The Surprising Benefits of Sarcasm

Sarcastic comments boost creativity, a study finds

"Sarcasm is the (1) _____ form of wit but the highest form of intelligence," wrote that connoisseur of wit, Oscar Wilde. (2) _____ sarcasm is a sign of intelligence or not, communication experts and marriage counselors alike typically advise (3) _____ to stay (4) _____ from this particular (5) _____ of expression.

And yet, our (6) _____ suggests, there may also be some unexpected (7) _____ from sarcasm: greater creativity. The use of sarcasm, in (8) _____, promotes creativity for those on (9) _____ the giving and receiving (10) _____ of sarcastic exchanges. Instead (11) _____ avoiding sarcasm completely, the research (12) _____ sarcasm, used with care and in moderation, can trigger (13) _____ creative sparks.

In one study, we assigned some (14) _____ to engage in either simulated sarcastic, sincere, or neutral dialogues by choosing (15) _____ pre-written responses on a (16) _____ of paper. Immediately after participants engaged in these "conversations," we presented (17) _____ with (18) _____ testing their creativity. Interestingly, those who engaged in a sarcastic conversation fared (19) _____ on creativity tasks. The processes involved in initiating and delivering a sarcastic (20) _____ improved the creativity and cognitive functioning of (21) _____ the commenter and (22) _____ recipient. This creativity effect only emerged (23) _____ recipients picked up (24) _____ the sarcasm behind the expresser's message (25) _____ than taking mean comments (26) _____ face value.

(27) _____ might sarcasm enhance creativity? Because the brain (28) _____ think creatively to understand (29) _____ convey a sarcastic comment, sarcasm may lead to clearer and more creative thinking. To (30) _____ create or understand sarcasm, tone must overcome the contradiction (31) _____ the literal and (32) _____ meanings of the sarcastic expressions. This is a (33) _____ that activates, and is facilitated (34) _____, abstraction, which in turn promotes creative thinking.

Given the (35) _____ and benefits of sarcasm, your best bet is to (36) _____ salty remarks limited (37) _____ conversations (38) _____ those you know well, (39) _____ you offend others — even as you potentially (40) _____ them think more creatively.

LIVEWORKSHEETS