

Top 5 Tips for Appropriate Laughter and Play at Work

1. **Laugh with others not at others.**

Laughter is beneficial and constructive when we laugh with others: It is a means of connecting and communicating. However, it is destructive when we laugh at others. Ensure you're laughing with others and never at them.

2. **Laugh at yourself.**

If you're going to joke about anyone, your best bet is to joke about yourself. It's the safest target for laughter because it's not threatening to those around you and shows your humility. Beware as there is a fine line between self-deprecating humour and put downs. For example if you forget something. Self-deprecation would be saying "My memory is good but short" whereas a put down would be saying "I'm so stupid".

3. **Take ourselves lightly but our jobs seriously.**

Many of us are very serious at work and forget to separate the seriousness of our jobs with the seriousness of life. Being serious about work is essential but being serious about ourselves is not. In fact, when we can take ourselves lightly it helps us manage stress, improve relationships and boost productivity. Using laughter and play is meant to help us at work not replace hard work.

4. **Recognize laughter in everyday activities and situations.**

Don't rely on jokes for laughter as humour is individual and can be politically incorrect or offensive. In fact, most genuine laughter is not in response to jokes.

5. **Know your audience and read each situation.**

When you know your audience and understand each situation, you can determine if laughter is appropriate and to what extent (e.g. a chuckle to a hardy guffaw). Sometimes your co-workers may be open to laughter but in a given situation, it may not be appropriate. For example, it might be smart to leave laughter out during a meeting discussing extremely poor financial results. The best advice is this rule of thumb: "When in doubt, leave it out."