

Panichelli, C., Albert, A., Donneau, A.F., D'Amore, S., Triffaux, J.M., Ansseau, M. (2018). Humor Associated with Positive Outcomes in Individual Psychotherapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy* (in press).

## Abstract

Considerable anecdotal evidence points to the usefulness of humor in the therapeutic process, but empirical evidence is still lacking. This study searched for an association between humor and therapy outcomes in a real-life population of 110 adult psychotherapy clients who attended at least 10 therapy sessions. Clients and their therapist evaluated the frequency and intensity of humorous events, as well as therapy effectiveness, therapeutic alliance, perceived hope and pleasure to participate in therapy sessions. We found a strong positive correlation between humor and therapy effectiveness, in both client ( $r_s = .40$ ;  $p < .0001$ ) and therapist perspectives ( $r_s = .37$ ;  $p < .0001$ ). The link between humor and effectiveness remained significant in more severe subgroups of clients, even though these clients reported less humor in their therapies. Further research is needed to determine if humor actually enhances therapy outcomes, or if positive outcomes trigger the occurrence of humor.

**Keywords:** Humor, coping mechanism, psychotherapy outcome, therapy effectiveness, therapeutic alliance