Humor is a spark in the dark, a bright thread woven through life's tapestry, softening the sharp edges of our days. It is a reminder not to take ourselves too seriously, to laugh in the face of absurdity, and to find grace in imperfection. In the gift of laughter, we discover resilience, a buoyancy that keeps us afloat when life gets heavy.

Chapter 14: The Power of Humor

Humor is a powerful yet often underrated tool for navigating life's challenges. More than just a way to make people laugh, humor uplifts, connects, and brings much-needed relief in difficult times. It is transformative, serving as a coping mechanism for building resilience, deepening connections, and enriching our lives. During my time as a professional humorist, including an unforgettable night opening for Eddie Murphy in Washington, D.C., I experienced firsthand the impact humor has on people. Strangers were united in laughter, sharing a moment of joy that made everything feel slightly lighter.

Humor can shift our perspective when life gets tough. It allows us to laugh in the face of adversity, a key to resilience. When we see the absurdity in challenging situations, humor gives us the space to detach and reframe. In my life, humor has often been a saving grace, helping me turn my focus from what I couldn't control to how I could respond. Those moments of laughter gave me the strength to keep going, no matter how bleak things seemed.

Deoxyribonucleic Acid

I always thought humor was woven into my family's DNA, or Deoxyribonucleic Acid, as I like to call it. From an early age, laughter was our language, and sharing stories—whether true, exaggerated, or completely absurd—was our way of connecting.

One memory that sticks with me is of interviewing my dad on video about his life memories. He started laughing, and the laughter was contagious. Years later, after he passed, that video became a treasured gem for all of us, a way to feel his presence and laugh alongside him again.
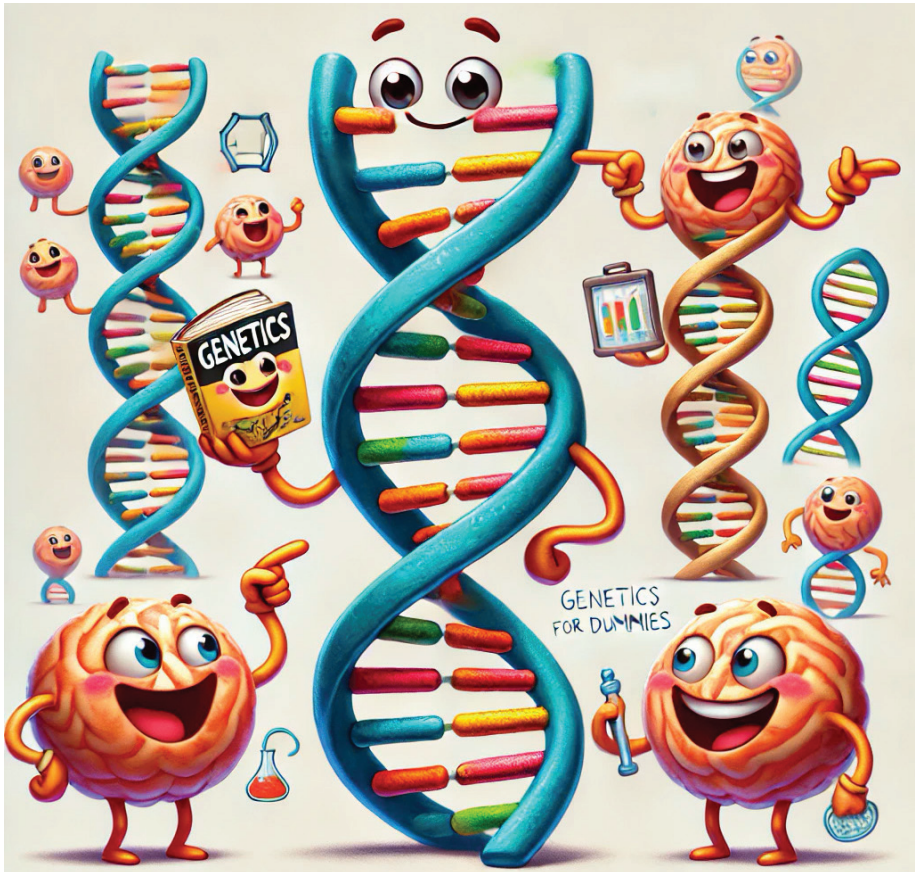
Growing up, humor ran deep in my family. My mom, known for her malapropisms (we called her the "Norm Crosby" of the family), could turn any conversation into a comedy routine. My mom once recounted a night at an Air Force dance, where she yelled, "Who wants my cherry?" after discarding it from her ice cream sundae. I didn't understand why everyone laughed as a kid, but the story stayed with us.

Source of Connection

One of the most remarkable powers of humor is its ability to connect us on a deeper level. A shared laugh can dissolve tension, build rapport, and create bonds that words alone might not. Humor is a universal language that bridges differences and unites people. For example, making a room full of strangers laugh was an incredible experience on stage. The opening for Eddie Murphy was unforgettable,

not just for the thrill of sharing a stage with him, but because it showed me how laughter could unite a diverse crowd in joy, even if just for a few minutes.

Humor transcends backgrounds, beliefs, and personal histories, allowing us to find common ground through laughter. When we laugh with others, we're saying, "I see you, I understand." It creates an unspoken bond that goes beyond words, fostering a sense of shared experience. Humor brings us together, allowing us to connect with each other's humanity, no matter how different we may seem.
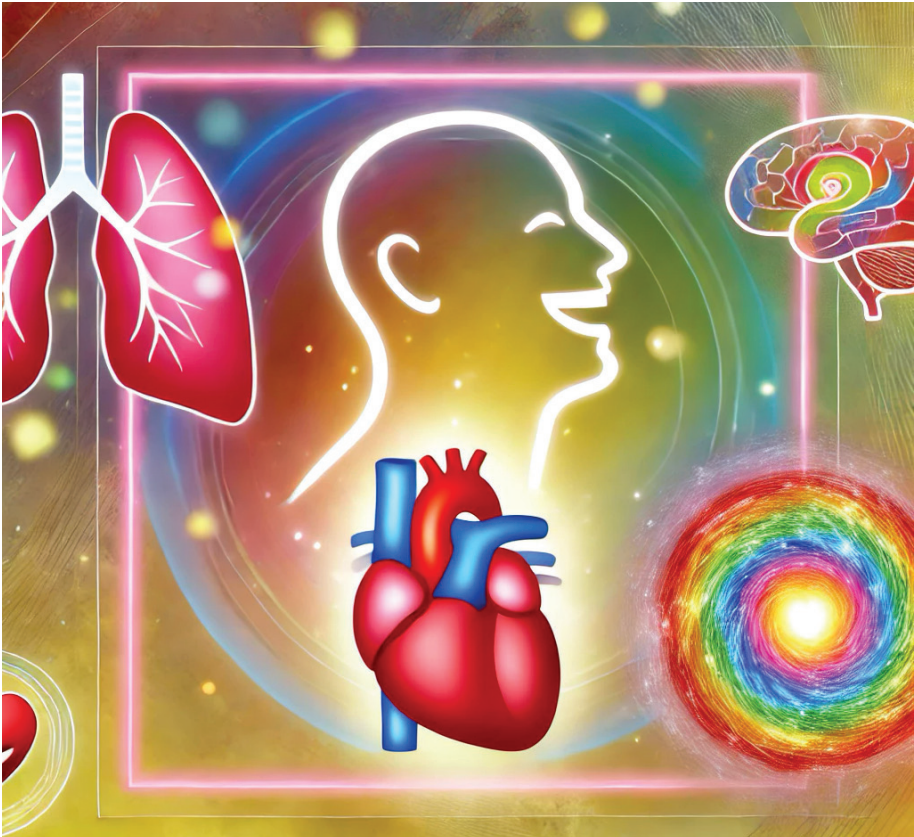
Mirror for Self-Understanding

Humor can serve as a mirror, giving us insight into ourselves. A well-placed joke or a bit of self-deprecation reveals truths about who we are and what we care about. Early in my humorist career, I used comedy to explore relationships, failures, and the absurdities of daily life. Joking about my flaws made me more comfortable, disarming

fears that might otherwise weigh me down. By laughing at myself, I could confront and even embrace my imperfections, finding a sense of ease in acknowledging them.

Humor often reveals the unspoken truths of our lives, the quirks and contradictions that make us human. By laughing at these truths, we find acceptance. We recognize that everyone has their flaws, and it's okay to own them. Humor allows us to face the parts of ourselves we might otherwise shy away from, offering a way to approach self-understanding with kindness and curiosity.

Health Benefits

Laughter isn't just good for the soul but has tangible health benefits. Studies show that laughter lowers stress, boosts immunity, and reduces pain by releasing endorphins, the body's natural mood lifters. For me, laughter became a reliable way to reset during difficult

times. When we laugh, even briefly, our worries fade, our minds clear, and we regain balance.

Laughter releases tension and invites us to relax, even for a moment. This release is incredibly healing, allowing us to release stress and approach life's challenges with renewed energy. By incorporating humor into our lives, we make life more enjoyable and give ourselves a powerful tool for maintaining well-being. Humor becomes a form of self-care, a way to nurture mind and body.

Coping with Hardship

Humor doesn't ignore pain or difficulty; it helps us face them with dignity and resilience. It's saying, "Yes, this is hard, but I'm still here, and I can still laugh." Humor helped me cope after Hurricane Sandy left my home in disarray. I didn't make light of the loss, but humor

allowed me to face it head-on, grounded in who I am. Laughing in the face of adversity wasn't about denying my pain but honoring my resilience.

Life's hardships are inevitable, but humor allows us to meet them gracefully. It acknowledges that even in our darkest moments, there's something to hold onto that can bring us back to ourselves. By finding humor in difficult times, we reclaim a sense of agency, reminding ourselves that we are not defined by our circumstances but by our response to them.

Developing a Sense of Humor

If humor feels out of reach, don't worry; it's a skill that can be nurtured. Humor isn't about becoming a comedian; it's about finding joy in life's absurdities and learning to see things from a lighter perspective. Here are some ways to develop a sense of humor and bring more laughter into your life:

1. Watch stand-up comedy, funny movies, or sitcoms to explore different humor styles.
2. Embrace your quirks and imperfections with humor. Laughing at yourself is incredibly freeing.
3. Focus on the small absurdities of daily life. Mishaps often carry seeds of humor.
4. Spend time with people who make you laugh. Humor is contagious.
5. Cultivate spontaneity and playfulness, always letting go of the need to be serious.
6. Look back on challenges with a lighter heart, imagining how you'll laugh at them later.

By engaging with humor, we make life more enjoyable and create a powerful tool for navigating challenges.