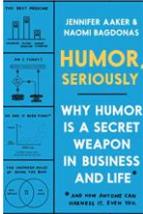


'CliffsNotes' Book Club Recap

DO YOU LOVE BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP, NEUROSCIENCE, AND BUSINESS, BUT NOT HAVE TIME TO READ ALL THE BOOKS?

At the '**CliffsNotes' club** there's no pressure to pre-read the book, no membership required, no cost, and great networking in just 90 minutes. Each month, you will hear **highlights** from a recently-published business book. **Register here** for upcoming events.



September, 2021

Humor, Seriously: Why Humor Is a Secret Weapon in Business and Life

By Jennifer Aaker, Naomi Bagdonas

Select Highlights & Discussion Points

Presented by Alecia Coffey <aleciaacoffey@gmail.com>

Book explores how humor has a profound impact on our behavior and mindset. Makes case that can be harnessed as a competitive advantage.

- Why so powerful—why underutilized—how to tap into it

The two authors' biographies demonstrate well positioned to make their case that humor complements rather than competes with serious endeavors.

- Jennifer Aaker behavioral scientist, chaired prof at Stanford who teaches a course called Humor, serious business.
- Naomi Bagdonas an executive coach who lived a double life as a comic, doing shows at night.
- Both had aha moments when realized humor doesn't deny seriousness of life but allows us to forge connections that help us to move through challenges.

Book has humor audit and a quiz on humorseriously.com to determine your humor style.

Ask group: When was last time you really laughed at work?

Gallup poll of 1.4 mill in 166 countries showed frequency of laughter starts to plummet around age 23.

Authors quote studies that demonstrate power of humor:

- Makes us and our material more memorable, enhances others' perceptions of our power/intelligence
- Creates bonds by releasing oxytocin, which accelerates trust building
- Fosters creativity, helps us see new connections and feel safer to share unconventional
- Reduces stress in moment, builds resilience
- can be persuasive

Examples:

- More than twice as many people solved cognitive test when watched a funny video first
- In an experiment on negotiation, buyers were willing to pay on average 18% more when sales person said 'final offer is x and I'll throw in my pet frog'
- CEO of Spanx finally made contact with buyers when sent one shoe by mail with a note saying 'just trying to get my foot in the door'

Ask group: Who is game to share a time they saw how humor helped build connections in a work setting?

Who can share a presentation that was memorable because of its humor?

Book delves into what makes something funny: noticing oddities and calling them out.

"Sorry I'm late. I didn't want to come"

- Heart of humor is truth and all humor contains surprise and misdirection

Techniques:

- Notice differences/incongruity. Health club vending machine only sells Doritos and Coke
- Notice strong emotion and opinions

Ask group: What frustrates you more than it seems to other people? What do you loathe for no good reason? What do you illogically adore?

Book then explores techniques such as yes, and, exaggeration, rule of three (two expected statements, one surprise)

Example from Amy Schumer: "Thank you so much for coming out to my show. This is such a big deal for me. I don't know if you guys know this but this past year I've gotten very rich, famous, and humble."

Teaching how to be funny rather daunting; authors switch gears to talk about goal being levity vs. telling jokes. Ultimately about creating human connections.

- Examples: injecting humor into our emails. Deloitte came up with a BS meter to get rid of tired words such as 'bandwidth' and 'optimize.'
- Humorous sign offs for resumes, presentations.
- Bad idea brainstorm—helps people suspend judgment completely.
- Callbacks—referencing 'private jokes'/things both found funny.

Leading with Humor Chapter basically reemphasizes point that humor builds trust. 2019 HBR survey found 58% trust stranger more than their boss. Survey found leaders who speak like regular people and share obstacles they've overcome more trustworthy/relatable.

- Madeleine Albright stories: Skit with her Russian counterpart. Bug pin story.
- Leaders can also use self-deprecating humor to break down hierarchy.

'Creating Culture of Levity

- Leaders should 'showcase their funny'
- Look for humorous wingmen
- Play along when see it

Ask group: If we aim low, 'mildly amusing'/droll/cracked a smile: what techniques could we try?

How can we encourage leaders to 'embrace their funny' to show up more authentically to their workforce?

What team rituals can encourage levity?

Navigating the Grey

- Gets harder as move up the ranks—don't make fun of those lower in status
- Bounds of appropriateness shifting—what was ok in TV shows ten years ago not ok now...

About the Book Club In this monthly club, a presenter shares highlights from a book related to leadership, business, neuroscience, or coaching. Membership is not required, and there's no obligation to pre-read the book. This discussion summary is intended to provide a recap of the conversation at Book Club, rather than serve as a thorough book summary. [Register here](#) for upcoming events. For the full set of discussion summaries, [click here](#).