# The role of humour in enhancing mental health through memes



Daily life often presents challenges, including stress and burnout, that many individuals seek to navigate through small rituals. These rituals could be anything from long walks or hot showers to enjoying a comforting breakfast or having deep conversations. In recent times, an unexpected source of comfort has emerged: memes. Specifically, memes that provide a humorous take on the complexities of mental health resonate particularly well with users.

In light of this, a collection of relatable and entertaining meme posts from the account "Freud Intensifies" has been shared, catering to those in need of a light-hearted moment. The collection aims to bring smiles and laughter to those grappling with their daily struggles.

The concept of humour as an avenue for relief has caught the attention of mental health professionals. Speaking to Bored Panda, psychotherapist and content creator Lauren Baird articulated the significance of humour in managing emotions. She stated, “When we laugh, our bodies release a cascade of neurochemicals including endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin—often called our ‘feel-good hormones.’ These create immediate physiological and psychological relief, essentially providing a natural mood boost.” This suggests that laughter not only serves as an amusement but can also trigger a visible and immediate sense of well-being.

The contagious nature of humour is rooted in its ability to foster social bonds. Psychotherapist Sarah Lee noted that the feel-good chemicals released during laughter can enhance connections with others. She elaborated, “Endorphins don’t just improve our mood; they also strengthen social connections.” The act of sharing a meme or laugh can thus offer more than mere entertainment; it can facilitate a sense of community among friends and acquaintances.

Humour can be particularly beneficial in high-stress environments. Baird explained that it activates the ventral vagal pathway, a part of the nerve system associated with feelings of safety and connection, further helping to regulate stress levels. She stated, “This is why humour is commonly employed in high-stress professions like healthcare, emergency services, and social work.” The ability to share a laugh can ease tension and promote calmness among individuals, potentially aligning them in a more regulated state.

However, mental health practitioners also highlight the delicate balance of humour as a coping mechanism. Emily Cook, a psychotherapist and counsellor, expressed the notion that humour can be strategically used to deflect difficult conversations. “Telling a joke about a serious topic might brush off some more serious questions about what’s happening,” she explained. Yet, relying on humour to avoid addressing deeper issues can lead to maladaptive behaviours. Lee warned that this method might result in emotional avoidance where feelings are not processed.

Baird expanded on this, noting that humour can be categorised as adaptive or maladaptive. Adaptive humour helps individuals to cope, whereas maladaptive humour can result in self-defeating behaviours. She articulated the potential consequences of relying too heavily on humour for comfort: “This pattern can lead to emotional avoidance, where feelings become ‘stuck’ rather than processed and released.”

To ensure the beneficial use of humour, Cook suggested that recognising the right moment for levity versus when to confront feelings is crucial. Engaging in discussions with a trusted friend or therapist can offer a means to process emotions in a constructive way. Baird recommended cultivating interoceptive awareness, which involves understanding one's internal bodily sensations and emotions, as a necessary skill in this regard.

Moreover, emotional literacy—learning to identify and articulate one’s feelings—can also be advantageous. Baird asserted, “There’s truth to the phrase ‘name it to tame it.’ Studies show that labelling emotions activates the prefrontal cortex, which helps regulate the amygdala.”

While sharing memes may offer a fleeting moment of joy, the importance of self-care remains paramount. The nuanced landscape of humour as a coping strategy underscores the need to balance laughter with genuine emotional expression to foster overall mental well-being.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.instagram.com/freud.intensifies/> - Corroborates the existence of the 'Freud Intensifies' account, which shares memes about mental health issues.
* <https://www.boredpanda.com/barely-functioning-therapeutic-memes-freud-intensifies/> - Provides an example of how memes are used to discuss mental health issues, aligning with the article's theme.
* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3444174/> - Research on laughter and stress reduction suggests that humor can have physiological benefits, similar to what is described in the article.
* <https://psychotherapy.org.uk/depression/effects-of-humor> - Discusses how humor can be used as a therapeutic tool and its effects on mental health, supporting the article's perspective.
* <https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/laughter> - Explains the psychological benefits of laughter and its impact on stress levels, aligning with the article's emphasis on humor as a stress reliever.