Delivering comedy has two immediate benefits: a natural physiological response experienced by both the sender and the receiver, and a “humanizing” effect that creates a connection between the speaker and the audience. The benefit to being a funny person is an increase to one’s popularity. Everyone feels good around him or her, especially when the humor is cute, witty, and even clean.

Creating tasteful and socially acceptable material that elicits laughter is serious business. Jennie McNulty, entertainer and a specialist in kinesiology offers this tidbit. “One significant formula for comedy is simply this: tragedy plus time equals comedy.” What was once so painful can become the humorous focus of which many people share a connection about the circumstances. With time creating distance, eventually painful memories lose their hold over one’s mind. Humor helps to heal the wounds and lessens the sting of the pain. Physiologically, responding to comedy allows the receiver to focus on something else and allows hormones to produce a sense of well-being.

With the holidays, we all have bittersweet memories that pop up. If only we could...
turn around negativity to something more productive—easy to say but difficult to
do most often. However, comedy and laughter do help the soul regenerate from
its wounds along with time in the healing process.
With that said, the holidays are especially stressful because of the financial
burden in finding the right gifts and keeping up with the popularity of giving the
“latest and best” gift items.
Electronic games, cell phones, music players, GPS devices, among other items
seem to come with a hefty price tag. In general, society has complied with
marketing and sales-driven campaigns to spend dollars that could be used more
economically and more purposefully and within their means and needs. The
meaning of the upcoming holidays really is about remembering one another and
acknowledging them with a token of love and appreciation for what they have
done in making a difference to the family unit, the workplace, and to the
friendship. Acknowledgement need not be expensive when sharing the holiday
spirit. Remember that when you shop.
The gift of laughter can be just the thing to help someone get through the stress
of the holidays. For instance, Poppy Champlin, comic entertainer residing in Los
Angeles, says that comedy is not natural to all of us, and we appreciate those
who are quick to see the humor in things. Seeing a comedy show in person or on
DVD is a great gift item. For the holidays, she especially likes to create humorous
mementos that elicit a smile or a good feeling because of the personalized nature
of the gift. She finds building her own gift to be therapeutic for herself in that she
is relaxed and focused on what she is doing, and she looks forward to coming
home and working on her projects. Poppy says that comedy relieves the
obsession to obsess about something. Her gift items have been a cube of pictures
that mean something to the receiver. One year she made a wish box and
decorated it beautifully with fun items on it. The receiver is to place a list in it and
see how many of them come to fruition the next year. Poppy created an elaborate
shadow box where she made a 3-D image of a trip from pictures she had taken.
She made the rocks and trees, and glued in tiny footlights. Visit at
www.poppycockprod.com
Comic entertainer, Jennie McNulty, gives thoughtful advice about becoming
cognizant of one’s actions. She recommends that people should snap out of it
when they recognize they are becoming a brat and behaving inappropriately.
First, apologizing to the receiver is due, then laughing at your incongruous
behavior is next. “The holiday is really about the spirit of fun, to be loving toward
one another, and ramping up for the next year,” she says. Jennie’s passion is in
walking as a great activity for bringing the mind and body back to balance.
With a background in kinesiology (the study of the mechanics of motion with
respect to human anatomy), she knows the value of walking for at least ten
minutes at a time to relax your mind and reflect on your life’s path. It seems that
very few people are getting enough exercise. Sitting all day in front of a computer
or any of the many jobs that confine people to an office does not give the body
enough of a workout. Walking is one of the best forms of exercise because it contributes so many benefits to the human body without risking injury or stressing it. Visit at www.jenniemcnulty.com

Is laughter contagious?
Have you noticed that when you are in an audience, you tend to laugh more intensely than when you are by yourself listening to a comedy show. Why is that? Is laughter contagious? An extraordinary outbreak of contagious laughter in a girls’ boarding school in Tanzania happened in 1962 when three girls got the giggles and couldn’t stop laughing for three months. The symptoms quickly spread to 95 students, forcing the school to close. Laugh tracks have accompanied most television sitcoms since September 1950 with “The Hank McCune Show. Canned laughter makes TV viewers laugh as if they were part of a live theater audience. Laughter from others is irresistible and has its roots in the neurological mechanism of laugh detection – a neural circuit in the brain that responds exclusively to laughter. (Yawning may involve a similar process in the visual domain.) Once triggered, the laugh detector activates a laugh generator, a neural circuit that causes us in turn to produce laughter.

Who doesn’t love a good joke?

So, why do people laugh at silly jokes? The winning formula to humor is one’s perception of incongruity. For example, why do we smile when we see a little girl in her momma’s shoes trying to look all grown up? Why is the most popular pastime of finding funny jokes and anecdotes flooding our e-mails? People love comedy! It’s a quick laugh and people want to share the sensation!
William M. Kelley, neuroscientist, illustrated how his group investigated the brain’s response to humor with the aid of a Jerry Seinfeld sitcom episode – the one in which George seeks a baldness remedy from China. Kelley and his colleagues have found that different brain regions spark with activity when a
person gets a joke versus when he or she reacts to it.

“Humor is a significant part of what makes us unique as human beings,” says Kelley, a neuroscientist at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. Meanwhile, an MRI continuously scanned their brains for nerve-cell activity. Scientists analyzed the data for the few seconds before and after each joke. As a participant viewed something funny, regions of the brain’s left hemisphere—the posterior temporal cortex and inferior frontal cortex—initially crackled with activity. Neuroscientists have previously associated these regions with resolving ambiguities, says Kelley. A few seconds later, presumably as the person responded to the humor, the insula and amygdala became active across both hemispheres of the brain. The insula is associated with emotional sensations, while the amygdala is for memory processing. Kelley notes that people tend to recall the funny bits of a sitcom.

Funnier alone or in a crowd?
Have you noticed that a joke isn’t always as funny when by yourself? However happy we may feel, laughter is a signal we send to others; it virtually disappears when we lack an audience. Gender differences in laughter may be even greater. Conducted by researchers with Robert Provine (University of Maryland), he found that of 1,200 people, females laugh more. In cross-gender conversations, females laughed 126 percent more than their male counterparts. Women tend to do the most laughing while males tend to get the most laughs. The main instigators of humor across cultures are men, beginning in early childhood. Most likely, the high school class clown is a male. The gender pattern of everyday laughter also suggests why more males are comedians than females.

Is laughter a social thing?
How important is laughter when wanting to meet and mate? In 3,745 ads placed on April 28, 1996 in eight papers from the Baltimore Sun to the San Diego Union-Tribune, women were more likely to seek out a “sense of humor” while men were more likely to offer it. The laughter of the female is the critical index of a healthy relationship. It seems that laughter does bring people together, and social support does improve mental and physical health. Adopting a humorous view towards life’s situations can take the edge off everyday stressors. Not being too serious or in a constant alert mode helps maintain the equanimity of mind and promote clear thinking. Being able to laugh stress away is the smartest way to ward off its effects. Go see a comedy show and share the gift of laughter for this holiday season. So, a monkey goes into a bar and...

Photo courtesy of nenetus at freedigitalphotos.net