

The Levity Tool Kit

Small ways to make work feel more Human

Our takeaways from *Humour, Seriously: Why Humour is a Superpower at Work and in Life*, by Aaker & Bagdona (2020)

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The “5% Lighter” Rule

You don’t need to transform the workplace overnight. Just ask, “How can I make this interaction 5% lighter, warmer, or more human?”

That might mean:

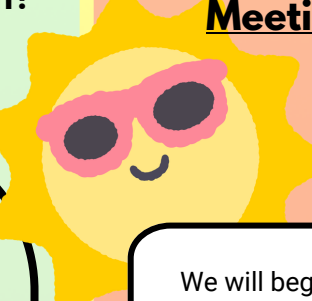
-  A genuine Smile or warm greeting
-  Acknowledging awkwardness
-  Celebrating small wins
-  A relatable comment
-  Laughing at shared realities

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Low Risk Levity Starters

Add a little humor to daily work tasks you already do!

Meeting Openers

-  Welcome Everyone. Congratulations on finding the correct Zoom link!
- We will begin once the technology finishes its daily character building exercise.
- Before we start: Coffee Status Check!

Human Check-in Questions

- What’s your current stress level in one weather pattern?
- What’s something unnecessary you’re oddly passionate about?
- What’s one tiny win from this week?
- If you had 25 hours in a day, how would you spend that extra hour?

Email Upgrades

Instead of:

Per my last email...

Try

“Resurfacing this before it disappears into the email abyss.”

Instead of:

The document is attached.

Try

Attached is the document we’ll all pretend to read before the meeting.”

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The Shared Reality Technique

Simply acknowledge what everyone is already thinking.

- Nothing says Higher Education like solving a problem with 3 committees.
- This meeting could have been an email, but then how would we build character
- I see we are all making the same face at this spreadsheet.
- I’d like to take credit for attending this meeting BEFORE my coffee kicked in.

Why it works

- Lowers tension
- Creates belonging
- Signals awareness
- Makes people feel seen

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The “Laugh with, Not at” filter

Don’t add humor at someone else’s expense.

Before using humor, ask:

- Is it inclusive?
- Is it kind?
- Is it self-aware?
- Is it situational?
- Is it safe for the room?

Avoid humor that:

- punches down
- embarrasses individuals
- relies on stereotypes
- creates insiders vs. outsiders
- masks hostility with “just joking”

Use Self-Deprecating Humor Sparingly

Good:

“I opened this tab with confidence and no plan.”

Not Good:

- Constance self-criticism
- Undermining your competence.

Rule of thumb: If only 1 person is laughing, reassess.

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Team Culture Builders

Little things that leaders can add to make meetings and workdays light and enjoyable.

- Best Fail of the Week
- Meeting Soundtrack while people join
- Weird Holiday Celebrations
- Team Meme Thread
- “One Good Thing” at the end of meetings

Inside Jokes are Culture Glue!

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Permission to be Human

Sometimes levity is simply naming the reality.

The Impact

- Reduces Stress
- Increases Trust
- Builds Connection
- Boosts Morale

Everyone seems a bit tired today.

We have all reached that point in the semester where passwords feel personal.

This week has been... a lot.

observe.
think.
smile.

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Humor for Introverts

Often, the funniest people in organizations are the observant ones.

You do not need:

- perfect timing
- a loud personality
- stand-up comedy energy

Quiet Humor Works!

- Dry observations
- Thoughtful comments
- Funny chat responses
- Playful slide titles
- Relatable Storytelling

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Tiny Things You Can Try Today



Start a meeting with a human question.



Replace one robotic email phrase.



Celebrate a small mistake openly.



Add one playful slide.



Use a GIF intentionally.



Acknowledge shared stress positively.



Assessment Buzzword Bingo



Use fun working titles for projects.

Levity doesn't require a personality transplant. Most of the time, it starts with noticing opportunities to be just a little more human.