

## Gelopedia...The Lexicon of Laughter®

Created by Steve Wilson, Psychologist, Joyologist, and Cheerman of the Bored

### A Dictionary of Vocabulary & Terminology Associated With Laughter

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We choose to use a language whose structure more adequately fits the field of the work we do in applied and therapeutic humor & laughter, not merely because it sounds more sophisticated but because we wish to become more effective in learning about this field, communicating about it, and improving applied methodologies for the future.

Concurrent with the evolution of Gelotherapy (laughter therapy) and Gelotology (the science of laughter), there also needs to evolve a particular vocabulary associated with it. In many respects, the Latin and Greek roots, prefixes and suffixes, can provide a more accurate depiction of states, conditions, and manifestations in an area (the field of applied and therapeutic humor & laughter) not otherwise easily talked about or understood. These neologisms are encouraged as appropriate to improve understanding and communication.

As we go along, the meanings and usages of these terms will be refined and expanded. Starting with vocabulary, eventually this will become an encyclopedia of applied and therapeutic laughter & humor. It is intended to be a living and collective effort. Input, suggestions or corrections, and additional contributions are invited from lay and professional readers and practitioners. -SW

**Gelastikos** (jeel-az-teek-os) is the Greek word for laughter. The “gel” in Gelos, and in all words derived from it should sound like “gee” as in gee-whiz! The pronunciation indicator is ‘jee’. Dr. William Fry, Jr., is adamant that it be pronounced gee-low-tahl-o-gee, and NOT sound like jello-tology, “Do not confuse the study of laughter,” he says, “with the study of a dessert!”

**GELOTOLOGY:** According to Dr. William J. Fry, Jr., “The science of laughter was formally established in March, 1964 by the origination, by Dr. Edith Trager, of its name— Gelotology, from the Greek root gelos (laughter).” Fry adopted Gelotologist as his unofficial title, even having it embroidered onto his lab coats.

**GELOTHERAPY:** Programs based in laughter that have among their goals overcoming hypogelotonia, usually done in a group setting with a qualified gelotherapist and also individually, as a self-care strategy; *a structured, repeatable program of systematic exposure to true mirthful laughter in a supportive environment coupled with Good-Hearted Living®, and infused with the enthusiasm, warmth, cheerfulness, and expertise of Certified Laughter Leaders (Gelotherapists)*. At this time, it is considered to be an adjunctive therapy, one that does not claim any particular cure, but helps primary treatments work better to the extent that it re-aligns perspectives, modulates stress reactions, contributes to improved quality of life, and lifts spirits. It should be considered essential to the goals of anyone engaged in a process of physical, mental, emotional or spiritual healing, vital to the needs of The New Seniors, and having many, many other applications. (Wilson)

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GELOTROPHIC (jee-low-trow-fik) or GELOTROPIC and GELOTROPIUM: (jee-low-trope-ee-yum): The state or condition of being nourished by and/or growing due to laughter. An organism exhibiting growth as a result of being stimulated by laughter. (Wilson)

GELOSIS: Denoting the condition of laughing more and more. (Wilson)

GELOTONIA and GELOTONIC: Gelotonia (jee-low-tone-ee-ah) is the condition of achieving a healthy balance with laughter, i.e., getting one's RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance) of laughter. This amount is not yet known in scientific terms, but at least one researcher (Dr. Michael Miller) has speculated that, in the future, physicians may prescribe a total of fifteen minutes per day as the RDA. Although this is still hypothetical, it is a goal worth considering for the time being. A person in a state of gelotonia would be gelotonic. (Wilson)

GELORRHEA (HYPERGELOS, HYPERGELOTIC): A seemingly nearly continuous giggling, chuckling or laughing; literally, a stream of laughter; under conscious control as compared to gelomania. (Mader)

GELOTICA (also PARAGELOTIC or PARAGELOTICS): Referring to materials & paraphernalia, props, toys, movies, bumper stickers, Groucho glasses, slide whistles, clown noses, cartoons and the like, when they are used to stimulate laughter. (Wilson)

GELODYSMORPHIA: The condition of being unhappy or dissatisfied with one or more quality of one's laughter, e.g., pitch, volume, timbre, nasality, frequency, etc. (Wilson)

HYPOGELOS (also HYPOGELOTIA, HYPOGELOTONIC, OR HYPOGELOTONIA): This would be the condition of NOT achieving one's full RDA of laughter. This is related to a condition I proposed several years ago: "The Y.A.L.E. Complex", or "You Aren't Laughing Enough!" (Wilson)

PROTOGELOTIC or PROTOGELOS: Referring to a person's very first laugh, typically at about 4-6 weeks of age in a healthy infant; also referred to as one's original, authentic, or primal laugh. (Wilson)

PSEUDOGELOTIC: Referring to false or fake laughter. (Wilson)

HUMERGY: the energy that emerges from the humor, joy, and optimism of our inner spirit, reflects our unique personality and nourishes a healthy mind/body balance. (Morrison, 2004)

Humorobics: the physical act of laughing. (Morrison)

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Humordoomer: a person who consistently uses negative humor to control and manipulate others. (Morrison, 2007)

Humorologist: person who practices the art and science of healthy humor. (Morrison)

Humorology: the art and science of humor. (Morrison, 2007)

Humorphobia: a fear of fun, laughter and humor. (Morrison, 2007)

RIGOLO: French; children use this word to say that something is funny. The word itself is amusing. "L'Ecole Internationale du Rire", the International School of Laughter, in France, teaches RIGOLOGIE. Its founder, Corinne Cosseron, calls herself a RIGOLOGUE. (Cosseron)

Laughter Exercise: Some evidence suggests that the physiology and bio-psychology of laughter is similar to that produced by light exercise. Combining laughter with familiar movements to create laughter exercises, results in 'silly' activities that produce physical effects such as movement of joints and muscles, increased heart rate and respiration, decreased stress hormones, and perhaps appetite suppression. (Interpreted from Robert Thayer, "Calm Energy", and various reports by Berk, Miller and others.) (Wilson)

Mirth: A pleasurable emotional state often accompanying humor, expressed by laughing and smiling (Martin 2007). Difficult to define but often described as synonymous with glee, hilarity, merriment, jollity, joviality; refers to the gaiety characterizing people who are enjoying the companionship of others. Mirth suggests spontaneous amusement or gaiety, manifested briefly in laughter; perhaps akin to Duchenne laughter. Some contemporary theories hold that laughter in the absence of mirth may turn out to NOT have the same benefits as laughter in the presence of mirth, i.e., the emotional state of mirth would have to accompany the psychological condition of humor and physical act of laughter in order to give rise to an advantageous physiology. (Wilson)

Humor: A personal, subjective, psychological phenomenon of shifting perception; a train wreck of the mind; allows human beings to say the un-sayable...to express rage at the world's insensitivity and yet get some momentary relief, too. (Don Baird)

Positive Humor: "With" not "at"; "humor is laughter made from pain, not pain inflicted by laughter." (Donald Baird, Joel Goodman)

Gelos (Laughter): A universal physical act, often stimulated by humor, but also occurring widely for many other reasons. *Laughter may not always add years to your life, but it will add life to your years*" (Unk.)

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Sense of Humor: The ability to see the non-serious element in a situation; the secret to resilience. (Joel Goodman)

Duchenne Laughter: Named for Guillaume-Benjamin-Amand Duchenne (de Boulogne), French neurologist (1806-1875). Duchenne laughter is a natural, spontaneous, unplanned outburst of laughter and smiling. Stimulus driven, emotionally valenced; spontaneous. In some research, Duchenne laughter was found to involve orbicularis oculi muscle action, related to self-reports of reduced anger and increased enjoyment, the dissociation of distress, better social relations, and positive responses from strangers, whereas non-Duchenne laughter did not. (Wilson)

Non-Duchenne laughter: Self-generated, emotionless, contrived, false; forced or fake smiling and laughing; manipulative, e.g., always laughing at the boss's jokes. (Wilson)

Therapeutic: Originally, or traditionally, the exclusive domain of medicine. Adopted and expanded in modern times, e.g., from a field called *Positive Psychology*, therapeutic goes beyond finding cures and 'fixing what's broken' to include strengthening what is working well, improving/maintaining quality of life, building self-confidence and self-esteem, enhancing social skills, teaching coping strategies, blocking fear/panic/anger/depression, uplifting perspective, and reinforcing hope. (Wilson)

Adjunctive Therapy: Programs and activities not considered to be primary treatments, but having the aim of helping primary treatments work better. They are not a substitute for bona fide medical interventions. (Wilson)

Palliative Arts: An intervention that complements traditional medicine and enriches the lives of those affected by illness or loss.

Laughter Club: A place where a group of people go to laugh stress away under the guidance and leadership of a qualified instructor. (Wilson)

Neurobics: A term coined by Lawrence Katz, PhD, to describe activities related to the new science of brain exercise for brain fitness. Gelotherapeutic methods may incorporate and capitalize on the supposed neurobic potential of a variety of activities, e.g., crossing the vertical midline of the body and mental challenges such as puzzles, as well as positive attitude to improve aspects of mental fitness, such as memory, focus, concentration, awareness, problem-solving, and brain speed. (Wilson)

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**Sanigelastic: Referring to True Mirthful or Healthy Laughter** (The term "true mirthful" was possibly first used by William Fry, Jr., M.D.) (Wilson)

1. It sounds warm and inviting. You want to join in even when you don't know what was funny originally.
2. There is almost always something in the objective reality which can be observed as the laughter stimulus (or it can be feasibly explained), i.e., not the result of a hallucination.
3. The laughter erupts spontaneously and is often followed by a sense of relief or release, and perhaps the comment, "Thanks! I needed that."
4. The laughter is at no one's expense.
5. The presence of the "play frame"; verbally or non-verbally signaling no intention to harm; non-competitive; not keeping score. (Fry 2010)

**Pathogelastic: Referring to laughter that is symptomatic of illness, injury, or other non-mirthful, usually harmful (physical or psychological) condition. These sounds of laughter are not signs of health and may not (future research awaits) be associated with advantageous physiology.** (Wilson)

A: Neurological conditions

Pseudo-bulbar palsy

Gelastical epilepsy

Various brain-damage disorders

B. Psychiatric conditions:

Hebephrenic schizophrenia

Psychotic hallucinations (auditory & visual)

C. Intoxications

The "happy" drunk

Nitrous oxide (laughing gas)

Cannabis (marijuana) induced giggles

Manganese poisoning

D. The humor itself is toxic (suggested by Joel Goodman)

It fails the "A.T. & T." test (is not Appropriate, Timely & Tasteful).

Uses ridicule, sarcasm, or taboo language.

Makes unwanted jokes about serious subjects.

Hostile teasing hides behind "just joking" excuse.

**Gelastical Seizure:** Also known as "Gelastical Epilepsy" is a rare type of seizure that involves a sudden burst of energy, usually in the form of laughing or crying. This syndrome usually occurs for no obvious reason and is uncontrollable. It is slightly more common in males than females. The term Gelastical originates from the Greek word "Gelos" which means laughter. This syndrome can go for very long periods of time without a diagnosis, as it may appear to be much like normal laughing or crying, if it occurs infrequently. It has been associated with several different conditions such as temporal and frontal lobe lesions, tumors, dilated temporal horns, atrophy, tuberous sclerosis, hemangiomas, and post infectious foci, but mainly hypothalamic hamartomas. (Wikipedia)

**Gelastical syncope:** Fainting or sudden, temporary loss of consciousness associated with laughter, probably due to cerebral hypoxia or hypotension. Referred to in one paper as "Seinfeld" syncope from the long-running TV series.

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**GELOPHILIA**: The love of laughter; an affinity for laughter; the pursuit of positive laughter. (Alice Glasser, M.D.)

**Gelotophobia**: Fear of being laughed at; gelotophobics do not interpret laughter by others as something positive but more as a means to put them down. In one study (Rene T. Proyer and Willibald Ruch in *Psychological Test and Assessment Modeling 2/2010*) Gelotophobes were found to be introverted neurotics.

**Gelotophile**: One who enjoys being laughed at and interprets the laughter by others positively, as a sign of appreciation. In one study (Rene T. Proyer and Willibald Ruch in *Psychological Test and Assessment Modeling 2/2010*) gelotophilia was primarily related to extraversion and in a multiple regression analysis gender (higher among males) turned out to be predictive as well.

**Katagelastic**: One who enjoys laughing at others and does not feel that there is anything wrong in doing so. In one study (Rene T. Proyer and Willibald Ruch in *Psychological Test and Assessment Modeling 2/2010*) katagelasticists were found to be younger males with higher scores in extraversion and psychoticism.

**Risibility** ris•i•bil•i•ty

1. The ability or tendency to laugh.
2. A sense of the ludicrous or amusing. Often used in the plural.
3. Laughter; hilarity.

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**Gelogasm**: A sexual climax accompanied or followed immediately by spontaneous, seemingly irrepressible giggling, chuckling, or laughing out loud; usually in the company of another person. (following Dunkelblau, AATH 2010)

**Gelotactile**: One who giggles, chuckles or otherwise laughs as a reaction to observing a particular fabric or other things/objects/materials through the tactile receptors; highly personal and subjective; this reaction may be based in early associative experiences. Examples might include things/objects/materials that the gelotactile describes as soft, furry, fuzzy, tickly, or prickly.

**Gelotopia**: An ideal world, suffused with laughter and the conditions that make laughter an easy and natural part of life for everyone.

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**GELOTOXIA**: Refers to laughter that is toxic, negative or otherwise harmful or hurtful. Includes jeering, derisive and demeaning laughter; may include teasing or any form of “laughing at”, especially when it is clearly unwanted. “Humor should be laughter made from pain, not pain inflicted by laughter.” (Joel Goodman) “The axe forgets, but the tree remembers.” (African proverb)

**GELONUTRIA**: Refers to laughter that is positive; inclusive; convivial; nourishing or nurturing of self-esteem; “laughing with”. “The richest laugh is at no one’s expense.” (Unknown)

**GELOMANIA**: The condition of being caught up in laughter and seeming unable to stop; a fit of laughter; a giggle fit; sometimes called a laughter casualty.

**GELOMIMETIC**: The so-called contagious effect of laughter; laughter that is contagious, e.g. you hear someone laughing and you feeling like smiling or laughing, too, even if you don’t know what originally triggered the laughter. See “mirror neurons” for a theory of contagious laughter said to be supported by fMRI studies.