

Lighten your life with some more **humour**



By Eve Menezes Cunningham

What do you call two rows of cabbages?

A dual cabbage way!

While most people groan at this (and most of the jokes I find hilarious), it always makes me smile. In fact I feel triumphant if I manage to tell a joke and don't give the punchline away within the first sentence.

1 July is International Joke Day. The originators want to lighten people's lives by encouraging some humour.

I used to worry about people laughing at me when I didn't want them to and not knowing how to make them laugh deliberately. Now, thanks to some Improvisation classes (and not being quite as big a control enthusiast as I was), I understand that almost all laughter is good. It doesn't matter if we do it deliberately or not.

And yet, humour can be used to hurt people, too. How many times do people from the larger, more powerful social groups tell the person in a minority, 'Can't you take

a joke?' to minimise some kind of offensive comment?

I'm regularly amazed by how so many offensive (to me) jokes could be so much funnier by removing the words that prop up tired old stereotypes.

“How might you bring more humour into your life in a way that feels good to you?”

We can use our common sense and sensory acuity to gauge the mood and tone but comedy treads an incredibly fine line. Going just a little bit over what's considered acceptable can, when done well, be pretty subversive. Humour can make people think about their own lives in a way similar to metaphors and their magic.

And, of course, sometimes, we don't *want* to have a lighter outlook. Just as we don't always want to get ourselves into a resourceful state, sometimes, even though it hurts to feel pain, grief and loss, we know it's a healthy pain. Of course, for professionals working in the kind of fields where they risk secondary

trauma, what can be considered by some a morbid sense of humour can help them stay effective at their work.

Social media can be an entertaining way to notice how tastes vary. I'm often bewildered by loved ones' favourite comedies and jokes as I just don't get them. Similarly, I imagine many of the things that have my lungs aching with laughter barely told a smile from others.

What are your default comedy programmes and films? Do you treat yourself to time with friends who sometimes have you falling on the floor with laughter?

How might you bring more humour into your life in a way that feels good to you (being forced to find something funny can be as counterintuitive as being told to relax)?

Sites like Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram can be great for sharing humorous memes. Or you could go old school and tell a joke like, 'What do you call a song sung in an automobile?' 'A cartoon.'

Happy International Joke Day! ■