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# 9 Weird Facts You Never Knew About Laughter

You'll get a chuckle from this trivia about one of our most ancient forms of expression and communication.

**BY BETH DREHER (HTTPS://WWW.RD.COM/AUTHOR/B-DREHER/)**

## Humans laughed before they spoke





ISTOCK/FATIHHOCA

Some scientists believe that laughter was used as a way for humans to relate to one another millions of years before they developed the lung strength for language. The mechanism of laughter is so ingrained in our brains that babies as young as 17 days old have been observed doing it. In fact, children born blind and deaf still have the ability to laugh.

**Laughter is actually rarely tied to humor**





ISTOCK/SKYNESHER

In his book, *Laughing: A Scientific Investigation*, Robert R. Provine, professor of psychology and neuroscience at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, describes an intriguing study about laughter—and it didn't take place at a comedy club. Provine and some graduate students listened in on normal conversations at local malls. They found that out of 1,200 "laugh episodes," only about 10 percent were generated by a joke. "Laughter really has a bonding function between individuals in a group," says Provine.

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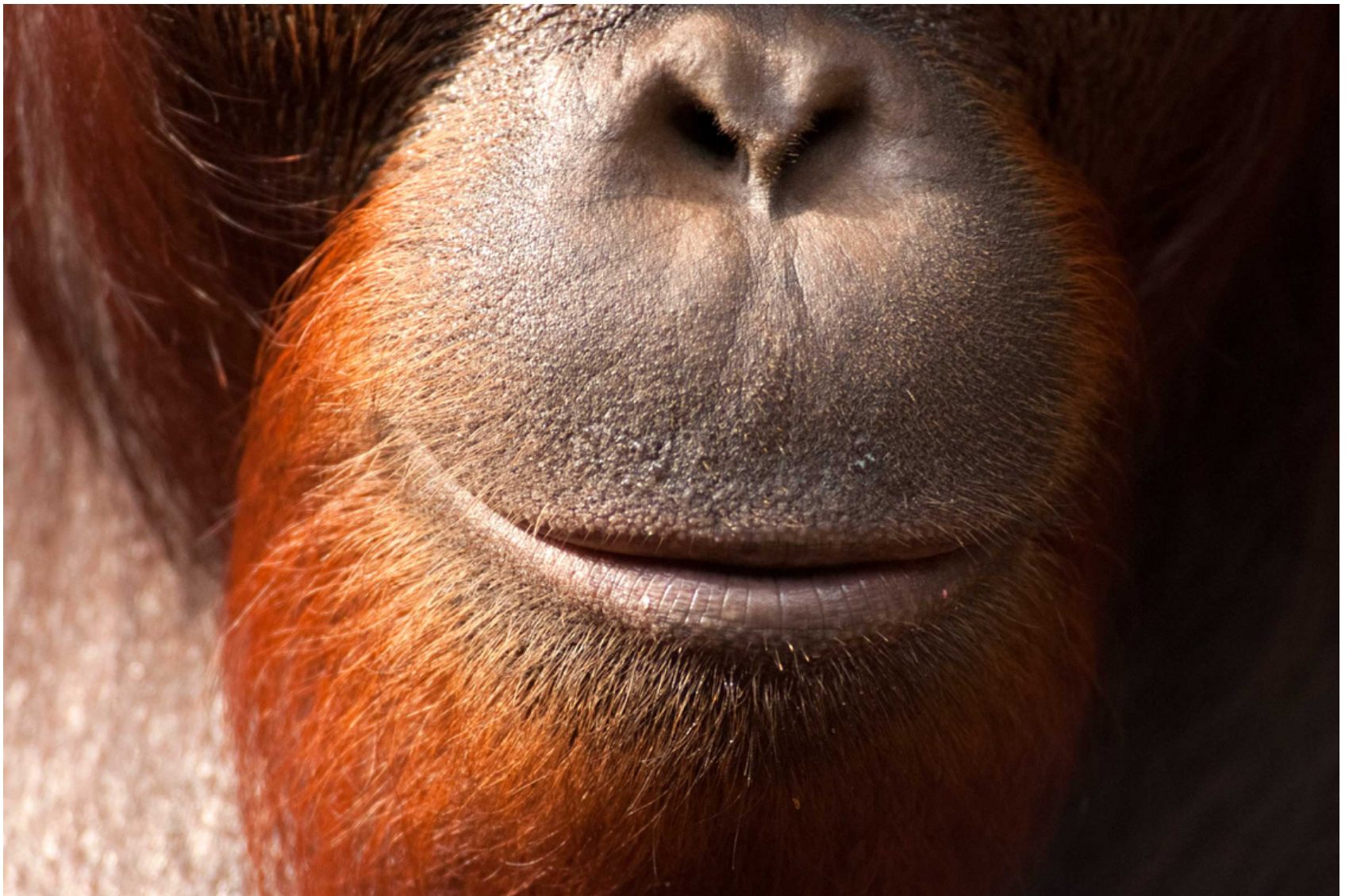
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## Rats and monkeys laugh



ISTOCK/RACHELKRAMER

It may sound strange, but several scientists

(<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/06/150613-animals-laughter-apes-evolution-science/>) have elicited "tickle-induced vocalizations" from primates. Penny

Paterson, president of the Gorilla Foundation says that Koko, the gorilla famous for her sign language abilities, even had a special "ho, ho," for visitors she liked. And rats apparently have very ticklish necks. When Bowling Green State University scientist Jaak Panksepp and his graduate students tickled baby rats' napes, the rodents emitted high-frequency chirps that Panksepp interpreted (<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/rats-laugh-but-not-like-human/>) as laughter.

## Couples who laugh together, stay together



ISTOCK/BRAUNS

Robert Levinson, psychology professor at the University of California Berkeley, invited couples into his lab and asked each partner to discuss something that irritated him or her about the other partner. The couples who tackled the stressful situation with laughter not

only felt better in the moment, but had higher levels of relationship satisfaction and stayed together longer than couples who didn't crack a smile.

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## Laughter controls our brains



ISTOCK/PEOPLEIMAGES

When you see people laughing, you just can't help but smile, right? That's because your brain makes it nearly impossible not to. That's the result of research from the lab of Sophie Scott, a neuroscientist at University College London. When she monitored

subjects' brains while she played laughing sounds, she found that the premotor cortical region of the brain, which prepares the muscles in the face to move, was activated.

# Laughing burns more calories than you may think

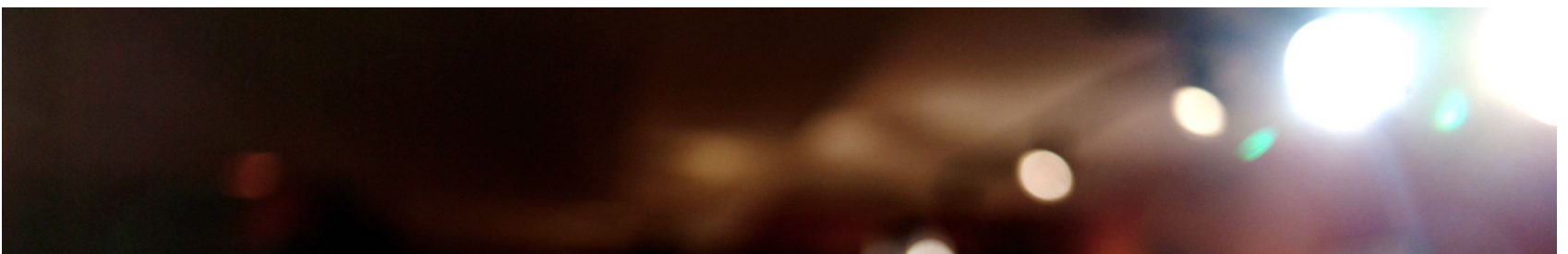


ISTOCK/GLOBALSTOCK

No joke! Just 10 to 15 minutes of laughing a day can burn up to 40 calories, according to a Vanderbilt University [study](https://www.nature.com/ijo/journal/v31/n1/full/o803353a.html).

(<https://www.nature.com/ijo/journal/v31/n1/full/o803353a.html>). Researchers determined that the increase in heart rate and oxygen consumption during these funny moments boosted the burn.

## Nashville is a really funny place

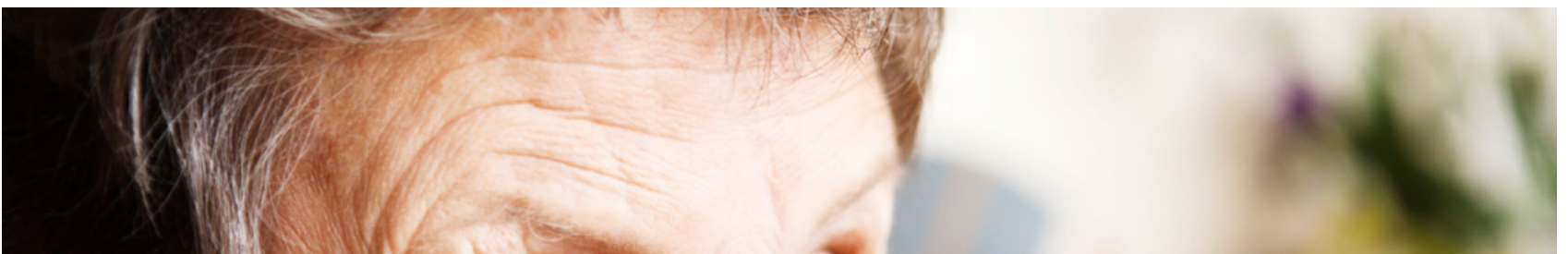




ISTOCK/HENK BADENHORST

At 8:04 p.m. on April 15, 2015, a crew of comedians put Nashville in the record books. Funny folks including Hannibal Buress, Rory Shovel, and Ahmed Ahmed riffed on stage to help set a new record for the longest continuous stand-up comedy show by multiple comedians: 208 hours, 16 minutes.

## **Laughter really is the best medicine**







ISTOCK/RAPIDEYE

Study after study has pointed to the health benefits of laughter: Research ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/22/laughter-and-memory\\_n\\_5192086.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/22/laughter-and-memory_n_5192086.html)) from Loma Linda University showed that laughing improved the memory of adults in their 60s and 70s; University of Maryland School of Medicine researchers found (<http://umm.edu/news-and-events/news-releases/2005/school-of-medicine-study-shows-laughter-helps-blood-vessels-function-better>) that hilarious movies improved the function of blood vessels and increased blood flow in a group of 20 thirty-somethings. And other research (<http://www.webmd.com/balance/features/give-your-body-boost-with-laughter?page=2>) has shown that laughing can improve immunity, help regulate blood sugar levels, and improve sleep.

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## Your sense of humor might be genetic





ISTOCK/GRADYREESE

In a Northwestern University study of more than 300 people, those with the short version, or allele, of gene 5-HTTLPR are quicker to laugh at cartoons or funny movie clips than those with the long version of the gene. That particular gene has long been associated with the study of depression, but this is the first study to look at its connection to positive emotions. "People with short alleles may flourish in a positive environment and suffer in a negative one," said study co-author Claudia M. Haase. "While people with long alleles are less sensitive to environmental conditions."

View as Slideshow (<https://www.rd.com/culture/laughter-facts/1>)

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[iStock/fatihhoca Some scientists believe that](#)

[laughter was used as a way for humans to relate](#)

[to one another millions of years before they](#)

[developed the lung strength for language. The](#)

[mechanism of laughter is so ingrained in our](#)

[brains that babies as young as 17 days old have](#)

[been observed \[...\]](#)

[\(https://www.rd.com/culture/donald-trump-facts/\)](https://www.rd.com/culture/donald-trump-facts/)

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It has to do with Paris's traffic laws... and a possible stop sign heist.

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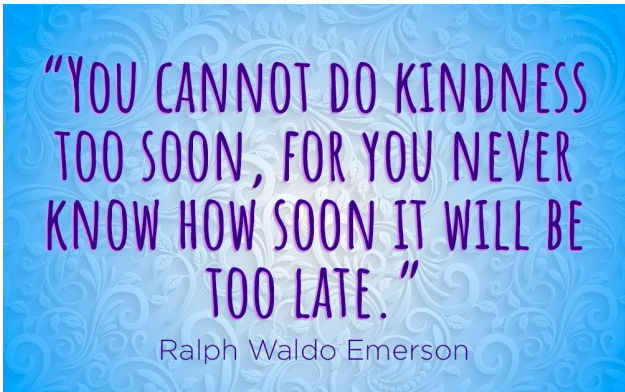


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Every British royal—from Queen Victoria in 1840 to Prince William and Kate Middleton in 2011—has done it.

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