

This is Your Brain on Humor

We've heard of superfoods to eat, but what about a kind of superfood for the brain? Ori Amir, a neuroscientist and stand-up comedian, studies the effects of humor on the brain and thinks that's what humor is. Appreciating humor is like solving a puzzle, by processing lots of distinct information to understand the punchline, or the resolution of two fundamentally different ideas or elements.

For example, Jerry Seinfeld pondered "Why does moisture ruin leather? Aren't cows outside a lot of the time"? Thanks to the new technology of fMRI, scientists can see exactly how the brain responds to humor. More neurons of the brain are activated when interpreting humor, compared to interpreting other information, showing that learning and problem solving get us high so to speak. When more neurons are activated and the more activated they are, opioid receptors are bathed in feel-good neurotransmitters and other chemicals, the more pleasure we feel.

But, the benefits don't stop there. Research has shown exposure to humor to decrease perception of pain and loneliness and improve blood flow, immune response, sleep and blood sugar levels. "Humor can help reframe stressors, challenges or difficulties that seem insurmountable to a person," says Tom Ford, a social psychologist at Western Carolina University. One study showed that college students who scored highest on intelligence tests also scored high on humor ability, confirming the wide body of literature that humor is a reliable intelligence indicator and "one of the most



important traits for seeking human mates." This is due in part to how appreciating and creating jokes requires connections to be made between many pieces of information in novel and innovative ways.

Laughter is so common and familiar that it can be recognized even if played backwards. It brings people together, reduces pain, exercises your brain and makes you happy. Finding time for a good joke is no laughing matter! Source: RD September 2019, "Laugh Yourself Smarter."

Thanksgiving Trivia

Q: What food was present at the first Thanksgiving that is rarely eaten at Thanksgiving now?

A. Seafood

Q: Which state raises the most turkeys?

A: Minnesota. 41 million turkeys were raised in 2015.

Q: Why are male turkeys called "tom"?

A: Possibly to spite Thomas Jefferson, because he wanted the turkey to be the national symbol of the US.

2019 is Running Out

Jingle Bell Run
Saturday Dec 7;
BOK Center
5k and 1 mile distance;
Benefitting research and programs for arthritis.

Fleet Feet Rudolph Run
Saturday Dec 14; Rose
District Broken Arrow; 5k
and 1k distances.

Race Into The New Year
Tuesday Dec 31; River
West Festival Park; 5k
and 1 mile fun run; Starts
at 11:45pm to run from
one year into the next. A
festive holiday celebra-
tion with party hats, fire-
works and food.

How fast can a wild turkey run?

A: About 20 miles an hour when it's scared.

Q: How many states have a town named Turkey?

A: 4, Arizona, Texas, Louisiana and North Carolina.

Q: How many cranberries are in one can of jellied cranberry sauce?

A: About 200.