

## Take care when teasing - it usually antagonizes

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New York (dpa) - Teasing and banter among colleagues or at school may often seem like fun but such remarks made in jest are nearly always interpreted as negative by those on the receiving end, a U.S. study has highlighted.

Even when a teaser delivers a jab with a laugh or smile, caution is called as this subtle, non-verbal part of the communication often falls by the wayside, found Justin Kruger, a psychology professor at New York University. As an experiment, he asked a group of students to tease each other and recorded their reactions.

According to Kruger in the German-language magazine *Psychology Heute*, people on the receiving end of teasing invariably failed to pick up on whether the taunt was good-natured or not. They simply felt antagonized.

Oddly enough, when teasing others these same people did not modify their behaviour in any way. Researchers found that the recipients of deflating remarks were only relaxed about ribbing when the researchers made it plain from the outset that the taunts were meant playfully. During Kruger's experiment even observers tended to interpret any teasing or banter as negative, the study found.

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