

What's So Funny

Humor Psychologist Explains Why Most Women Just Don't Get It

By Marc Davis (Chicago Tribune)

What are you guys laughing at? And what kind of jokes do you tell?

The usual, said Ed Dunkelblau, a Chicago-based clinical psychologist and psychotherapist who is an expert on humor.

But what we find uproarious often leaves women mystified.

The usual jokes men tell and laugh at are jokes with sexual content, jokes dealing with violence, and aggressive, vulgar, often scatological jokes, according to Dunkelblau.

Dunkelblau has been practicing for 25 years, has several Fortune 500 companies among his clients and is past president of the American Association of Therapeutic Humor.

"Women, by contrast," Dunkelblau said, "generally tell and laugh at jokes about themselves, about love, or domestic problems or situations."

Besides his personal observation of gender-based predilections in humor, Dunkelblau cites a scientific study of the differences in the male and female sense of humor, conducted some years ago by professor Birgit Kaare of the Institute for Cultural Studies at the University of Oslo. "Her data showed that there's a definite difference in what the sexes laugh at.

"Men are more aggressive, and this is reflected in what they find funny," Dunkelblau said.

Men and women are conditioned by social circumstances to develop a different sense of humor.

"In prehistoric times males traditionally were hunters," he said. "Women took care of other things back in the cave."

What each sex finds humorous probably started evolving there.

Dunkelblau points to the mock violence of the Three Stooges as an example of what men find hilarious and women do not.

"But as women gain more equality in every area," Dunkelblau predicted, "they may find funny the same things we find funny."

(Editor's note: Would this be progress?)

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