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HEALTH!



(BECAUSE LIFE'S TOO SHORT. . .)

About the Author:



Shara Rendell-Smock has written more than twenty computer software manuals, numerous newspaper articles, including a monthly health column for The Sarasota Herald-Tribune.

She's the author of two books of non-fiction: *Getting Hooked: Fiction's Opening Sentences 1950's- 1990's* and *Living With Big Cats: The Story of Jungle Larry, Safari Jane, and David Tetzlaff*

[For ordering information, click here.](#)

To read more about these books, participate in an ongoing joke contest, surf on over to www.rendell-smock.com. The author currently lives on Florida's Space Coast.

Shara has recently [signed with a New York Literary agency](#).

Humour and Health

"Think You're Funny?" - Part 1 of 5

Most laughter has nothing to do with jokes, concludes researcher Prof. Robert Provine. For years he has studied laughter and what provokes it.

Some of Provine's conclusions:

- Less than 20% of laughter was in response to anything resembling a joke
- People are 30 times more likely to laugh in groups than alone (hence, TV's laugh tracks)
- Women laugh more than men, except when they are listening to a woman
- The talker chuckles nearly 50% more than his/her listener does

Provine's approach to understanding is one that "a visiting extraterrestrial might take were it to encounter a group of laughing human beings." What would an alien think of this sound coming from our faces?

Researching this question, Provine and his assistants have logged a lot of time in malls and on the street, eavesdropping on giggles, cackles, and whoops. In his classes, he recorded people's laughter and analyzed the data in an acoustic laboratory at the Washington DC's National Zoo. He's even compared human laughter with that of

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Previously:

Overcoming Sleep Disorders

[Part 1 of 4](#) - how your mattress can make all the difference.

[Part 2 of 4](#) - strategies to help you sleep.

[Part 3 of 4](#) - more strategies to help you sleep.

[Part 4 of 4](#) - what is a sleep log and how does it work?

Osteoporosis

Stats indicate that for those over the age of 50, one of every two women and one in eight men will have an osteoporosis-related fracture. Our sedentary lifestyle puts us at risk for this disease. Yet osteoporosis is not inevitable. Here's some information on this disease and how we can prevent it.

[Part 1 of 4](#) - details the likelihood of developing this disease, and its dangers and consequences.

[Part 2 of 4](#) - presents the risk factors of

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Patterns

Joining forces with Kim Bard of the Yerkes Regional Primate Center in Atlanta, Provine observed chimps laughing in play. Chimp and human laughter differ in many ways. We laugh as we speak. Our laughter is basically chopping, single expirations (ha ha ha). Chimps' laughter is more a breathy expiration and inspiration, like panting, and sounds more like ah ah ah.

One theory puts forth that this is one reason humans have been unable to teach chimps to speak. Not just their vocal structure is to blame. Their laughter is produced differently. Chimps are unable to modulate the airflow: In discovering how chimps laugh, researchers learn about more than laughter.

Chimps mostly laugh in response to physical contact, such during tickling, wrestling, or chasing (The one being chased laughs the most.) Humans laugh mostly during conversation, rather than physical contact.

Social Implications

As you would expect, people are more likely to laugh in social contexts. Provine found that, in the absence of stimulating media -TV, radio, or books - people are 30 times more likely to laugh in a group. Obviously, social situations increase laughter.

But contrary to researchers' expectations, Provine observed that most laughter is in the context of conversation, not as a response to any structured attempt to provoke laughter. The biggest bursts of laughter were in response to such side-splitters as, "Look. It's Andre" and "Are you sure?" Laughter mostly follows such lame remarks.

osteoporosis and some of our misconceptions about the disease.

[Part 3 of 4](#) - insights into diagnosis, and basic management techniques.

[Part 4 of 4](#) - new medical treatments to stop osteoporosis, and safety in the home of osteoporosis sufferers.

Next Week:

What the experts say. . .

Many researchers concentrate on the audiences. Provine studied the speakers, too. He found that, counterintuitively, the **speakers laugh more than the listeners do** and **females tend to laugh more often than males**.

In a study of 1,200 episodes of laughter, Provine found that during same-gender conversation, "the male speaker laughs more often than his male audience and a female speaker laughs more often than her female audience. In contrast, a typical male speaker will laugh slightly less often than his female audience will.

The most striking differences between the genders were found in episodes that involved female speakers and male audiences. In such instances, female speakers laughed more than twice as often as their male audience did.

"Cross-cultural evidence suggests that males are the leading humor producers and females are the leading laughers. These differences are already present by the time that joking first appears around six years of age."

Now, what does this have to do with health?

For one thing, laughter increases activity in cells that attack viruses and tumor cells. In this series I'll discuss such aspects as medical prescriptions for laughter, on-line sites discussing laughter for medical benefit, and phenomena such as contagious laughter.

If you want some laughs, go to the Joke Contest page at my web site: <http://www.spacey.net/smock> . But don't forget to come back here to read other Sideroad writers' columns.

Next Week:

What do the experts say about laughter and health?

Does laughter improve YOUR health? Got any experiences to share? Or jokes for next week? If so, **e-mail me** at hookingreader@cfl.rr.com

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Shara's books can be ordered from her web site at www.rendell-smock.com

