexes

Contagious

Volitional

Endorphins

Cortisol

Ailment

Part 2. Discuss the questions below to reflect on what you've learnt during this lesson.

1. What new insights did you gain about the science of laughter today?
2. How might understanding the effects of laughter on our bodies influence your daily life?
3. In your opinion, is laughter truly beneficial for health? Why or why not?
4. How can you incorporate more laughter into your routine to improve your overall well-being?
5. What is your biggest takeaway from this lesson, and how might it change your perspective on humour?

