

The Surprising Benefits of Sarcasm

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Scientific American:

“Sarcasm is the lowest form of wit but the highest form of intelligence,” wrote that connoisseur of wit, Oscar Wilde. Whether sarcasm is a sign of intelligence or not, communication experts and marriage counselors alike typically advise us to stay away from this particular form of expression. The reason is simple: sarcasm expresses the poisonous sting of contempt, hurting others and harming relationships. As a form of communication, sarcasm takes on the debt of conflict.

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Consider the following example, which comes from a conversation one of my co-authors on the research (Adam Galinsky, of Columbia) had a few weeks before getting married. His fiancée woke him up as he was soundly asleep at night to tell him about some new ideas she has for their upcoming wedding next month –many of which were quite expensive. Adam responded with some ideas of his own: “Why don’t we get Paul McCartney to sing, Barack Obama to give a benediction and Amy Schumer to entertain people.” His comment required his fiancée to recognize that there is a distinction between the surface level meaning of the sentence (actually signing up these people to perform) and the meaning that was intended.

Read the whole story: [Scientific American](#)