

Use Lightness With Care

Lower tension in moments that can bear it.

Warmth and appropriate humor can sometimes prevent a small disagreement from becoming a large one. The test is whether the person experiences it as connection. When humor misses, acknowledge that and change course.

FOUR MOVES TO TRY

01 Read the moment

Decide whether the situation is safe and minor enough for lightness.

02 Lower your intensity

Relax your expression and use fewer words.

03 Keep the expectation

Offer a brief choice or redo without surrendering the limit.

04 Shift when needed

Drop humor immediately if it feels mocking or distress grows.

TWO WAYS TO APPLY IT

YOUNGER CHILD

For a routine chore, offer a playful choice about which part to do first.

TEENAGER

If a joke does not land, say so and ask what concern you have missed.

COACH THE CAREGIVER

Ask whether the young person welcomes humor and where a serious, reassuring response is needed.

TRY IT THIS WEEK

Select one low-level recurring conflict and plan a warmer response that keeps the expectation intact.

REFLECTION

Is my lightness helping this person feel understood, or making the moment about me?

SAFETY AND PRACTICE

Never use humor to minimize fear, grief, trauma, or safety concerns.

AUTHORSHIP AND CONTEXT

Dr. Charles Pemberton, Ed.D., developed the original Clinical Perspectives materials for the FITT team while serving as Clinical Program Director at Omni Family of Services. This website adaptation is for general education; it does not state current Omni or FITT policy. Publication rights review is pending.