



The abbreviation “LOL” stands for “laughing out loud”, and is commonly used in place of the now outdated “HAHAHA!”. Nevertheless, the mere fact that we even express our laughter in written communications highlights the point that laughter is a meaningful and purposeful response.

To phrase it differently, there may be only two repeated letters in HAHAHA, however laughter actually says quite a lot. In fact, laughter, in different circumstances, can convey completely different meanings.

For example, if a person says in all seriousness, “My mother passed away,” and his statement is received with laughter, he will feel hurt and offended. On the contrary, if one has to make a joke, and the response is laughter, then one will feel pleased and happy. In the same way, if a person is convicted of a crime, and he has to sarcastically laugh in the face of the judge, then he could possibly be charged with contempt of court!

Having understood this, we need to think carefully over the effect that our laughter has on the child of another person when he/she misbehaves. Often, when the child defies his parents, back-answers, jumps onto the table, hits another child or displays other ill-behaviour, then some adults find the ill behaviour amusing. This itself is a problem, but what worsens the situation is when they laugh over the behaviour.

Generally, children are attention-seekers and always want approval from others. Thus, when this behaviour earns them attention and laughs, it encourages them to repeat it if not escalate it. Thereafter, when the parents attempt to fulfil their responsibility of raising the child correctly, by chastising, reprimanding and disciplining the child, the child makes his parents the enemy. The child cannot understand why his parents find a problem with his behaviour when everyone else encourages him to behave in this manner by laughing.

Naturally, this leads to a gradual breakdown in the parental authority, as the child becomes rebellious and disrespects his parents' right to correct him – especially when the people 'supporting' his ill behaviour are his own grandparents, uncles, aunts or other relatives who may be older than his parents!

Laughter may be spontaneous, but the next time we have an urge to laugh, let us first think of what meaning the HAAAAHA will actually convey.

