

# Your Seventh Sense

How To Think  
Like A Comedian

## Your Seventh Sense

© 2004 by Karyn Ruth White and Jay Arthur

Published by LifeStar

2244 S. Olive St.

Denver, CO 80224-2518

(888) 468-1535 or (303) 757-2039 (orders only)

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Also by Jay Arthur:

*How to Motivate Everyone*, LifeStar, 2003

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## PREFACE

*Humor is just another defense against the universe. —Mel Brooks*

People come to us and say, “I know my life is off balance when I’ve lost my sense of humor.” Your humor is a very precious thing that needs to be nurtured, cared for, guarded and valued. So first and foremost, know that your sense of humor is a priority. It needs to be fed and nurtured just like every other aspect of your health. So how do you do that in a way that is uniquely your own?

This book was written to help you develop and expand your Seventh Sense—your sense of humor. It seems to get harder and harder to protect and nourish your humor in a world that takes itself WAY too seriously. The headlines and the 24-hour cable news channels barrage us with messages of death and destruction. And just when you’re feeling like there is nothing left to laugh about, an eighty year old woman in a gold polyester jumpsuit passes you in the grocery aisle and you lose it! This is the

universe's way of telling you that tragedy and comedy live side by side.

People have trouble conceptualizing the idea that tragedy and comedy are inextricably bound together. We are brought up in an either/or society. We tend to be linear thinkers, but life isn't linear, it's circular and convoluted. Life refuses to be pigeonholed. Have you ever had a situation that was very serious and in the midst of dealing with it you found something hilarious to laugh about? We have noticed that the professions with the highest stress levels, (e.g., police, fire fighters, paramedics, health care professionals and even funeral directors) have a very well defined, playful, albeit sometimes morbid, sense of humor which helps them cope with the tragedy they deal with everyday. Laughing is one of the greatest human release valves for pent up stress, anxiety and fear.

Obviously not everything is fodder for funny, but a large slice of life can be looked at through a "funny lens" if we allow ourselves to go there.

My (Karyn's) friend Alison was on her third year of battling breast cancer. She was sitting in the doctor's office waiting for yet another test result when the nurse approached her and said, "Dr. Barth will be right with you." Alison's husband, Marv (a man with a highly honed seventh sense), said, "Dr. Who?" The nurse repeated, "Dr. Barth." Alison and Marv then proceeded to go into a sidesplitting routine about a dog with a lisp and they were "barthing" themselves silly when the doctor walked in. They were like two little kids rolling on the floor in laughter. I love this story. It reminds me that if we are willing to look, humor can be found in even the direst of circumstances. Here's another great Marv and Alison story: Marv proposed to Alison over breakfast one morn-

ing and she said she couldn't possibly give him an answer that minute because she had a big real estate test that afternoon and she needed to concentrate. Only after she took her test did the realization hit her that Marv had actually proposed to her. She ran to the nearest pay phone, called him and yelled, YES! YES! YES! Marv in a very understated voice said, "Yes what?" She said, "Yes, I'll marry you." Marv said; "That's great...who is this?"

Humor is a matter of perspective. It only took a few days after 9-11 for Leno's and Letterman's writers to start finding ways to poke fun at Osama Bin Laden. That's what comedians do; they find ways to turn tragedy into comedy. Tragedy is a hard pill to swallow, but humor helps coat the pill, making it easier to swallow. That's powerful.

The mission of this book is to make you laugh while teaching you about humor. We want you to finish this book with a better sense of *your* sense of humor; what it's all about and how you can be a humor-generator in the world.

This book is unique in that it combines the science of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) along with the artistry of stand-up comedy to help the average person learn to attract and create humor.

This information is our gift to you. We hope that the user-friendly principles we've provided will inspire you to cherish, broaden and exercise your wonderful sense of humor. The world needs all the humor it can get; so read on!



## **KARYN RUTH WHITE**

Karyn Ruth White's calling is to help people live with more laughter. She is an active member of the National Speakers Association. She is a professional speaker and comedian with a positive message and a hilarious style. Karyn started her comedy career performing stand-up comedy for 12 years across the country and she's been presenting stand-up and humorous keynote programs for over 20 years. She presents stand-up comedy with a positive punch and she is positively hilarious.

Karyn's gift is the ability to connect with people on both a humor and a heart level. She takes information that will help people live better quality lives and she wraps it in humor. People connect because they're laughing, they're having a good time, and all the while the information is getting in. That's how Karyn uses the gift of humor.

Karyn Ruth is the owner and CHO (Chief Humor Officer) of Laugh and Learn Productions. She travels around the world teaching people how to use humor for stress management and to better cope with life. A lot of people come up to Karyn and ask, "How can I bring more humor into my life? How can I put more humor into my presentations?" So Jay and Karyn brainstormed on how to combine their talents to teach anyone how to use their seventh sense and this book was born.

"Comedy is a life's calling for me. I love the sound of laughter, mine and yours. I love to see people shed the worries of the day and just laugh with abandon. I love the

sound of the little sighs they make after they've had a good laugh. I love watching them wipe their eyes from tears of laughter. I love performing. I love laughing with them. I love cracking myself up. I love it all. This book is my attempt to share some of my love for comedy, humor, laughter and joy of spirit with you. This book is a gift of love from me, my coauthor and the comedy muse."

Karyn Ruth White





**JAY ARTHUR**, the KnowWare® Man, is a speaker, trainer and consultant. He is a long-standing member of the National Speakers Association. Jay spent 21 years in the phone company working with hardware and software, slowly going nowhere. Then he began studying how we run our “big brains” using what he calls KnowWare—software for your mind: studying pictures,

sounds, things that we say to ourselves and our feelings. About five years ago, Jay took one of Karyn’s comedy classes. Jay wanted to learn how comedians think. As a master practitioner of NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) one of the things he’s learned to do is reverse-engineer the software of the mind. By studying people as they talk about how they do something effortlessly, he can determine how people (like Karyn) run their brains to produce outstanding results in the world.

Jay started studying Karyn and how she thinks about creating humor. What are her filters? What does she believe? How does she take some simple, normal activity and make it funny? How does she take the dark underbelly of everyday life and make it funny? Jay also studied humorists and comedians from the National Speakers Association. Virtually any time he saw somebody talking about comedy, he watched and listened. He started to grab onto what they were saying and figured out that all comedians do pretty much the same thing. They all run their minds in basically the same way. His research and expertise will help you understand how to get the same kinds of results that comedians do.

The next time  
someone tells you  
that they're having a  
Deja-Vu.

Look at them  
with a straight face  
and say:

"You told me that  
already."

**KARYN RUTH WHITE**

## NLP AND YOUR SEVENTH SENSE

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) began its development in the early 1970s. At its core, NLP allows you to study an expert or a genius doing their “thing” in their natural habitat and figure out how they run their mind to create results and achieve success. In the early days, this technique allowed Richard Bandler, John Grinder, and Robert Dilts to decode the skills of extremely successful psychotherapists; Milton Erickson, Virginia Satir, and Fritz Perls. Most of what passes for NLP today is training on these therapeutic techniques. But the heart of NLP is much more than that.

Once you understand *how* an expert or a genius thinks, you can *decode their mental software* and *install* it in your own head to get similar results. Then you can design training to install the expert/genius-level software in the minds of others. This is the power of NLP. This process of observing, analyzing, distilling, decoding, and installing the best mental software is called *modeling*.

There are people who think that the human mind cannot be reduced to the study of well-defined mechanisms and their interactions. This view, however, is a limiting belief that has prevented us from exploring and understanding the mind. Fortunately, using the maps and mechanisms of NLP, this barrier no longer exists. Arthur C. Clarke once said: “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.” This is the magic of NLP, that what was once invisible is now visible (and teachable) to the trained eye.

In the past, modeling has been used for everything from capturing spelling strategies (i.e., see the word in your mind’s eye) to winning at poker, to trading com-

Absolutely no credit!  
You should have  
known yesterday  
that you'd be hungry  
today.

**SIGN IN COUNTRY DINER**

modities. In this book, we want to model how comedians and humorists think, because laughter is a big key to reducing stress, increasing health, being more creative, and living a better life.

In Jay's research it became clear that comedians *think* differently than you or I. Did I want to become a stand-up comic? No. Did I want to spend five or ten years doing stand-up to become an expert? No, not really. Do I want to have a better ability to find the humor in any situation? Yes. Do I want to be better able to make people laugh? Yes. Do I want to be better liked because I am funnier? Yes. Do I want to be more creative? Yes. Do I want to pass this ability on to others? You bet.

The first step in modeling is simply to observe experts doing or talking about their specialty. This involves more than just listening to their words. As we all know, people rarely speak without using gestures or physical movements. A posture or tilt of the head can be more important than the words someone says. Similarly, the eyes may be windows into the soul, but they are also windows into a person's mental programming. When a person looks up, they are usually remembering or creating visual pictures in their mind. When they look down and to their right, they are often accessing their feelings. NLP offers a highly refined set of filters for observing a genius at work and capturing the nuances of their mental software.

All mental software is made up of pictures, sounds, feelings, smells, and tastes. While we normally think of the five senses as external experiences, the mind can remember or construct them without any "real" external stimulation at all. (If you don't believe me, think of a lemon. Do you see a color and a shape? Can you feel its texture? Can you smell it? Can you taste it?)

Eagles may soar,  
but weasles  
don't get sucked  
into  
jet engines.

ANONYMOUS

Unlike computer software which is totally on/off and yes/no in its construction, the five senses are more flexible, pictures can get closer or farther away, bigger and brighter or smaller and dimmer. They can be in color or in black-and-white, sharp or fuzzy and so on. The same is true of sounds, feelings, smells and tastes.

The modeler's job is to decode all of these internal and external representations offered by the expert and sift through them for the key pieces of mind-code that can deliver the results. While you and I may never fully understand all of the nuances of an expert's craft, we can easily grasp the essence or the core of their craft. The core of genius is always simple and elegant; it's never complex. There is always a logic or sequence used to achieve a certain goal or accomplish a certain task. There are beliefs and values that support their ability. If we break the overall ability down into smaller chunks that can be taught in a logical sequence, then anyone can learn to do anything, maybe not at the expert level initially, but certainly well beyond a beginner level.

One of the things you soon discover about experts and geniuses is that they have no idea how they do what they do. They can rarely convey what they're doing or how they are thinking to other people. And to some degree, if they were able to convey it, they might lose their status as an expert. This is the bind that most experts face and most modelers as well. That's why it's often easier to model someone who doesn't know they are being modeled.

When I (Jay) began my quest to study comedians, this is exactly how I began. I watched comedians talking about their craft on The Comedy Channel. I took a five-week comedy class from Karyn Ruth. I studied the humorists I knew in the National Speakers Association.

My father always yelled when he was getting ready for work. "Where the hell is my shirt? Why can't I ever find my damn shoes? Why don't I have any frigin' clean socks?" I finally asked; "Mom, why does Dad always have to yell in the morning?" She said: "Oh honey, he can't help it. Your father's always been a cross dresser."

**KARYN RUTH WHITE**



As I watched all of these comedians do their thing, a pattern emerged. I noticed a certain sequence they all followed to find the humor in any situation. So I "tried it on" until I got the basic working parts installed in my mental tool kit. Then I approached Karyn Ruth to do some comedy classes to transfer these abilities to normal folk, tuning up the training model as we went along. The result is this book and our Seventh Sense Workshops.

Installing mental software can be easy and fun. Normally, we call this "learning." Unfortunately many of us have learned to associate learning with sitting at uncomfortable desks and listening to boring presentations. Learning doesn't have to be this painful. It would be great if every person had a CD-ROM drive in their forehead so that you could just install mental software directly, but we don't (yet.) Sometimes you have to uninstall your current mental software first, (the buggy software) before you can effectively install and run the expert software. This is another core capability that NLP modeled early on: how to create experiential exercises that simplify and streamline the transfer and installation of genius level mental software.

It doesn't matter what field of endeavor you choose, modeling with NLP can explore and decode the essence of any human skill or ability. Humor is one of those abilities.

If you would like to know more about NLP, go to the Resources section at the end of this book for suggested reading.

At Disney World I  
overheard a father  
say to his crying son:  
“If you don’t stop  
your whining, I’m  
going to drag your  
sorry little butt right  
out of the happiest  
damn place on  
earth.”

**KARYN RUTH WHITE**

## Chapter One

# Can Anyone Be Funny?

*A person without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs, jolted by every pebble in the road.*

Henry Ward Beecher

Can you learn to be funny or is it something you're born with? We believe the answer is yes and Yes!

James Lipton, host of the Actor's Studio, asked Robin Williams this question. Williams said: "It's about 50/50." (Half innate talent and half learned skill.) Jay Leno believes that humor is genetic. So, if you want to be a stand-up comedian, it helps to have an innate sense of what's funny, a natural flair for seeing the humor in

When I die  
I want to go like my  
Grandfather did,  
peacefully in his  
sleep, not screaming  
like the other pas-  
sengers in his car.

UNKNOWN

everyday life and funny parents. But if you just want to add a little more fun and laughter to your daily life, there is a science to humor (as well as an art) and that's what you're going to learn more about in the following chapters.

Jay Arthur has been studying comedians and humorists for over 10 years. Karyn Ruth White has been writing and performing stand-up comedy for over 20 years. Jay has studied the science of humor while Karyn has honed the art. Together we'll walk you step-by-step through the whole humor-making process. There is a structure, sequence and logic to this art form, and any one can learn it and apply it. First let's take a look at some of the old programming that may be blocking your seventh sense.

## UNLEARNING OLD-PROGRAMMING

The average preschool child laughs over 400 times a day, the average adult laughs 15. We seem to lose our ability to laugh as the years advance. Why is that?

Do you remember laughing as a kid and getting in trouble for it? Do you remember your parents saying: "Finish your homework/chores/spinach and *then* you can go out to play?" Parents systematically taught us that work and play are two separate things, and that play can not occur until the work is done. As a result, we grow into adults who compartmentalize the concepts of work and play. As an adult, the work is never done, so when is it time for play? If you watch a child, you soon notice that work and play are inseparable. There is no separation of the two concepts in the child's mind.

Throughout our childhood, someone is always telling us to: "Get serious! Stop being silly! Wipe that smile right off your face!"

Since the beginning of time men and women have played different roles in society. Men have notoriously been the hunters, tirelessly stalking fresh new game, while women have been expected to remain content gathering fruits and nuts. Scientists call this survival of the fittest. I call it Happy Hour.

**KARYN RUTH WHITE**

We constantly receive messages that humor and laughter are not okay or that they are inappropriate. We are made to believe that we are somehow being disrespectful to the world at large by daring to express our humor. It gets to the point where we start to believe this nonsense on some very deep level. With this type of unchallenged programming, is it any wonder we've lost touch with our seventh sense? So how do you start the process of getting back in touch? How do you start to reprogram your mind to embrace humor rather than censor it?

First, realize that you were programmed to think about humor in a certain way. You were either rewarded for it or punished for it. Just as every classroom had a class clown who was rewarded for making people laugh; those classrooms also had a quiet or even sullen child whose humor had been repressed.

To reprogram yourself to find the funny in everyday life, work, and relationships, you will want to understand how you think about humor and why it's important to you. This process is about helping *you* get in touch with *your* unique sense of humor. In order to do that you need to get in touch with your own deep-seated thoughts about humor.

## HOW DO YOU DEFINE HUMOR?

First, let's define what humor means to you. For stand-up comedians, humor is a highly refined art form. They can tell you instantly if something is funny or not. For the rest of us, it may just be laughing at a newspaper headline or a cartoon that strikes us funny. Ask yourself and/or write in your Seventh Sense Journal:

Spell Check  
is like a man.  
Don't be afraid to  
use it,  
but never count on it  
entirely.

**KARYN RUTH WHITE**



- How do I define humor or comedy?
- Where, when and with whom do I believe it is appropriate and useful?
- Where is it inappropriate?
- Where could I use more humor in my life?
- Where and when do I lose my sense of humor?

Humor can be used in any situation to lessen the stress and increase our ability to deal with life's many challenges. If you study comedians, you'll find that most came from difficult neighborhoods and families. David Brenner said he was a gang leader and that he used humor to defuse confrontations with other gangs. Humor is an essential tool for coping with tragedy, stupidity, frustration, disappointment or whatever else life throws at you.

## **WHY IS HUMOR IMPORTANT TO YOU?**

Getting clear on why humor is important to you will help you to anchor it as a core value in your life. You wouldn't go to all the time and effort attracting and creating more humor in your life if you didn't genuinely value it. Right? Sometimes a great way to reaffirm this value is to ask yourself, "Why is humor important to me?"

Here are some of the answers our Seventh Sense Workshop students came up with when asked this question:

- Humor actually makes my life better.
- My job is very stressful. When I remember to use humor on the job it makes my job easier and I get along better with my coworkers.
- I'd rather laugh with my spouse, than fight.
- My kids are at an age where they take everything so seriously. I want to help lighten them up.

I recently broke up  
with a man I was  
dating.

He wasn't able to give  
me the one thing I  
need in a relationship,  
eye contact.

**KARYN RUTH WHITE**

- It's magnetic. I've noticed that a good sense of humor really draws people to you. I use it whenever I am in new social situations.
- I can't really explain it, but humor just seems to make my life flow better.
- My sales go better. I seem to close a lot of sales deals when I interject humor.

**Exercise:** In your Seventh Sense Journal make a list of reasons why humor is important to you. Keep this list handy so you can look at it now and then as a reminder when life tries to zap you of your humor. Keeping a close connection to your seventh sense takes a conscious effort because life will challenge it every day.

## WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT HUMOR?

Think about how humor was used in your house growing up? Was there a lot of humor or none? Were you encouraged to use humor or were you punished? Close your eyes and remember the family sitting around the dinner table? Was humor allowed or was there silence? How did your parents use humor?

**Exercise:** In your Seventh Sense Journal, write about what you remember learning about humor. What messages did you internalize from your family and teachers? Sometimes getting your thoughts on paper helps to give you a new perspective on your thinking and your beliefs. This new perspective can then pave the way for some new thinking and behavior.

We can't reprogram new thoughts until we know our existing thoughts. Once you've had the opportunity to get in touch with your innermost beliefs about humor, ask yourself whether or not these beliefs are truly yours or whether you have accepted them unquestioned from the

I'd love to meet you  
at your level,  
but I'm afraid the  
descent might be too  
abrupt.

**KARYN RUTH WHITE**

adult sources in your life. This is where the process gets exciting. You now have an opportunity to challenge these long-held beliefs and in so doing, make room for some new ones.

## **HOW WE DEFINE HUMOR**

### **POSITIVE VERSUS NEGATIVE HUMOR**

You can use humor positively, or you can use it as a sword. There is a lot of confusion about exactly what humor is and is not. We live in a world where we see angry comedians using humor as a sword rather than as an olive branch. We are subjected to a lot of vulgar humor in western society, a lot of anger masked as humor. In our opinion, anger and hostility masked as humor are a coward's way of dealing with life. After all, rudeness is just a weak person's attempt at strength.

### **COMEDY IS WAR**

Consider the terminology used in the comedy world: "I slayed. I killed. I destroyed." And if you don't do well, "I died or I bombed." This is the language of war. Comedy is war, and war is hell. So comedy must be hell, right? It doesn't have to be.

Granted, comedy is an aggressive sport, but in everyday usage you can get your point across without belittling or alienating anyone. People are much more apt to accept what you have to tell them if it's not delivered in an intimidating, degrading, authoritative, or patronizing way. Effective humor is not about one-upping another person, nor is about becoming the victim. It's about healing the situation and connecting with the other person. If you can use humor in a good-hearted way, people are more able

What's with all these  
internet viruses?

I bought antivirus  
software, spyware,  
and a firewall.

It feels like I'm  
wearing three  
condoms. I think I'm  
going to bed alone,  
but about twice a  
week I still get a  
dose of the clap.

JAY ARTHUR

to easily accept what you have to say. They can accept your message and not feel like they've lost a part of themselves in the process. That's hugely powerful.

Humor in its highest form should always be a point of connection between people. Humor should be a path to healing. In our book, humor is always defined as a good-hearted and loving (sometimes mischievous) attempt to connect people through common experience and humanity.

## **HUMOR IN THE FRIENDLY SKIES:**

Jay was on a business flight and the flight attendant starts doing the announcement. She gets on the intercom and says, "Please pretend to pay attention to the Flight Attendant, as she demonstrates the safety features of this airplane. In the event of an emergency, an oxygen mask will drop from the overhead compartment. When you stop screaming, place the mask over your nose and mouth and begin to breathe freely. Then put it over any children or people behaving like children sitting next to you."

Jay remembers thinking: "I never thought that you could make the safety instructions funny, but there it was and it was brilliant."

Any guess what affect this little bit of humor had on the passengers? "The whole plane just kind of lightened up. They were getting tense because we were late and the plane was hot. The flight attendant starts doing this comedy bit and little chuckles started to ripple through the entire plane and pretty soon the anxiety was all gone."

Humor is truly a magical thing. Humor really does get people's attention. People basically want to be enter-

A team at Stanford  
found that comedy  
activates the same  
region of the brain  
as cocaine.

Want to get high  
without losing your  
house, your car, and  
your spouse?  
Laugh more.

JAY ARTHUR



tained, whether it's a student, an airline passenger, a business person, or an audience. They want to be entertained. It doesn't have to be knee-slapping hilarious, but if you can give them something that is just off center enough (which is what comedy is) they may sit up a little straighter and pay attention. As Mary Poppins says: "Just a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down."

Humor is the sugar. It's just that little sugar coating that helps people to listen better. So comedy also has a great role in transferring information from one mind to another.

Humor is really a shock absorber. Heaven knows, we need some shock absorbers in the world we're living in. So humor is just another tool that you've got in your toolbox of life skills. We encourage you to really cultivate and use it to the best of your ability.

Now that you know a little bit more about what you think about humor, let's explore what the professionals think. How do they orchestrate their thoughts to get laughs and find the funny in seemingly desolate territory?