



The Best Medicine

My brother and I have a very similar sense of humor. Ever since we were young we would laugh hysterically at things that would leave our dad, mom and sister scratching their heads. It's not that they didn't get it, it's just that they really didn't find it funny. And I get it, humor is subjective. My entire relationship with my brother has been centered around making each other laugh. We try to one-up each other with humor and wit pretty much every time we see each other. And the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, my nephews do the same thing. My sister says her older son's main goal in life is to make his little brother laugh, while the younger one's main goal is to consume as much ice cream as a four-year-old can.

Although I'm sure all of the joking around sometimes drove our mother crazy, developing a sense of humor is critical to a happy and successful life. Not only does laughter have many psychological benefits, the physical benefits are astounding and contribute to increased blood flow and heart health - it really is the best medicine! According to kidshealth.org a good sense of humor is a tool that kids can rely on throughout life to help them:

- see things from many perspectives other than the most obvious
- be spontaneous
- grasp unconventional ideas or ways of thinking
- see beyond the surface of things
- enjoy and participate in the playful aspects of life
- not take themselves too seriously.

Coincidentally these are the same skills we see in emerging leaders today. But it is not something we are born with. A sense of humor is a learned quality that we can foster and develop in our children. Laughing with your children is one of the best ways to connect with them. And the great thing about children is they can find humor in almost everything and everyone. On average children laugh 200 times a day, compared to the 15 to 18 times adults laugh.

In the [ABC Head Start](#) classrooms laughter is a sound heard throughout the day in pretty much every activity. One of my favourite activities to build children's sense of humor is actually a vocabulary and language building exercise. They are a set of flashcards with pictures that have something wrong or crazy happening, like a peacock with crayons for a tail, the children think these are hysterical and they love to talk about the cards and describe not only what is wrong but how it can be fixed.

And that is just one very specific activity but preschoolers really don't need anything specific to make them laugh. Create fun in everything you do with your children, because if you are laughing they will most likely join in. Be silly, play, have fun and most of all - laugh.