

# Thoughts Have Feelings Too

## Teacher Resource Pack



### INTRODUCTION

Laughter is the best medicine! The idea that there is a connection between laughter, emotional wellbeing and mental health has been around for years. Research on the physiological health benefits on laughter has been conducted for decades and continues to happen internationally by medical physicians. There is also a growing group of researchers that are exploring the psychological benefits of laughter. This research suggests that the healing power of humour and laughter combats stress, reduces pain by releasing endorphins, boosts the immune system by increasing the level of T cells & lowering serum cortisol levels, helps promote a positive outlook, helps people to cope with difficult situations and helps to create bonds and therefore support between people, all of which aid the healing process.

Comedy and clowning are now being used in hospitals to support children in their recovery from the trauma of medical and surgical treatment. Clown Doctors use techniques such as magic, music, storytelling and other clowning skills to empower children with doses of fun that help them deal with the range of emotions they may experience while in hospital: fear, anxiety, loneliness, boredom.

These notes are designed to give you a concise resource to use with your class and to support their experience of seeing *Thoughts Have Feelings Too*.

### CLASSROOM CONTENT AND CURRICULIUM CONNECTIONS

**Essential Learnings:** The Arts (Drama), HPE (health, personal learning), English.

**Style/Form:** Traditional and contemporary clowning, non-verbal communication and mime.

**Themes and Contexts:** Storytelling, creativity and imagination, confidence, resilience, self-actualisation, mental health.

## **CLOWNING**

The attributes of a clown are playfulness, irreverence, and the freedom of 'not knowing'. In ancient Greece comics were bald-headed and padded to appear larger than normal. They performed as secondary figures in farces and mime, parodying the actions of more serious characters. In Roman mime the clown wore a pointed hat and a patchwork colourful robe and was the target for the tricks and abuse.

The clown emerged as a professional comic actor in the late Middle Ages. Court jesters and fools were influences for travelling entertainers. Italian commedia dell'arte, improvised masked comedy with stock plots also developed many stock clown characters, including Arlecchino (Harlequin) in the 16th century. Harlequin began as a comic valet, or zanni, but soon developed into an acrobatic trickster, wearing a black domino mask and carrying a bat or noisy slapstick with which he frequently hit his victims. Pierrot was another Zanni, always the butt of jokes and pranks, he was the lowest of low in society. Commedia also had lazzi, or humorous interludes.

The 3 traditional types of clowns are the White-face, Auguste and Character.

### **White-face Clown**

The White-face clown is the 'classic' clown, the oldest and most well-known of the clowns, and is typically the straight clown in skits.

Associated with the circus, the White-face is the most intelligent type of clown with the highest status - typically the ringleader. The make-up base of white grease paint meant distant audiences could see the clown.

This is the oldest style of clown, dating back to Greek theatre. Whiteface is the court jester of the Middle Ages. Commedia del arté popularised several stock clown characters, including Pierrot, Columbine, Harlequin and Clown. Pierrot is a White-face clown. His flour-whitened face is thought to be the introduction of the White-face.

### **Auguste Clown**

The Auguste clown is the least intelligent, and zaniest of the clowns. The Auguste clown tends to be the silly clown in skits. Make-up is a flesh-tone base, with features outlined. The costume of the Auguste clown tends to be gaudy, mismatched, over-sized and very bright. In the 1860s, or so the story goes, a low-comedy comic appeared under the name of Auguste, who had a big nose, baggy clothes, and large shoes. He worked with a White-face clown and always spoiled the tricks by appearing at the wrong time to mess things up.

The red nose was introduced by Albert Fratellini in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Character Clown**

The Hobo or Tramp clown is the most popular character clown, although character clowns can be police officers, women, or babies - any character at all.

The Hobo usually has tattered clothes, a tattered hat, make-up which suggests he is unshaven, exaggerated features and a red nose. The generic Tramp character is 'down-on-his-luck'. The Tramp clown is an American creation, and Charlie Chaplin is the most famous of these.

## LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

### *Art Form Definitions*

**Clown:** A character, often with a red nose who looks and acts 'out of place' and makes people laugh. There are many different kinds of Clowns: circus clowns, red nose clowns, bossy clowns, innocent clowns, sad clowns, and happy clowns. Clowns often make us laugh through their *physicality* - how they look, move and act and what they do, rather than what they say.

**Status:** Where someone acts or is treated as more important than someone else. A King for example, has a higher status than a normal person. Hierarchy or status is important in the world of Clowns. In the performance, there are two clowns - one is high status and one is low status.

**Mime and Non-verbal expression:** Communicating without words, just with the face and body, creating and using imaginary objects

## KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS

Discuss and define the following terms with your class in relation to the performance of *Thoughts Have feelings Too*.

Slapstick, visual comedy, physical theatre, mime, acrobatic, positive, negative, angry, control, happy, sad, depressed, anxiety, emotions, reaction, resilience, clown, high status, low status, clown

## KEY QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION AND CONSIDERATION

- What is a clown?
- What makes you happy, sad and angry?
- Can little things make you angry?
- Can you stop being angry?
- How can you feel better about bad days?
- How can you help others when they are sad?
- What does negative thinking do to your emotions?
- What can positive thinking do?
- Who controls our emotions?

## LINKS TO CURRICULUM

The following learning experiences provide an entry point to the style of the performance and its thematic investigations.

## DRAMA

### Pre-performance Activities

#### *Making and presenting*

Warm up: Exploring physical and gestural aspects of comedy

Students walking around the room as if:

- *They are 50 kilograms heavier*
- *Their knees have turned to jelly*
- *They can't control their legs and arms*
- *They are invisible and can move silently*

Discuss with class what characters are suggested by some of the movements.

- Students to create frozen statues of the following actions: the best day of your life, a sad day, trying to help someone, feeling hopeful, shrugging your shoulders, losing your temper, controlling your temper, feeling proud, feeling worried, feeling scared, feeling brave.
- Students in groups to create a freeze frame that captures the following: "I wasn't a part of the group". Present to class, discuss the implicit narratives/stories in the frames. Discuss how to overcome feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- Students in groups to create a freeze frame that captures a group of people getting along and enjoying an event. Discuss what factors and conditions help this to happen. E.g. people take their turn and listen to each other.

### Co-operation

#### Activity 1: Sound Ball

Have the group stand in a circle. One person makes a sound—any sound—while also making a throwing gesture towards another person in the group. That second person then 'receives' the sound with a physical motion like catching a ball or a sack or a ray of light and—importantly—repeats the sound sent to them. Then, without hesitation, the first receiver sends a new sound with a new gesture to another person in the circle. Keep the sound moving quickly and boldly to get everyone involved. *Insider Tips:*

- Make sure to get the body involved and not just the voice. An active, athletic stance—like you would need if you were prepared to catch a real ball—helps loosen up the mind.
- Encourage kids *not* to predict or plan what sound they'll make if the ball comes their way. Better to receive the one sent and then send a new one that emerges of its own accord.
- Make sure that folks do actively *receive* the sound sent to them before sending one out. It's a great affirmation to the sender and helps build a spirit of generosity.

Add in your own variations as your group gets better with Sound Ball. We've played City Ball, Vegetable Ball, Names that Start with M Ball, and so on. Keep encouraging folks not to have one waiting in the wings to use. Or, even better, let them have a response in the wings—but then choose another one in the moment.

#### Activity 2: Knife and Fork

Divide students into pairs, preferably with folks they don't yet know as well. Let them know that you're going to give them a phrase or item that they need to somehow create with their bodies *without talking*. They should hold their position until you give them the OK for the

next item. You'll be amazed at the range of creativity folks come up with. Good starter "tasks" include: *fork and knife, peanut butter and jelly, bee and flower, train and station* but have fun coming up with your own!

- Keep them focused on their own creations rather than looking around at what others are doing.

### **Activity 3: I Am A Tree**

One person starts the scene on stage saying "I am a tree." Another person joins them, choosing something or someone to interact with the tree. They might say "I am the kookaburra calling from the tree branch" and clasp the tree person's arm. Or maybe they say "I am the water running beneath the roots of the tree" and lie down on the floor to wriggle beneath the tree person's feet. A third person then joins the first two, choosing their own related identity and action: "I am the person reading a book under the tree" while sitting at the tree person's feet. At that point, the person who started the scene—here, the tree—chooses one of the others to take with her off stage ("I'll take the person reading.") and they leave the third person alone on stage. That person repeats their identity ("I am the kookaburra calling from the tree branch.") and two more come on stage to find connected identities to *that* person. This person who was left on stage alone—this second time, the kookaburra—now chooses one of his or her own to come off stage and the cycle begins again. Repeat as needed.

- If needed, encourage students to connect their addition to who or what has already been established.
- Each subsequent set of "beings" need not relate to the one that came before it.

Once your group gets familiar with the game, it can make for a sweet conclusion to find a way for the last person to say "I am a tree."

### **Activity 4: Failure "Ta-Da"!!!**

So many of us remain terrified of failing or of making mistakes and that prevents us from even participating in discussions. This game builds a different relationship to failure. Here, each person comes in front of the room one at a time. After "claiming" the stage, that person shares with pride a made-up failure of theirs. Something like "I put a pair of new blue jeans in with my mother's clothes and everything turned blue" is great—not completely inconsequential (like "I forgot to turn the lights off when I left home") but also not devastating or traumatic (like "I ran over my dog...twice"). Once they've shared the 'failure', the rest of the group gives them a wild and rousing ovation in celebration. The person on stage should take a grand and vigorous, deep "ta-da!" bow, soaking in the applause to full effect. The game finishes when everyone's had the chance to celebrate having 'failed.'

*Insider Tips:*

- Make sure to explain *why* you're playing this game before you play it or to debrief it afterward: we're trying to create a new relationship to what we think of as failure. When we fail, it often means we're pushing ourselves to develop new skills. It means we're taking risks. And our so-called 'failures' can lead us to possibilities we never would have imagined. That's all worth celebrating.
- Again, emphasize that the failures should be made up once the person gets to the stage. You don't want to initiate a therapy session here.

Often times, kids will shrink from the applause and will want to take a quick bow and run off stage. The whole point is to soak it in. What would it be like if we celebrated our failures?

### *Responding*

#### *Introducing the performance*

- Show the students the performance image on the Homunculus Theatre Website. Ask what the image tells them about the performance. Introduce the creative team and discuss the style of theatre. Students to view the list of commedia characters and their typical characteristics (please see list on the website).
- Students brainstorm their favorite comedies and discuss what characters they like.
- Discuss with the class the importance of laughter for well – being.

## **DRAMA**

### **Post-performance Activities**

#### *Making and presenting*

- Students to create in small groups a memorable moment from the play. Encourage students to carefully recreate the posture, facial expressions and demeanour of the character. Present to class and discuss why the moment engaged the audience.
- Students to discuss the two clowns; the gentle, sweet clown and the absent – minded professor. Discuss who had the higher status or power? In pairs recreate a moment when the sweet clown is walking behind the other clown slightly making fun of the professor. Pairs to rehearse and present to class.
- Mantle of the Expert: All students are ‘in-roled’ as counsellors, experts in advising someone to overcome their problems. The teacher goes into role as a child who is always losing their temper and has upset many people in the school. Students are to devise a list of questions and solutions for the “troubled student”. The teacher puts on a hat (or other handy piece of costume) and responds in role to the questions. The students sit in their normal places and ask questions of the teacher in role. The teacher in role selects students with their hands up. At the end the teacher sums up the advice given to the student and what was learnt about the problem.

If the class warm to the activity, the teacher can suggest a student to go into role as the difficult student and change the emotion to anxiety. How can they help a student that feels anxious all the time?

### *Responding*

- Students to brainstorm with teacher the moments they liked from the performance. Teacher to write up responses. Students then discuss any moments they found challenging?
- Discuss with the class the statement from the performance: “We all have beliefs about ourselves but sometimes the beliefs we have about ourselves are not necessarily correct”. What was the example given in the performance that showed this? What happened when Clown ‘changed his thought?’
- •f you are angry at someone, what should you do? Discuss the statement from the performance: “When you’re angry sometimes it’s good to be alone.” What did Clown do when he was angry at the Professor, and alone? Why was he angry? How

did they become friends again?

- Using the following questions further unpack the construction of the performance:  
*How did the performers create different spaces and the environments in the performance?*  
*Describe the two characters in the performance? How did the two different actors create the characters through voice and movement?*

## **CONCLUSION**

*Do you have questions about the performance? How was it different to other performances you have seen?*

## **ENGLISH**

### **Pre-performance Activities**

- Why is it so important to laugh, both personally and in our communities?
- Students in pairs, to create a poster that advertises a clown performance coming to the school.
- Students investigate the website of Homunculus Theatre. What can we tell from the images?

## **ENGLISH**

### **Post-performance Activities**

- Students to write a letter to a friend about the performance. What did they learn? What was your favourite moment and why? Was there anything they didn't understand?
- Consider the characters; describe them and relate them to modern examples or people they remind you of in your life.
- Teacher to read the books (if possible) *Sarah's Heavy Heart* by Peter Carnarvas and *Angry Arthur* by Haiawyn Oram, discuss the characters in the books and the troubles they are having; what suggestions do the students have for them.

Teachers investigate the power point on <http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Power-point-on-managing-anger-6009696/> it explores the tantrum Arthur has and how to control it.

Student to compose a creative piece of writing;

- a) The last time I lost my temper...
- b) When I get worried I try to .....

## HEALTH

### Activity 1: You!

#### Objectives:

- Disrupt automatic mental patterning;
- Focus on the here and now;

The basic pattern:

- Everyone stands in a circle. The facilitator starts the game by pointing to someone in the circle while saying "you". This person then points to someone else while saying "you".
- Play continues until everyone gets to lower their hand and say "you" to someone – no repeats allowed – the last person points to the facilitator and passes the "you" back to him/her.
- Ask the participants if they remember who they received the "you" from and who they passed it to because they are going to stick with these people.
- Play two more rounds so everyone becomes comfortable and encourage the group to go faster.

The second pattern: Tell the participants that they are now going to practice a different pattern. Point to someone (different than the first round) and say something in a category, e.g. your favorite breakfast food/dish. Repeat procedure until everyone's pointed to someone and said a favourite breakfast item (no repetition of people being pointed at or food). Start the "you" pattern and about 30 seconds in, begin the breakfast pattern so you have two patterns going at the same time. Ss will generally drop one. Encourage them to concentrate and keep the momentum with both.

The third pattern: Now introduce a third pattern with a different category, e.g., animal, superhero, flower, country. Start the "you" pattern, then the 2<sup>nd</sup> one and then the third.

### Activity 2: The Silent Circle of Support

#### Objectives:

- Promote group cohesion;
- Demonstrate the core improv principle "take care of each other";
- Provide an experience of disorientation that is safe and supported, which promotes creativity and openness to the development of new thinking and skills;

Each participant takes a turn walking with eyes closed in a circle made up of the rest of the group. It begins with turning around a few times with eyes closed, in the center of the circle, then walking straight ahead. The group is responsible for making sure the person walking is supported, safe, and taken care of. There is always the risk that someone in the circle will mess up, or that the people in the circle will not work together in a coherent way (although I have yet to see that happen). Especially with kids, there is always the possibility that it could happen and we have to be prepared to process anything that goes wrong if it does.

### Activity 3: I Did It!

#### Objectives:

- Reflect on a personal experience with "following the fear" that turned out well which demonstrates one of the tenets of both improvisation and emotional intelligence;
- Build up group cohesiveness through personal sharing;
- Experience the group support and the "music" of an interaction, which is central to understanding emotional intelligence;



- Review the “hook” of musical themes from movies that most people recognize, including movies that feature heroes who do incredible things, e.g.: Mission Impossible, Theme from Superman, Theme from Rocky, Theme from Magnificent Seven; relationship or interpersonal issues: Theme From The Odd Couple; Sing each theme together to rehearse.
- Instruct participants to take 5 minutes to review something that have accomplished in their life that they did not think they could do. Identify: What was the goal? What were the obstacles? How does it feel to have accomplished this?

Each participant can choose what theme music they would like the group to sing as they take center stage. Sing with energy to support the person as they take the stage. Everyone shares from 3-4 minutes.

#### **Activity 4: What Are You Doing?**

##### **Objectives:**

- Increase spontaneity;
- Produce mind/body dissonance\* which enhances creativity;

The first player of the line steps into the circle and starts miming an activity. As soon as the activity is clear, player 2 asks “What are you doing?” The first player answers something that has nothing to do with what he’s actually doing. E.g. if player 1 is cutting someone’s hair, when asked what he’s doing he might say “I’m reading the newspaper”. The second player starts miming the activity stated by the previous player. A third player comes up to player 2, asks what he is doing, and so on. Play until everyone has mimed something, and has answered the question.

#### **Activity 5: Life Raft**

##### **Objectives:**

- Communication;
- Problem solving;
- Co-operation;

In small groups, plan how to balance as many people as possible within a small marked area (for example, inside a hula hoop, or on a large sheet of paper).

For additional challenge keep making the raft smaller.

#### **Activity 6: Sit Down Synchrony**

##### **Objectives:**

- Awareness of others;
- Awareness of the group;

In this game, the class is seated in a circle. The challenge is for the class to stand in perfect synchrony, without an identifiable leader, and then to sit in the same style.

#### **Post-show Discussions**

1. Brainstorm: what do we know about emotions? What are feelings? How do they affect us? What are the emotions explored in the performance? Happiness, sadness, anger, fear.
2. Word discuss: Go through the different words that represent these four emotions
3. Emotions wheel: Create an emotions wheel each- (split pins for spinner) and once complete spin and act out an emotion.

4. Discuss each emotion- what does it look like? Feel like? Write on board
5. Facial expression for that emotion
6. Act it out as a group
7. Repeat this process for each emotion.

### Emotions

To focus on emotions, write down a list or ask for suggestions from your class.

For the emotion (or quality) "angry," have the students suggest situations that make them angry. For example, a person might feel angry if they get fired from their job. A person might feel angry if their best friend lied to them about... Do this for each of the emotions.

Divide the students into pairs. Each pair receives or picks one of the emotions and a situation. Give them a few minutes to confer and rehearse a pantomime with each other.

Bring the class back together and each pair can perform a pantomime that displays the emotion.

Pantomime works best with this exercise. When students rely on the use of words, they are less likely to *show*, and more likely to *tell*.

### References

Carnarvas, Peter, *Sarah's Heavy Heart*  
 Oram, Haiawyn, *Angry Arthur*

### Web Links

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/positive-psychology-in-the-classroom>  
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