

Humor--Creativity—Intuition: Kissin' Cousins  
by Anne Durrum Robinson  
(from *FOCUS* Volume 9, Number 4, July-August 1998)

I hope that the term "kissin' cousins" is understood not only in Texas but all over the world. Most of us have cousins on one side of the family or the other. Some we rarely see. Some we wouldn't recognize if we met them on the street. Others are especially dear to us. We rejoice in their company. When we encounter them (occasionally or often), we greet them with bear hugs and a smack on the check. Those are our KISSIN' COUSINS!

So why do I give that warm designation to HUMOR, CREATIVITY and INTUITION? Because they are unquestionably close to one another (as well as to us) and will remain that way.

I first became aware of their potential proximity when I read Dr. Edward de Bono's discerning book, *Serious Creativity*. Oddly enough it was in the book of that knitted-brows title that Dr. de Bono pointed out the similarity between two of the terrific threesome. He said that both humor and creativity have elements of surprise. They ostensibly start in one direction, abruptly veer off in another, and then often find their way back to their original paths.

Having been made conscious of that similarity, I began to do mental "road maps" of jokes and of the charted pathways of creative thinking. Just as the wise man had said, partway through the thought process the mind was often jerked onto a "side road." There would be a period of astonishment and another of readjustment. Then the mind would handle the detour and return to its original pathway, richer for an "Aha!" or an unexpected chuckle or guffaw.

Even good cartoons display this intentional misleading. Our eyes are given a picture that heads our thinking in one direction. The punch line pokes us in the ribs with an alternate suggestion. Example: At a truck stop a burly truck driver has just been handed his sandwich chopped in two equal halves. (If he's going to make any comment, we expect it to be road-wise and macho. Instead....) Tears are streaming down his weathered face and he is wailing, "Oh dear, I wanted it cut crisscross!"

Humor . . .

Although humor is mental and laughter is physical, I often associate the right kinds of laughter with an overall feeling of camaraderie and good humor--particularly in groups. For instance, in the monthly creative problem-solving meetings which I mentor in my home, as the quality of the creative-thinking improves, there is more concerted group laughter. But it is always "laughter WITH"--never "laughter AT." My husband (who spends the problem-solving evenings in his study upstairs) often comments on the laughter-level when we have solved a particularly challenging dilemma for some "client." In fact, he questions whether we are truly working on a real poser. Says he, "I think you

all are just eating the refreshments and having fun." "Well," I confess, "part of the time we're doing those things, too. But we have many helpful pages of options to send home with the person who is solving a problem or planning a project."

So lightheartedness does not necessarily mean lightheadedness. Any individual or group can give ample consideration to a creative challenge without drawing the eyebrows into a forbidding scowl or tying the corners of the mouth under the chin.

As a matter-of-fact, I deliberately begin each speech or workshop with something that can produce either a giggle or guffaw. I'm not an effective joke teller so my humor is largely situation: some laughable element I find in what is going on around us. Example: I had been asked by one business/industry client to teach a session on effective listening. So when the group began to assemble, I was sitting at the door wearing a huge pair of pink ears. As each of the participants greeted me, I looked perplexed and said, "How's that again?" or gave an answer that showed I hadn't really heard what was said. By the time we were ready to start the session, folks were smiling and a few were begging to try on the ears. The participants were much more receptive because we had combined humor and creativity.

Intuition . . .

So where does intuition come into this relationship? First, let me share my personal definition of intuition. To me it is a natural "mind power": a combination of logic, experience, memory and paranormal knowing which everyone has to some degree. (In this, intuition differs from clairvoyance, which is a wholly paranormal knowing with no part of experience or memory.) So when I need information on how to approach a person, group or challenge, I may check my left-brain sources first. What do the facts or an analysis tell me? Where does this situation fall into a known system? What has my experience been? What do I remember from similar circumstances?

Then I get quiet, open and receptive to my other sources. I deliberately (with silence, deep breathing, relaxation) open what I term my "awareness window" between my conscious and subconscious minds. I may write my impressions or simply make mental notes. But I encourage my two minds to deliberately confer with each other. Then both invite the Higher Mind to share whatever it has to offer. The three minds are also open to other minds which don't close them out. I can dip into what Dr. Ira Progoff calls "the underground stream" or what others have dubbed the "collective unconscious." Personally, I avoid the term "unconscious." I feel that there is some form of consciousness at all times.

As I relax and receive, I deliberately put aside the "editor" or "selector" or "judge" in me. At this time I am open to whatever contribution any helpful mind wants to make.

When I feel I have given a fair hearing to all pertinent (or even impertinent) information, I then ask my intuition to guide me to right choices: information, direction or actions that will be equally beneficial to everybody involved.

It is at this stage that I think we need to be aware of our individual reliable signals. If you are interested in relying on your intuition, I advise you to practice until you know what these signals are. I have two separate ones. For situations, I must get the same instructions three times. Then I know I'm on the right track. For people, if I am choosing wrongly, I get a little warning bell. It rings way back in my consciousness, not loudly but instantly. If I ignore either of these signals, it is to my peril.

Creativity . . .

I have recently had ample evidence of the value of my "kissin' Cousins." I broke my right leg. When it was healed but not getting stronger, I asked for more therapy. I was sent for the wrong kind, which collapsed my left hip. Back into a wheelchair I went, this time permanently. I could not longer travel without a companion. Therefore, much of my speaking and training (done across the country or internationally) had automatically come to an abrupt halt.

This was a real jolt. In my beloved profession, I had been exactly where I wanted to be: reasonably successful, with marvelous colleagues, friends all over the world. And a strong feeling that I was making valuable contributions to the lives of others. Where was I to go from here? What was I to do?

I turned to the left-brain. Frankly, inasmuch as all logic was heavily discouraging, it wasn't much help. So I shifted to the right. I followed the procedure I have just described. And waited. And waited. Then I began getting nudges that I should design a presentation that is meant to be delivered from a wheelchair.

Meanwhile, a thoughtful friend found a fabric designer who could devise a fabric piece to be slipped over the back of the wheelchair to make it look like a winged chair. The thoughtful friend made this her "recovery" gift. Design and production were a lengthy process but the camouflage is almost ready for a debut.

In my reveries I was reminded and reminded and re-minded of the rhymed comedy skits my twin and I used to write and do. I recalled that laughter is a great healer, witness the experience of Dr. Norman Cousins. When I got the repeated "mental shoves" enough times, I finally located the box which contained the skits, selected four and built around them a really fun presentation titled *Bad Times Made Verse or What to Do When Life Goes to the Doggerel: A Study in Re-sillyence*.

I do the presentation with lots of hats and headpieces. Three live performances (one for 1,000 folks in San Antonio) convinced me that the nutty offering accomplishes its mission. One woman who came up (after I had wrecked what little hair I have left with

all the changes of headgear) said, "Mrs. Robinson, this is the first time I've felt happy since I can remember."

That was enough to convince me that my intuition had prompted me in the right direction. With the invaluable help of a very gifted colleague, Lynn Segall, we have recently made the presentation into an hour video. It was shot at Innovation Space, Cynthia Carlisle's "creative playground for the brain." Many talented people were involved.

We have also collected about fifteen of the skits, had them illustrated by Betsy Warren, and put them into a book. They and the video (emphasizing laughter as a way to turn misery into merriment or hopelessness into hilarity) form a fitting tribute to my departed twin: Marye Durrum Benjamin, one of the funniest women, best writers and most effective natural actresses I have every seen.

When I think back through the sequence of heart-stopping events beginning with April 1, 1996, I realize that all three of my "Kissin' Cousins" came to my rescue: Creativity, which enabled us to write the skits in the first place. (Perhaps I should add a fourth, Courage, which let us make utter fools of ourselves on various stages.) Humor, which was the basis of every short sketch. And Intuition, which led me back through time to these laughter-producing sketches which I could recreate "sittin' down."

So a big kiss back to the rescuing relatives who were there when I needed them most: Creativity, Humor and Intuition. I count them an invaluable branch of my wonderful family. I hope you will adopt them into yours.

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Anne Durrum Robinson is a consultant, creativity connoisseur and world traveler. For over 25 years she has taught workshop and given keynote speeches for business, industry, government and academia in the U.S. and other countries. Annie's 40-minute video "Bad Times Made Verse or What To Do When Life Goes to the Doggerel: A Study in Re-Silly-ence" shows how she turned misery into merriment, hopelessness into hilarity. She accomplishes this with four rib-tickling skits (each done in appropriate headgear). For information, go to <http://www.io.com/~stellar/adr/anne.html>.