

Can a dog bite ever be funny?

By Tim Gard, CSP, CPAE

I love dogs. I have been bitten by dogs and don't recommend it. But if asked, "Can a dog bite ever be funny?" I would have to say "Yes."

Let me explain. I once spoke at a meeting of postal carriers. One of the other non-postal carrier speakers (like me) made this opening comment: "There is nothing funny about dog bites." I suspect he was trying to gain empathy from this postal group, but his comment was not . . . entirely . . . accurate.

If you have ever watched the classic movie *The Pink Panther Strikes Again*, you know where I'm coming from. I've embedded a 77-second clip to share with you. (It's streaming video so you don't have to download anything.) Seeing it and hearing it beats simply reading about it. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXn2QVipK2o>

If you watched the video, then skip this next paragraph. If not, then read on.

Chief Inspector Clouseau is checking into a Bavarian motel. After signing the guest register and while walking away from the reception desk, he sees a small, cute dog in the lobby. He asks the clerk, "Does your dog bite?" The clerk looks at the dog, looks at Clouseau, and simply replies, "No." Clouseau then bends down to pet the animal and gets viscously bitten by the dog. Indignantly, he turns to the clerk. "You said your dog doesn't bite!" The clerk replies, "It's not my dog."

Funny. Yes, I think so.

No matter what you do for a living, you find both funny things and things that will never be funny. As someone who has worked in Human Services most of his life, many things I've experienced first-hand will never be funny. But I also know first-hand that humor is

a tool—a skill that can be developed. Having a Comic Vision can help us *burn bright* and not *burn out* even under the most stressful situations.

What would you have done in Clouseau's place? Would you have wandered off as the inspector did? Would you have laughed on the spot? Would you have gotten upset and obsessively carried the miscommunication around all day? We are all different people with one similarity—we each have the choice to *act* and not *react* to situational stress.

Stressors exist all around us, sometimes when we least expect them and sometimes when we encounter them over and over. If you are an inspector like Clouseau or work in another profession, the number one rule in dealing with stress is this: It doesn't matter what happens to us or around us; our stress stems from our personal *perception* of an event.

I often choose to use my Comic Vision to see everyday stressors in a funny light, and you can too. I actively *act* and not *react* to the stress, and I encourage you to develop that skill also.

Humor skills *can* be learned just as we learn skills like leadership, management, taking or giving blood, and so on. And using humor as a business skill isn't about telling jokes.

What is it?

- Sometimes it's *intentionally* becoming aware of the funny stuff we *unintentionally* do.
- Sometimes it's acting and not reacting to everyday stressors, choosing to laugh and not get upset when potentially funny stuff happens.
- Sometimes it's giving the stressor a little time, then laughing about it and letting it go rather than obsessing about what was or wasn't said and whose fault it was.

Carol Burnett once said, "Comedy is tragedy plus time." Some things in our lives will never be funny, some are funny on the spot, and some take time till the laughter seeps in.

I respectfully disagree with my speaking colleague who said, “No dog bite is ever funny.” Do I think *all* dog bites are *always* funny? No. Neither do I think getting rabies from dog bites is funny.

But I do know that, every day, we see the good, the bad, the happy, the sad. We just need to know there’s a place for laughter in our lives . . . even when a dog bites.

Tim Gard, CSP, CPAE

One of the USA's foremost authorities on stress reduction through humor, Tim Gard, CSP, CPAE is also a professional speaker, author and humor philosopher. In addition to sharing his fall-out-of-your-seat laughing Comic Vision seminars, he markets his own line of stress buster tools. A Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), Tim is also a member of Hall of Fame 2006 Council of Peers Award of Excellence (CPAE). Contact him at Tim@timgard.com or visit his website at www.timgard.com. USA 1-800-865-9939 (It helps to remember it as: 1-800-VOL-ZZEZ) or USA 303-371-3311 (direct line) or USA 303-932-0990 (fax).