

Humorless

Humorlessness is usually defined negatively, as the absence of a sense of humor. But is there anything wrong with humorlessness? Is it the result of a rational error? If so, can a sense of humor then be taught, by showing a person the language rules that govern humor?

Examples

1 Some people are literal minded; they take statements at face value. If your girlfriend tells you she loves you, she can have several different thoughts in mind: she can mean, what a funny old humorous guy you are; I am melting with ardor for you; it'll be ok, we'll see this through. The inability to distinguish among these senses is a poor prognosis for human relations.

2 Is humorlessness, then, an intellectual or a personality issue? Does it make sense that a person should be born either humorless or sensitive to humor? Do we perhaps choose to be humorless, if we are, as a way of ruling out uncertainty?