

At work, humor can be used to build or break working relationships. Often men and women have the same intent -to build a sense of camaraderie -when joking or kidding around.

However, women jest. Men joust.

The Jester, if you will, will use self deprecating humor or feel good humor.

The Jouster will use humor to skewer or unseat the opponent and for the benefit of others. It is humor and one- ups-manship. And unless you are prepared to skewer back, it can be a demoralizing experience.

Not a big deal? Oh contraire! I hear of more women leaving male-dominated environments because of the Jousting Atmosphere.

As one woman put it “there was just too much testosterone! The men did not know when to dial it down!”

I am not saying that men need to become women with penises. Nor should women be men with breasts. What I am saying is that everyone should be conscientious of how they use humor in work groups.

So are you a Jester or a Jouster? Have you ever been a Jester in a group of Jousters? Or a Jouster in a group of Jesters? (For that second one, will anyone fess up if the Jouster with the Jesters might have led to complaints of bullying or harassment? Just wondering...)