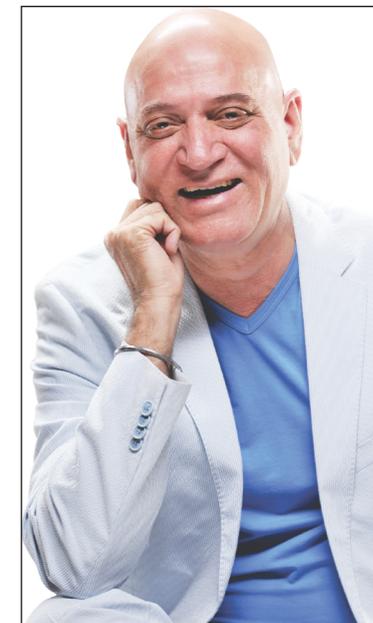


Workshop Objectives

You Will Know Laughter- You will get in depth knowledge about laughter and Laughter Yoga wisdom - how and why it works, as well as the immeasurable benefits it provides for body-mind wellness.

You Will Learn To Do Laughter- Knowledge alone is not enough. You have to actually do laughter to experience the benefits. Laughter Yoga methods will give you guidelines and practical skills to do laughter in a group and once your body gets the intelligence of laughing without a reason, you can even laugh all by yourself anytime, anywhere.

You Will Learn To Live Laughter- Laughter is not just about learning and doing Laughter Yoga - it is about living it. Therefore, it is essential to bring happiness to others in order to find yourself happy. With our experience with Laughter Yoga worldwide, we found that once people start laughing on a regular basis, it automatically brings attitudinal changes in their behavior. They become more loving, caring and forgiving. Not only do they laugh in the laughter session; they carry the spirit of laughter throughout the day.



Dr. Madan Kataria
The Founder of Laughter Yoga

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CHAPTER 1

Why We Need To Laugh Today

Today it seems people have forgotten how to laugh. Researchers tell us that laughter has a positive impact on our physical and mental well-being, but in this high pressure, high tension, and competitive world, laughter is fast disappearing. The hearty humor of 30 years ago no longer stirs even the faintest smile. If we consider laughter an expression of happiness, it seems that a lot of people are not happy with their lives.

Stress – The Number One Killer

Life is really stressful and stress-related diseases are on the rise. More than 70 per cent of illnesses are related to stress. High blood pressure, heart disease, anxiety, depression, frequent cough and cold, nervous breakdown, peptic ulcer, insomnia, allergies, asthma, irritable bowel



““ When You Laugh
You Change
When You Change
The World Changes
Around You””
Dr. Kataria

syndrome, colitis, menstrual difficulties, migraine, and even cancer are related to stress.

Most people rely on three things to laugh: level of happiness and life satisfaction, sense of humor, and reason. But, these factors are mostly unreliable. We can't depend upon a sense of humor and there are very few reasons for us to smile and laugh. In fact, there are countless reasons for us to be sad, depressed, and frustrated. The million-dollar question is: How can we find laughter, and who will make us laugh?

Over Seriousness

The whole world is full of seriousness. As a child, one is asked by one's parents over and again, "When will you become serious?" As an adult, if you want to be joyful, people say, 'Don't behave like a child! Life is serious.'

Wherever you look, you will find more gloominess and less laughter. Even workplaces are quite solemn and people exude seriousness all the time. Then there are newspapers and television programs which continually bombard us with dreadful news and negative thoughts, making people still less secure.

Children too are overloaded with information at a tender age. They behave like young adults. Instead of outdoor games, they play

computer games and chess, where you need to apply a lot of thought and there is almost no laughter.

People nowadays are more logic-oriented; they look for logic in laughter too. But, because the very essence of laughter is absurdity, wherever there is logic; there is no laughter. We are already paying a heavy price for taking life too seriously and the time has now come to take laughter seriously. We intend to break the seriousness of life through Laughter Clubs, and revive the spirit of laughter and joy as a way of life around the world.

Depression – A Global Phenomenon

Depression is growing at a very fast pace and is becoming the number one sickness in the world. People are becoming more sad and lonely. Often they have no one to talk to or share their feelings and emotions. Laughter is a powerful antidote for depression. It fosters a positive and hopeful attitude, which makes the world seem a wonderful place full of fun and interesting people and great potential for achievement and happiness. In this state one is less likely to succumb to feelings of depression and helplessness.

““ More than 70 %
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simultaneously””

Laughter Yoga – A Breakthrough

For centuries, laughter was referred to as the best medicine for body and mind, but never was there a reliable delivery system. Laughter was simply the end result of entertainment or amusement, but Laughter Yoga has taken laughter to a new level. It is a complete delivery system, allowing laughter to actually be prescribed as part of a daily routine in order to realize all of the health benefits being funny.

Laughter Yoga was started by Dr. Madan Kataria in 1995 as a social Laughter Club in Mumbai, India, with just five people. In the initial days, the group resorted to jokes and funny stories, but they soon ran out of them. This prompted Dr. Kataria to come up with a

“ Laughter Yoga is a complete delivery system, allowing laughter to actually be prescribed as part of a daily routine in order to realize all of the health benefits ”

breakthrough system of laughter. He finally found the answer he was looking for, which was based on a scientific fact that the body cannot differentiate between acted and genuine laughter. Both produced the same ‘happy chemistry’.

He explained this to the group and asked them to try to act out laughter with him for one minute. Amid skepticism they agreed to try – and the results were amazing. For some, the acted out laughter quickly turned into real laughter --- this was contagious and very soon others followed. Soon the group was laughing like never before. The hearty laughter that followed persisted for almost ten minutes. This breakthrough was the birth of Laughter Yoga, which has today become a global phenomenon with thousands of Laughter Clubs in more than 72 countries.

It is now being practiced in companies, old age homes, schools, colleges, fitness centers, community centers, prisons, hospitals, homes for the physically and mentally challenged and cancer self-help groups. It is being touted as perhaps the best alternative health therapy for complete body-mind wellness.



“ Whether you laugh for real or pretend to laugh; your body does not know the difference- you will still get the same health benefits ”

What Is Laughter Yoga

- Laughter Yoga is a unique concept where anyone can laugh for no reason, without relying on humor, jokes or comedy.
- We initiate laughter as an exercise in a group, but with eye contact and childlike playfulness, it soon turns into real and contagious laughter.
- The reason we call it Laughter Yoga is because it combines laughter exercises with yoga breathing. This brings more oxygen to the body and the brain which makes one feel more energetic and healthy.
- The concept of Laughter Yoga is based on a scientific fact that the body cannot differentiate between fake and real laughter if done with willingness. One gets the same physiological and psychological benefits.

Three Reasons Why Laughter Yoga

Most people feel that if they are able to laugh naturally they don't need to join a Laughter Club, but the fact is that spontaneous laughter is not sufficient to bring significant physiological and biochemical changes.

Here are 3 basic reasons why one must do Laughter Yoga to get maximum health benefits:

- 1 In order to get scientifically proven health benefits of laughter, we need to laugh continuously for at least for 10 to 15 minutes. Since in Laughter Yoga we do laughter as an exercise, we can prolong our laughter as long as we want; it brings measurable physiological changes like oxygen levels in the blood, muscle relaxation, blood circulation and release of certain hormones in the body.
- 2 To reap the health benefits of laughter, laughter has to be loud and deep, coming from the diaphragm. It should be a belly laugh. It might not be socially acceptable to laugh loudly, but Laughter Yoga Clubs provide a safe environment where one can laugh loudly and heartily without any social implication.
- 3 Natural laughter that courses through our life depends upon many reasons and conditions, but there are not many reasons which make us laugh. That means we are leaving laughter to chance, it may happen it may not. In contrast, in Laughter Yoga Clubs we are not leaving laughter to chance, but doing it out of commitment. This is a guaranteed way of getting the health benefits of laughter.

“ In order to get scientifically proven health benefits of laughter, we need to laugh for at least 10 to 15 minutes and it should be sustained laughter ”

Health Benefits Of Laughter Yoga

Laughter Yoga is sweeping the globe not because the concept is great; but primarily because people are getting enormous health benefits from it. Regular practitioners report amazing improvement in their health as well as a more positive mental attitude and higher energy levels. The first thing participants say is that they don't fall sick very often and the frequency of normal cold and flu reduces or even disappears. There are daily reports of partial or total cure of most stress-related illnesses like hypertension, heart disease, depression, asthma, arthritis, allergies, stiff muscles and more.

You can apply Laughter Yoga to different fields and sum up the many benefits into five major categories which affect a person in almost every facet of life. These categories are:

“Laughter Yoga can change your mood within minutes by releasing endorphins from your brain cells. And if your mood is good, you are at your best and you will do everything well”

- 1 Personal Benefits
- 2 Health Benefits
- 3 Business benefits
- 4 Social Benefits
- 5 Laughing Through Challenges

Personal Benefits

Besides being the best stress buster, Laughter Yoga has proved to be very effective as a personal development tool. It enhances mental skills and abilities that help a person to improve their performance in every sphere of life. As it generates a positive mental attitude; it helps to change the mood state and the whole perspective towards life and people in general.

Here are some aspects of personal development easily enhanced by Laughter Yoga:

Brings More Laughter & Joy: If you ask any Laughter Club member what benefits they have received from doing Laughter Yoga, the first thing they say is that after laughing for 15 minutes they are in a good mood which keeps them cheerful throughout the day. This sense of wellbeing comes from the release of 'feel good hormones' called endorphins which improve the mood state instantaneously, and if your mood is good you are at your best in everything you do.



“In Laughter Yoga you can laugh even if you are not happy as Laughter Yoga is all about finding happiness within and not outside”

Another thing people say that is that Laughter Clubs have helped them to develop the ability to laugh at almost anything. This can be attributed to two factors – Firstly, Laughter Yoga develops sense of humor and secondly, it provides a childlike playfulness in people's lives.

Self Confidence: Laughter Yoga is a powerful means to enhance self confidence as it helps overcome inhibition and shyness and eases out awkwardness. Laughter and smiling not only helps to communicate with others effectively, but also creates a safe environment for others to connect and come closer. This goes a long way in achieving success in business life, personal life and social life. When you laugh in a group, in a public place, it removes most inhibitions and over a period of time you become more sociable, unreserved and outgoing. Gradually, it builds self-confidence and helps to develop personality and leadership qualities.

Communication Skills: Laughter Yoga significantly improves communication skills by reducing one's self-consciousness and hang-ups. Stress and negative emotions reduce communication skills and the motivation to communicate. Laughter Yoga is a perfect exercise routine that exactly counters these effects. As it induces unconditional laughter through group dynamics and childlike playfulness, it enables people to communicate and express their emotions freely. It generates positive feelings and alleviates all negative strains of thought. In fact, it is hard to

remain in conflict with someone when you are laughing.

Maintains Emotional Balance: It is comparatively easy to manage physical or mental stress, but very complex to handle emotional stress which arises due to problems at home or at work, faulty relationships and several other strained situations. Faced with such circumstances, people find it hard to express their feelings and emotions, as a result of which they suppress their emotions. Laughter Yoga helps free flow of emotions and releases pent up feelings. It defuses painful emotions like fear, anger, resentment etc. thus preventing conflicts, easing tension and helping to us to understand and comprehend the other person's point of view.

Unfolding Infinite Potential Through Laughter: Laughter has an infinite potential to enhance right brain functionality, which is the seat of creativity, intuition, imagination, inventions, music, art, meditation and healing. The capacity of the analytical left brain is limited, while the right has tremendous prospective to grow and develop. One of the easiest ways to stimulate this is by playfulness. By being playful, one can augment creativity and imagination. A Laughter Club is a perfect platform that gives an opportunity to be playful in a group, without embarrassment.

Makes You Look Younger: Laughter is an excellent exercise for toning facial muscles and improving expressions. When you laugh, the face

“Laughter Yoga enables you to laugh even when you don't feel like laughing because it is an exercise which can be done regardless of your mood state”

“Natural laughter that courses through our life depends upon many reasons and conditions. Laughter Yoga helps to disconnect from reasons and conditions of life”

becomes red, due to an increase in blood supply, which nourishes the facial skin and makes it glow. Laughing people look more cheerful and attractive.

Health Benefits

There is an ever increasing demand to open more and more Laughter Clubs in the world because people are inspired and motivated by the multiple health benefits derived from doing Laughter Yoga. Club members proudly say that they never miss a single day! In India, Laughter Clubs meet every day and have proved to be a great platform where people not just meet to do Laughter Yoga exercises, but have also successfully created an effective social network of caring and sharing relationships. Laughter Yoga is a complete package for physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being of an individual and has all the elements of perfect health building activity.

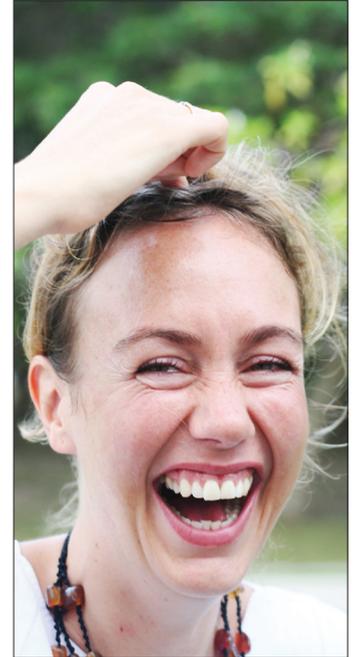
Laughter Yoga for Fitness: Laughter Yoga enhances body fitness, and above all is the best cardio workout which increases blood circulation as well as brings more oxygen to the body cells. It can be compared to any aerobic exercise, except that you don't have to wear fancy shoes or clothes. You don't need to slog on a treadmill or the tracks. Just laugh yourself fit and healthy. According to Dr. William Fry 10 minutes of hearty laughter is equal to 30 minutes on the rowing machine! This is in respect

to cardiopulmonary endurance. Laughter Yoga is ideally suited for busy professionals and business people who have very little time to exercise. 20 minutes of Laughter Yoga can give you similar results as those of going to gym for one hour.

More Oxygen: Negative emotions constrict the supply of oxygen and induce shallow chest breathing. Laughter exercises are devised to facilitate longer exhalation and deep diaphragmatic breathing, which helps in flushing the lungs of stale residual air and increasing the net supply of oxygen.

Increased Blood Circulation: Physical disease or mental problems restrict circulation and slow down the body system. Research has shown that laughter causes an 'internal jogging' that massages and promotes circulation to the digestive and lymphatic systems. It increases circulation to flush the body and organs of waste products leaving us ready to operate at peak performance.

Stress Buster: Laughter Yoga is an instant stress buster. It has been scientifically proven that laughter reduces the level of stress hormones like cortisol and epinephrine and enhances positive emotions. A study on a group of 50 IT professionals in Bangalore, India, showed that the cortisol levels dropped significantly after Laughter Yoga sessions. The



“Laughter Yoga is an instant yoga. One can feel the benefits from the very first session”

study also confirmed a significant drop in blood pressure following laughter sessions.

Laughter Boosting for stressful situations: Growing competitiveness and desire for lofty accomplishments in workplace, academics, and sports as well as in the field of creative arts invariably places people in a vulnerable situation, which can generate fear, anxiety and worry and lead to an immensely negative and stressful scenario. Performance levels are most likely to be affected as rationality gets clouded with stress. It is therefore important to alleviate these circumstances and create an ambience for optimal performance. Laughter can do just that. It has the power to boost positive emotions and enhance self - confidence just within minutes before a stressful event.

Business Benefits

People today are facing tremendous stress and burnouts in the workplace. Even highly talented and skilled people cannot perform well if they are emotionally imbalanced and stressed. Companies, which have introduced Laughter Yoga sessions for their staff at all levels, have reported a happier workplace, increased efficiency, better communication, increase in sales and productivity, increased creativity and better teamwork, decrease in illness and absenteeism and a reduction in employee turnover.

Stress in the workplace can be divided into three types:

Physical Stress results from working beyond one's physical capacity. Working continuously without sufficient rest or recharge makes one physically tired and exhausted.

Mental Stress in the workplace stems largely from heavy workloads with tight deadlines, from fear of losing one's job or pushing too hard to fulfill basic needs. Competing with others or with yourself to improve your performance also leads to mental stress.

Emotional Stress is deep-rooted and caused by bad relationships at home or at the workplace. Even highly talented and skilled employees cannot perform well if they are emotionally disturbed. Emotional problems at home reflect at work and vice versa.

Emotional stress is more difficult to cope with (and to reduce) than physical and mental stress.

One needs to deal with emotional stress at two levels:

Develop skills to express emotions freely without fear: Laughter Yoga helps to develop emotional expression through physical playfulness and a playful mental attitude. While playing you focus entirely on the play process and one's personality takes a back seat. One is creative, dynamic and playful.

“We are not leaving laughter to a chance, but doing it out of commitment”

“ We have
taken life too
seriously; it’s
time now to
take laughter
seriously ”

Most people spend a lot of time and energy holding on to their masks and personalities. Physical playfulness helps to shed these masks and enables the free expression of emotions without fear.

Increase one’s ability to release pent-up emotions: Suppressed emotions cause ongoing

physical or mental pain and reduce one’s performance. Laughter Yoga provides a simple, painless and effective release mechanism to help rid the subconscious mind of pent-up emotions through catharsis during intense laughter. Such release helps to build performance and improves emotional intelligence and communication skills.

Peak Performance: Mood, energy levels and good oxygen supply are essential for peak performance. Lack of any one of these elements can lead to physical, emotional and mental stress which is counterproductive. Laughter Yoga has the power to change the mood state within minutes by releasing neuro-peptides from the brain cells called endorphins. Science tells us that the brain needs 25% more oxygen than other body organs. Laughter Yoga increases the net supply of oxygen which helps in optimal performance and boosts energy levels. It is the only exercise routine that works both on the body and mind simultaneously and effectively recharges the body system thus enabling it to perform to its optimum stage.

Team Building: “People who laugh together, work together” John Cleese, a renowned British comedian, once said during his visit to Mumbai that Laughter is a great connector of people. It breaks all hierarchies and is a force for democracy. Laughter Yoga is a powerful tool that can give you a highly motivated and energetic workforce for maximum productivity and profitability. It also develops a positive mental attitude, hope and optimism and increases communication skills to help in teambuilding.

Laughter Yoga group sessions create a bonding as people learn to share and care about one another. It provides a sense of emotional security which resists stress and promotes excellence in all other areas of life. It teaches one to understand others and balance one’s own emotions. It diffuses stress and generates peace and harmony which leads to improved thinking and better creativity with a defined focus. The goal of Laughter Yoga is to connect people with one another at heart level without judgment.

Laughter is powerful group dynamics. The mirror neurons in the brain cause us to experience the emotions of people we communicate with. Being with laughing people, we experience their laughter which makes it easier for us to laugh. Each time we establish eye contact with people who are laughing; the mirror neurons add their laughter experience to our own and this creates a feeling of togetherness which is a major component for successful team building.



“People who laugh together, work together”
- Laughter Yoga is a great team building exercise ”

Innovation & Creativity: The essence of Laughter Yoga system is to cultivate childlike playfulness. This playfulness stimulates the right brain activity which is the seat of creativity. This helps generate new ideas and new insights about workplace issues and problems.

Increases Attention Span in HR Trainings: Human brain cannot concentrate for more than 90 minutes after which the attention span reduces. Even a 5-10 minute Laughter Yoga session can provide a great energy boost during long HR training sessions and conferences. It helps to increase the attention span and enhance learning skills & concentration.

Social Benefits

The quality of life does not depend upon how much money, power and success we have. Rather, it depends upon the caring and sharing relationships with people around us. Both in times of success and failure, we need people with whom we can share our moments. In fact, many a times it is seen that our own family members are unable to provide that kind of happiness and security that a good friendship can. This establishes the fact that the best relationships are mostly with good friends who are always around to provide unconditional love and support. With laughter we attract like-minded or good hearted people and the way Laughter Clubs are developing into communities, there is no doubt that Laughter Yoga is an excellent tool to bring people together like an extended family.

Healing through Laughter Clubs: Members of Laughter Clubs laugh together daily or weekly. The healing effects of laughter are different for each person according to their physical, mental, emotional problems and needs. Many members with chronic pain, migraines, headaches and asthma have found attacks to become less frequent, and in some cases, to disappear completely. Symptoms of high blood pressure, severe spinal, neck or shoulder problems and even diabetes have improved eventually requiring no medication.

Besides the therapeutic power of laughter experienced in these clubs, people also find a profound change in their mental conditions as it helps them to counter depression, anxiety and stress. Members have reported moving from debilitating fear and anxiety to a more positive state of mind, transforming their quality of life.

Many members who harbored bitterness, hatred and other long-term emotional problems found that all their pent up feelings are released through the cathartic effects of laughter, leaving them joyful and free.

People suffering from life threatening diseases like cancer found laughter in these clubs as a refuge to deal with their trauma and pain. Even students with emotional problems that have left them incapable of learning have reported that after a period of laughter they have been able to continue their education and succeed.

“The brain needs 25% more oxygen than other body organs. Laughter Yoga increases the net supply of oxygen which helps in optimal performance and boosts energy levels ”

“ The
playfulness in
Laughter Yoga
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right brain
activity which
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creativity ”

A Network of Caring-Sharing Relationships: Social Laughter Clubs have the power to reach beyond the healing of laughter. Relationship with people with whom we laugh regularly becomes very strong. This effective network of caring-sharing relationships is the key to a happy and healthy life.

Spiritual Benefits: In addition to providing a positive and secure emotional environment, Laughter Clubs promote personal happiness in many ways. The positive and happy attitude from Laughter Clubs is spread through the mechanism of emotional contagion to others that we have contact with. This is not limited to just friends, family and co-workers, but also includes social contacts and even people they sit next to in a bus or in a restaurant, taxi drivers and many others.

Their caring, empathetic manner touches all the people they interact with and thus the benefits continue to grow. The emotional problems and selfish interests fall away through laughter and caring and there is a kind of inner joy that fills the heart.

This 'Inner Spirit of Laughter' becomes apparent to some as they develop a state of emotional fluidity where the worries and intense goals that have driven their lives become less important to them. These people become aware that true happiness comes from giving unconditional

love, caring and sharing, and working to make the world a better place not only for themselves but for all others.

Laughing Through Challenging Times

Laughter Yoga goes beyond just laughter. It not only fosters a feeling of physical well being, but also enhances the spirit and touches the emotional core of people. It develops an emotional balance which helps one to understand one's own emotions as well as those of others.

People are often surprised at the powerful changes that Laughter Yoga makes to their lives. The ever present ego and the 'I' mellow down to a loving, caring and giving state of mind. It alters the selfish character to an altruistic nature. It cultivates a positive mental attitude and an understanding based on unconditional love, forgiveness, generosity and compassion. It allows virtues of patience and tolerance to emerge in the forefront.

Laughter helps people to develop a state of emotional fluidity where worries and intense goals that have driven their lives become less important. It ensures that people around us are also happy or else they will not allow us to be happy. It teaches us that even as we seek our happiness, we must be mindful of bringing happiness to others too.



Testimonials From Laughter Yoga Practitioners

Maria Manninen, Finland: My life has been pretty tough for many years and I spent lot of time crying alone at home. It was only when I discovered Skype Laughter Club that I felt a dramatic change. My life started to fill up with joy and laughter and I found myself smiling and laughing throughout the day. And when something was funny, I would laugh out loud which I hardly did before. I got so much into laughing that I did a 3-day Laughter Yoga leader's training and now lead the Skype Laughter Club on line. After a daily Skype laughter session, I feel so much happier. In fact, sometimes I laugh so much that I have to explain to people that I'm a Laughter Yoga practitioner!

Nili Dor HaElla: Laughter helped me through difficult times: My brother David and my sister-in-law died in a plane crash in USA. It all happened

so suddenly that it was very hard for me to grasp whether it was true or some nightmare. My body was in a state of shock and there was no way I thought I could ever laugh again. I told myself that I would do my best even if I had to fake it till I made it. So I brought my body and open-heart to the Laughter Club. I shared with the group what was going on with my life and thanked them for their love and support. That laughter session was the most powerful experience I have ever had in my life. I found the ability to tap into my inner resources, I did not know existed, at a time when I felt weak and powerless. The Laughter Club members were so loving and supportive that I still feel lucky to be surrounded by such loving kindness.

Brigette, Denmark: Laughter really changed my life. I now feel happier and more focused about things that make me happy. It has changed me from being a serious person to a much lighter person. I use laughter as my personal stress management therapy to keep my stress levels low.

Neeta Fadia, Mumbai: I have been suffering from advanced osteoarthritis of the knee joints which has severely hampered my mobility. Even after my knee replacement, I found it very hard to stand even for 15 minutes without pain. But, thanks to an evening Laughter Club that started in my building compound, I began attending the laughter sessions regularly. Now, I can stand for more than half an hour continuously without pain. It is amazing how Laughter Yoga changed my life and outlook.

“ In Laughter
Yoga, we don't
laugh because
we are happy;
we are happy
because we
laugh ”

“ In this high
tension high
pressure modern
world, we don't
have many
reasons that make
us laugh. We need
to disconnect our
Laughter from
reasons and Laugh
unconditionally. ”

“ If laughter cannot solve your problems, it will dissolve them by changing your body chemistry and mindset so you can face them in a better way ”

Sunita Beri, Mumbai: Ever since I started doing Laughter Yoga, I found myself very peaceful. Earlier, I used to get angry at everyone in my house, but now within a week my anger has reduced by 50%. My husband and children are surprised at my changed attitude. They never saw me laughing like now. I feel relaxed and can sleep better. Thanks to Laughter Yoga, it has really worked like magic.

Reema Hiranandani, Mumbai: I have changed a lot by practicing Laughter Yoga. My immunity has increased and I don't suffer from cough and cold any more. I feel energized and relaxed and am in a good mood the whole day. In fact, people look at me and tell me I look happy and content.

Anna Zakharova, Moscow: For 15 years I was looking for a spark to ignite my passion of painting, and finally it was Laughter Yoga which helped me achieve it, just after my second lesson. I've had a difficult time in life as a result of which I lost my health, got severe pain in my spine, and was not able to sit properly. But during the third Laughter Yoga lesson, I was sitting for 20 minutes using Laughter Meditation to discard the pain! I saw and understood that Laughter Yoga can give anything you want - health, joy, happiness, show you the way to your purpose and help you reap the real results in life.

Marilyn Fogelquist: I'm not a funny person. Neither can I remember and tell jokes nor did I grow up in a home with humor. In fact, I didn't learn any skills for defusing conflict or dealing effectively with stressful events and as for problems at home; we didn't talk about them at all. Laughter Yoga has brought great joy and pleasure to my life. It has provided me with the opportunity and skills to bring laughter and joyfulness to other people in our community. It has also been a blessing in helping me deal with the lingering illness and death of a family member.

Michael Shineberg: My father passed away recently after five months of a terminal sentence with cancer. At one point, I was grieving so heavily that I was getting lost in it: grieving is good for you but makes you weak. I wondered what I was going to do as I seemed to be spiraling down into a state I couldn't get out of. I thought of my laughter practice and started laughing. My grief was transmuted into a sublime energy of joy. I started laughing which helped me to connect to the power from within and cope with my tragedy.

Karla Ivette Oseguera Moguel: Soon after the birth of my child, I began to lose sight without realizing what was happening. I had lost 90% of my sight and was almost blind for more than a week. The diagnosis was Multiple Sclerosis. My life became like the vanishing



“ If you can't
laugh, bring
your body to
the Laughter
Club, your mind
will get it ”

light of a candle. I used to be a kind, affectionate and loving person with a remarkable sense of humor and plenty of vitality. But, I found myself living in darkness, with a lot of anger, frustration and gradually falling into a deep depression. Luckily, I found Laughter Yoga which gave a new meaning to my life. I have learnt to laugh all by myself under any condition. It even allows me to laugh in a ridiculous situation without being embarrassed. It makes me feel safe. I have also learnt to love myself and have realized my worth. I now respect myself more than ever before. I am happy and I can spread peace and happiness. Now, I can see that life has plenty of possibilities. I have found serenity and have increased my own tolerance to frustration. I trust myself and everyone else. Today, I can say I am alive and want to keep living. I can talk about what the disease has given; rather than what it has taken.

Gabriela Sanchez, Tijuana Mexico: It has been a great experience in my life. My relationship with my husband has improved and I feel happier and healthier. I sleep better and take care of myself.

Dominique Toulet, New Caledonia: I work as a conference interpreter from English to French. It is a profession recognized for being highly stressful. But Laughter Yoga boosts my confidence more than any other trick I've tried. I arrive at work all flushed and happy, totally calm within and deliver to the best of my abilities with no fear, stage fright

or whatever negative feeling which could only lessen my performance. Laughter is the best mood and confidence enhancer I know!

Linda Leclerc, Canada: As a Laughter Yoga Teacher, I tell people that laughter helps to decrease stress-levels and relieves tension. Whenever I feel nervous before meeting a new group or making a presentation, I lock myself in the bathroom and do my "survival routine" exercises: a few deep breaths, 2-3 minutes of silent laughter, stretching and breathing. Then I do 1 minute of lion laughter, take a few deep breaths and am ready to go feeling great. Every time I do this, it's almost like a new discovery for me: It really works!

Vishwamohan, Vijayawada, South India: It's usual to celebrate one's birthday the day one is born, but, not so for me. I celebrate my birthday on the day I joined the Laughter Club! I feel I got a new lease of life and was 'Reborn' in the club.

Constantly troubled by never-ending illnesses for the over 30 years, I had almost given up on life. From chronic diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiac problems to diabetic neuropathy, I had suffered immense pain and anxiety right through 53 years of my living. After a heart bypass in 1999, I still had to endure other health complications. Disillusioned with constant medication and rising stress levels I decided to adopt an alternative method to help me feel better.

“ Laughter and
breathing in
Laughter Yoga
brings you totally
in the present
moment, as you
can't laugh and
breathe in the
past or future ”

“ I have not
seen anybody
dying of
laughter but I
know millions
who are dying
because
they are not
laughing ”
Dr. Kataria

On January 14th, 2002, I joined the local Laughter Club. Gradually, my life underwent a remarkable change. My health improved considerably as my ECG, BP and blood sugar levels stabilized. I had never felt so much healthier in his entire life. I firmly believe that Laughter Yoga helped me rejuvenate and nurtured me to good health.

Des, Australia: Greatly inspired by Laughter Yoga Clubs, I started to laugh all by myself every day after meditation. I allow myself to be spontaneous and childlike and make funny movements. Regular practice of laughing alone has had a tremendous effect on my health condition. Though suffering from a tumor for some time, I can feel it getting smaller. Even my specialist was amazed when he realized it had shrunk remarkably. He cancelled the radiotherapy and said, 'I am happy to keep an eye on it for now. I really believe its laughter, meditation and positive affirmations that have worked so wonderfully together.' I also think laughter is anti-ageing. Though I'm 60 I feel very energetic, there is less pain and I can easily do a lot of things. People remark I look much better and younger!

Dianne Theil McNinch: In January 1997, my thoughts of suicide became frequent and by April 1997 I was officially diagnosed with Clinical Depression. Over time my condition became severe and by this year I was spending over \$400 on depression medication each

month. I first heard about Laughter Yoga on the American TV show 'Dancing with the Stars'. It seemed delightful. Then on April 11th 2007, I happened to see Laughter Yoga on the Oprah Winfrey show. Even before the show ended I signed up for the May Sierra Madre training and tried to find a local laughter group. The next day I met Jeffrey, a Laughter Yoga teacher who guided me to my initial session.

Just two months after my first Laughter Yoga experience on April 12, I had amazingly decreased the use of medicines by almost 80%. In fact, I'm completely free of all medication now and am saving over \$400 each month. I sleep better than I ever have and people tell me I look great. My life has undergone a remarkable change.

Lucinda, Canada: I used laughter exercises to relieve a nagging dental pain. During an uncomfortable drilling episode, I decided to do some laughter exercises to ease the pain. Just five minutes of laughing helped me to go through 4 minutes of totally pain free drilling. Though the pain crept back after 4-5 minutes, but by then the job was almost finished. Besides alleviating my pain, laughter lightened the mood in the office. I often do laughter exercises in the elevator and believe me it takes the edge off.



“ Laughter
Yoga is art
of laughing,
science of
breathing”

CHAPTER 5

How To Get Involved In Laughter Yoga

5 Strategies To Bring More Laughter Into Your Life

How often do you wish there was more laughter in your life? How often, when you see others laughing heartily, do you wish you had a reason to laugh as well? One of the reasons the frequency of daily laughter is declining is because laughter has been left to chance. However, Laughter Yoga is all about making the decision to laugh and not leaving it to chance. It is not dependent on outside circumstances, but from conscious efforts from within to generate laughter. This guarantees that there will be more laughter in your life.

Listed below are five major strategies that can be used in order to bring more laughter into your life:

- **Join or start a Laughter Club**
- **Laugh all by yourself**
- **Cultivate four elements of joy**
- **Find more laughter in daily situations**
- **Perform daily random acts of kindness**

Join Or Start A Laughter Club

One of the simplest ways to bring more laughter into your life is to join a Laughter Club or better yet, start one! Initially, the physical act of laughing is practiced which ultimately translates into the wisdom of laughter, ready for use at any point in life.

Laughter Clubs are a worldwide network of social clubs run by volunteers under the aegis of Laughter Yoga International which is fully independent, not-for-profit, non-political and non-religious, based in Bangalore, India. People gather together in public places or indoor venues to practice Laughter Yoga exercises, accompanied by breathing and stretching exercises, as they reap enormous health benefits.

“ Laughter
Club is like a
kindergarten
of grown ups”

“Laughter Yoga
develops
positive
mental
attitude which
keeps your
spirits high
during hard
times”

Laughter Clubs are social clubs that are free anywhere in the world. No membership fees are charged; however, members of the club share venue expenses.

Laughter Clubs in India

In India, most Laughter Clubs function daily with members meeting in public parks. Starting a club is easy. Just find a place in your community where people walk each morning and can assemble for a laughter session. The big advantage of selecting such a place is that it can be combined with your morning walk.

The designated area should be far enough away from residential areas so as to not create a disturbance. If your region experiences inclement weather part of the year, sessions during that time will need to be held in yoga classrooms, health clubs or aerobic centers.

Laughter Clubs in Western Countries

Laughter Clubs are run slightly different in the West where club members prefer to meet for two hours every weekend or twice a month. Combined with breathing and stretching, 30 minutes of laughter is followed by a 15 to 30-minute Laughter Meditation. Activities of the social Laughter Club include games, brainstorming on the psychological and physiological

benefits of laughter, as well as dancing. It is operated on a non-profit basis with expenses for venue, food and drinks shared by the members. The frequency of such laughter gatherings can be increased or decreased according to the wishes of the group.

Laughter Clubs should be started and led by Certified Laughter Yoga Leaders or Teachers who have been trained at one of the many training programs available all over the world.

As public Laughter Clubs are not always accessible, we have online, phone and Skype Laughter Clubs, plus a network of caring relationships, available 24 hours a day.

Online Laughter Clubs: Laughter Yoga on the phone is a concept that is quickly catching on as the benefits of daily laughter become more apparent. Laughter professionals have created history by taking the initiative to create an innovative venue to involve greater numbers of people laughing on a regular basis. Laughter Yoga on the phone is a virtual group laughter exercise that unites people around the world in remarkable, spontaneous and hilarious sessions of health and healing through spontaneous laughter. It is easy, free and available 24 hours a day.



“Quality of life depends upon quality of our friends and relationships. Laughter is a great connector of people which brings lots of good friends with caring and sharing relationship”

A Laughter Yoga phone session releases tension, opens the heart, elevates the mood and stimulates physical and psychological healing. Hearing the laughter of others is a contagious exercise, allowing laughter to flow easily, as child-like playfulness is engaged and a feeling of oneness with the group is enjoyed.

Skype Laughter Club: Now everyone can find a Laughter Club at home or at the office. All you need is a computer, internet connection, Skype and a headset. Add Laughter Club to your contacts and you are ready to laugh! Ten minutes of laughter is such an awesome break during the day.

CHAPTER 6

How To Laugh Alone

Laugh Alone - 5 Laughter Exercises

Currently, there are thousands of Laughter Clubs worldwide, but many still find it difficult to reach these clubs due to some constraint. Realizing the need to laugh on a regular basis, we developed specific techniques for Laugh Alone Laughter Yoga. Since Laughter Clubs meet once a week or every two weeks in the Western countries, people can laugh alone every day in their homes. Many leaders and teachers tried laughing in the bathroom or in front of a mirror with positive results. People loved this new technique of laughing alone that helped them release their stress and maintain their health.

Laughing Alone confirms that Laughter Yoga not only heals when practiced in a group, but also when practiced alone. This exercise regime, which

“Children who do not play enough grow up with low emotional intelligence”

“Laughter
Yoga is the
quickest, most
effective, most
economical
way to help
employees
reduce stress”

combines laughter and breathing exercises, is very beneficial for those looking for alternative methods to daily laughter, as well as for patients suffering from chronic diseases and those unable to actively move or exercise. This is an innovative way of practicing laughter exercises, while reaping the same health benefits as those enjoyed at the clubs.

Factors That Facilitate Laughing Alone

Paramount – Willingness to Laugh

A willingness to laugh creates a positive mindset that is necessary in order to be fully open to the benefits of laughing alone. Injecting exaggerated mannerisms into your laughter will allow suppressed emotions to be released more easily.

Self-Dialogue

Do not criticize the quality of your laughter. Tell yourself this is not about real or spontaneous laughter, but that your laughter and childlike playfulness is only an exercise with scientifically proven benefits that will give more oxygen to your body and more clarity to your thought processes in order for both your mind and body to retain and/or regain its health. Openly appreciate yourself. Literally give yourself a pat on the back each time you laugh more and without reason.

The 40-Day Formula

Laugh alone for 40 days and it will become a new healthy habit. After 40 days, the brain will develop new circuits with the new behavior becoming a part of your unconscious mind.

Without ever going to a Laughter Club, laughing alone will result in positively conditioning a joyful state of mind after repeatedly engaging in laughter and breathing exercises over an extended period of time. The brain actually develops new neuronal connections, which produce happy neuropeptides and hormones in the body that are triggered by this repetitive act.

In neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) language, eliciting such a bodily reaction is called an “ANCHOR”. By performing a joyful anchor action with the body, the mind can experience the emotion of joy completely with the chemical reactions it triggers. The body and mind can be trained to laugh at will and just like learning to ride a bicycle, once learned, the technique will never be forgotten.

Every Person Is Different

Laughter is individualized – there is no right or wrong way to laugh. When laughing alone, you will develop sounds, gestures and postures that you alone are comfortable with. Create your own exercises and develop



“Laughter Yoga is ideally suited for seniors as they can’t comprehend humor and comedy due to senile dementia and Alzheimer’s”

new ideas in order to discover what works best for you. Once you start laughing, you will be shocked at how laughter will release your sense of creativity!

Guidelines On How To Laugh Alone

How to do it and what to wear

Consciously relax the jaw. Every time you laugh alone, open your mouth a bit wider to enable laughter to flow from the belly. If your mouth is tightly closed, laughter will come from the throat or the upper chest. The goal is to have your laughter come from your lower belly which will engage the diaphragm. Engaging the diaphragm stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system that will relax all metabolic systems.

Wear loose and comfortable clothes for breathing and laughter exercises. Trousers should be below the navel, so as not to hinder abdominal movements. Also, avoid tight belts that restrict belly movement.

Duration and Ideal Time

Ideally, 15 minutes should be spent each on yogic breathing and laughter session with short breaks of relaxation. You can begin with 10 minutes and gradually increase the duration. Laughing alone should ideally be practiced the first thing every morning, since it will put you in a cheerful mood and keep you feeling good day. If you do not feel like laughing first

thing in the morning, begin with some warm-up and breathing exercises. They will stimulate the body and soon laughter will follow. Happily, this can be done anytime of the day in order to boost energy levels.

Warm-Up Exercises

Before starting laugh alone exercises, try some warm-up exercises. Exercises like, “Ho Ho Ha Ha”, Gibberish talking and “Very good, very good, yay!” are a few bodily expressions of joy that can be practiced. These exercises will be even more fun if you do them alone in front of a mirror. Do them gently in the beginning, then gradually increase the intensity till you get comfortable screaming with joy.

Popular Warm-up Exercises

“Ho Ho Ha Ha”

Ideally, this warm-up exercise should be done in a standing position. Say “ho ho” twice, as you push your hands forward away from your chest and say “ha ha” as you push your hands downward. Slowly sway your entire body from left to right, bend your knees slightly, as you speed up saying, “ho ho ha ha”. After doing this a couple of times, do some deep breathing exercise. Raise your arms above your head, inhale and hold your breath for 3-5 seconds. Then slowly bend your body from the waist, let your arms dangle, and exhale saying “haaaaaaaa” and continue to laugh.



“ To reap the health benefits laughter has to be loud and should come from the diaphragm; this is what we learn from Laughter Yoga”

Holding your breath creates enough pressure in the lungs to help you laugh. Voice reinforcement takes place when you say “haaaaa” which helps generate laughter easily. When bending at the waist, abdominal muscles are squeezed, moving the diaphragm upward, further facilitating laughter.

Caution: If you have back or spinal problems, be careful and do not make jerky movements.

Gibberish Talking

Gibberish is a meaningless language, a verbal diarrhea – it makes absolutely no sense. Try talking quickly in this “language” while moving your tongue from side to side as you make funny expressions will support your gibberish talk.

Broad hand gestures, along with “performing” in front of a mirror, will also help facilitate the utterance of gibberish. Talk as long as possible until you run out of breath. Gibberish talking is a special kind of exhalation that helps empty your lungs of stale, residual air. Laughter happens automatically when speaking gibberish. Complete the gibberish session with deep inhalation.

Very good, very good, yay!!

This is a common exercise used in Laughter Clubs to cultivate childlike playfulness. It consists of three verbal prompts, “very good, very good and yay!” combined with two claps and a thumbs up. Clap, as you simultaneously say,

“very good” twice, thumbs should be triumphantly pointed upward as you exclaim, “yay!” Find your comfort zone with this exercise – perhaps, starting more gently in the beginning, then increasing your verbal intensity as you get more comfortable with child-like joy.

Five Laughing Alone Exercises

A slogan known in all Laughter Clubs is, “Fake it, ‘til you make it!” This statement is based on the scientific fact that the body cannot differentiate between simulated or real emotions. Just as an actor whose mind and body in real life mimic the same emotions he repeatedly portrays on stage or screen, your body will not know the difference between the fake or the genuine laugh.

1. Converting simulated laughter into the real thing:

- Try faking laughter by saying, “Ha ha ha, he he he, ho ho ho”. Keep playing with this silly exercise, until you finally start laughing genuinely at the absurd sounds of your own laughter.
- Try different ways to fake laughter sounds, until you find some that amuse you. Stick to them and practice them often.
- “Blowing the raspberries” - putting your lips together and blowing through them, so they vibrate as babies often do, is also a good way to get your giggle going!



“In Laughter
Yoga we do
not need to
have a sense of
humor, rather
you can develop
a sense of
humor through
laughter”

Initially, simulated laughter may seem awkward, but with repeated practice, your body will become conditioned, so the moment you start faking laughter, real laughter will follow quickly.

2. Voice Reinforcement Technique

Children shout and scream to express themselves fully, but adults learn to control the pitch and tone of their voices, resulting in an inability to fully express their true feelings.

The freedom and expression of the voice affects the free flow of emotions within the mind, hence laughter type, tone and quality changes according to the state of mind and personality. Laughter is, in essence, the signature of character. Because there is a two-way link between body and mind, freeing the voice with the sound of laughter can bring about a change in the entire emotional state.

- Remember the following points while doing Laughter Yoga exercises:
- The purpose of laughter and breathing exercises is to prolong the exhalation in order to empty the lungs completely. This can be accomplished by inhaling deeply to get more oxygen flowing into the body. Then try and keep laughing during the exhalation until all the breath is gone. This technique will remove the stagnant, residual air from the lungs and make room for fresh oxygen.

➤ While laughing alone, keep the chin up, because laughter comes more easily when casting the eyes upward. Stretch the neck while looking upward. The respiratory tract will automatically lengthen and straighten, thus facilitating freer and increased airflow.

➤ With the chin up, head titled back, arms open and extended heavenward; a very happy body pose has been created. Because of the body-mind link, this happy pose will lead to the release of endorphins, happy chemicals, in the brain.

3. One Meter Laughter

One Meter Laughter is preferably done in a standing position, but can also be done while sitting. Stand with feet slightly apart, both hands stretched out to the left. While saying, “Aeeeeeeeeee”, slide the fingers of the right hand over the left arm, until the left shoulder is reached with the fingertips, pause at the left shoulder, inhale, then continue sliding the right hand across the chest to the right shoulder, while saying, “Aeeeeeeeeee”. Pause once again before fully opening your right arm, while continuing to say, “Aeeeeeeeeee” with both arms fully outstretched, chin up, head titled backward, as the mouth opens a little wider and you laugh heartily. This technique helps move the diaphragm and allows laughter to flow freely from the belly. The cathartic effect allows repressed emotions to be released, as you experience a renewed sense of joy and freedom.



“The essence
of laughter
is cultivating
childlike
playfulness”

4. Aloha Laughter

Aloha Laughter, derived from the traditional Hawaiian greeting, is very stimulating and provides for increased circulation, as body movements facilitate an improved supply of blood to the brain.

Ideally, it should be performed in the morning, immediately after awakening, on your bed. With knees bent, sit in the middle of your bed on folded legs. Place a pillow or two in front of you. With both arms raised overhead and chin up, say a prolonged, “Alooooooh”, and end by saying a loud “Haaa!”, while lowering your body on the bed, digging into the pillows and laughing heartily. Continue laughing without interruption as long as it is enjoyable. In this position, cover the head with both arms and continue laughing. This increases airflow that many find stimulating.

Aloha Laughter can also be performed while standing. Raise your arms overhead, put up your chin and say “Alooooooh” in a crescendo. End the exercise by saying, “Haaaa!” and lower your arms even as you continue laughing.

Caution: This exercise should not be attempted by anyone suffering from positional vertigo as it could increase dizziness when bending down. Also, remember to have the bed well padded with cushions, so there will be no injury on the way down.

5. Silent Laughter

This is the best exercise that one can do without disturbing or bothering other people. You can do it lying down, sitting or standing. The best way it works is to keep your mouth wide open, but you can also try it with your mouth closed. Silent Laughter invariably turns into genuine laughter very easily.

Caution: One should not apply excess force or over exert while laughing without sound. It can be harmful if intra-abdominal pressure is raised unnecessarily. One should try to impart more feeling rather than apply more force.



Cultivate 4 Elements Of Joy

“Let your smile change the world but don't let the world change your smile”

The core philosophy of Laughter Yoga is about cultivating joy, which is happiness from within. External happiness is dependent on various situations all of which, for the most part, are fleeting - once achieved or obtained, that which was sought to bring happiness, waxes cold. Conversely inner happiness or joy can be triggered by the simplest of physical activities, such as singing, dancing, playing or laughing all of which are the basic tenets of Laughter Yoga.

Children are born with the basic elements of joy intact. Unfortunately, as we age, joy is lost to inhibitions and self-consciousness that often limit participation in those kinds of joyful activities. A Laughter Club can bring those elements back, making singing, dancing, playing and laughing

easier within a safe environment. Once your body knows what to do, practicing the same “happy” exercises alone will become even easier.

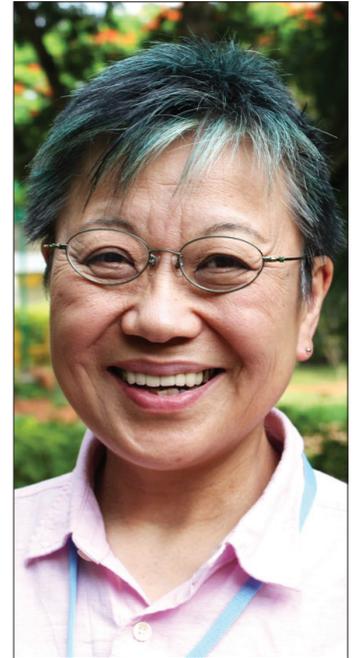
Find More Laughter In Daily Situations

According to the principles of neuro-linguistic association, there is very little difference between thinking about doing something and actually doing it. Thoughts in the mind, whether real or imaginary, produce similar physiological changes within the body. When a particular experience is repetitive, over a period of time the body will produce a quick knee-jerk reaction, without involving the rational brain or the process of thinking. This process is called conditioning.

I have included some practical ideas to experiment with, anytime; any place, using the concept of laughing as a form of exercise with the byproduct being increased joy in your daily life. I practice them all - remember, when you laugh, you change, and when you change, the whole world changes.

First Things First - Decide To Laugh

Everyone has a choice. If you choose to be sad, nobody can stop you; if you choose to laugh, no one can stop that either. Life itself has no real meaning; personal choices dictate the meaning and outcome of life. The



“ Laughter Yoga
is a powerful
no sweat
cardiovascular
workout – 10
minutes of belly
laughter equals
30 minutes
on a rowing
machine ”

decision to glide through trying times with a smile or laugh is entirely your choice. Challenging situations of any kind do not necessitate becoming angry, sad, upset, depressed, bitchy or whiney. Why not decide to laugh through difficult times? Try it and see the difference laughter will make.

Mental Attitude Toward Laughter

In order to bring more laughter into your life, first become aware of the benefits of laughter. Ongoing scientific studies, plus the success of the Laughter Club movement, have proved that laughter has a powerful and profound effect on the human body and mind, not only in the prevention of many illnesses, but it can also contribute toward healing chronic diseases, both physically and mentally. Therefore, understanding the importance of laughter will aid in building the proper positive mindset toward laughter and its benefits.

When the decision has been made to bring more laughter into your life, there might be obstacles. As it happens in life, there will always be the naysayers, those whose mission in life seems to be to discourage and dissuade. They will question your motives; remind you that life is serious and not a laughing matter. My advice - believe in laughter, believe in its healing value, believe that laughter can change your life, then go ahead and laugh!

This is your golden opportunity to share your love for laughter and its benefits with others. Create awareness by organizing a group of like-minded individuals who support fun – start your own Laughter Club!

Take Action

Laughter is the best medicine – everyone knows that, but many have no idea how to laugh or what will make them laugh on a regular basis. Normally, it is believed there needs to be a reason to laugh or that happiness is a prerequisite for laughter. Laughter Yoga has changed all of that – we know that anyone can laugh for no reason without a sense of humor or without even being happy. I urge you to become a member of the laughter movement, join a Laughter Club where laughter is practiced on a regular basis and you will reap enormous health benefits.

Laughter Yoga can help anyone develop a sense of humor and the ability to laugh without any reason. Laughter Yoga is a powerful antidote to stress, pain and conflict. Nothing works faster or is more reliable in bringing the body and mind back into balance than a good laugh. The ability to laugh easily and frequently is a remarkable resource for overcoming problems, enhancing relationships, and supporting both physical and emotional health.



“There is no need to wait until something funny happens; you can laugh on demand and command in Laughter Yoga”

In this fast-paced, stressful, modern world when there seems to be so little to laugh about, Laughter Yoga has come along as a great exercise routine that teaches the art of unconditional, hearty and extended laughter which is a boon for everyone's mental and physical well-being. Laughter in a group, and as an exercise, seems to make even the most serious laugh freely. With consistent practice, laughter will become incorporated into your life, becoming a natural and spontaneous response to all you do.

Practice Smiling

A few weeks after birth, the first indication of inborn, non-verbal communication is the infant's smile. That first warm smile brings indescribable joy to the parents, who return a smile to the infant who more often than not, will again smile, chuckle and wriggle in response to this joyful recognition. Smiling has communicated warm, positive feelings for centuries. It is an effective marketing tool in nearly every industry – it simply makes all businesses better, whether the actual smile is seen or the smile is “heard” at the other end of the line.

The question is, how can that smile be unconsciously kept on the face? Exercising your facial muscles by laughing and smiling on a regular basis

will tone the smiling muscles and help keep the face prepared for more smiling. The act of smiling has much to do with basic body movement – the more we exercise those smiley muscles, the more we smile. This phenomenon is based on the theory that motion creates emotion; therefore, if you are more dynamic in your life, exercise regularly, actively engage in dancing and playing games, the more likely you will be able to smile and laugh....and the happier you will be!

Not only does Laughter Yoga tone up the facial muscles, it is a powerful tool for increasing personal development and self-confidence. Within a safe environment where you will be connecting to others as you laugh; you develop personally as you build self-confidence.

A genuine smile is the index of your happiness, so put a little more joy in your smile, reach out to others and give a little more of yourself when you smile next time.

Surround Yourself With Happy People

Surround yourself with happy people, because it is a scientifically proven fact that mood and state of mind are affected by the emotions of others. Since happiness is infectious, align yourself with someone who makes you



“Laughter Yoga
is cost effective,
less time
consuming,
scientifically
proven fun
exercise to
reduce stress –
anyone can
do it”

laugh a lot, then try to spend more time with that person. If you sense you are inhibiting the laughter of others around you, apologize for your negative mood and let them know when you are back and ready to laugh again. Once you open the door to laughter, miracles will begin happening.

Laugh with Your Family, Laugh at Work

Laugh at home – laugh with your spouse, your children, laugh alone, laugh with your co-workers, laugh with strangers. Take that frown and turn it upside down! Laughter will increase your endorphin and serotonin levels, while decreasing stress hormones and suddenly, you will be looking at life through rose-colored glasses!

Diffuse that argument with your spouse. Take her hands in yours, look her in the eyes....and just laugh for no reason!

A student of mine who was a very serious kind of person before becoming a Laughter Yoga teacher tells the story of how she engaged her employees in laughter that literally transformed her workplace and the attitude of her employees. Not only did she laugh with all the residents, but also began and ended each and every staff meeting with laughter. She managed to convince her staff about the benefits of laughter to such a degree that when she, herself, would occasionally

flare with the seriousness of the job, her manager would gently put an arm around her shoulder and softly say, “I think we need to laugh!” and they did. Never forget - laughter changes things.

Make A New Discovery Every Day

Discover something new every day, because life becomes dull and boring the day learning ends. Relationships stagnate if there is no newness. Actively seek ways to bring more excitement and joy into them.

Seek Out Humor-Related Entertainment

Be a laughter magnet. Seek out humorous TV shows, movies, funny books, listen to a silly song, play a funny game, go to a comedy club, look at silly pictures, visit a funny website, or watch hilarious YouTube videos. Make laughing every day a priority. Find humor in daily situations - in people's behavior, the ridiculousness of certain situations, and laugh out loud about it.

Engage In Fun Activities

Engage in new activities that bring out your playfulness, and then laugh at yourself. Over-exaggerate simple mistakes, be spontaneous - the element of surprise can be hilarious. Physical activity positively affects



“Two things are most important in our lives – everyone wants to be happy and healthy – Laughter Yoga will give you both”

your mood and can also be a source of laughter. If physically able, try fun activities, such as dancing, skating, or hula hooping. Theme or costume parties can be fun. Why not throw one for absolutely NO reason? They are always guaranteed to induce plenty of good laughter. Gather with friends and family for playing games, sharing funny stories and do not forget to include embarrassing moments!

Laughing Alone At Everyday Situations

Laughing alone is a great way to release stress and negative thoughts, to dissipate anger and focus on meditative activities. Additionally, it will aid in the development of self-confidence, as it reduces shyness and inhibitions.

Laughing alone aids in dealing with the trivial irritations of daily life, such as broken vending machines, traffic jams, rude teenagers, long queues in the supermarket. Learning to laugh alone assists in facing these “free floating anxieties” in a much more positive way.

Communication with others will become more effective as a safe environment is created for others to comfortably connect with you, thus allowing you to achieve more positive relationships in your professional, personal and social life.

Laughing in the bathroom: The bathroom provides for a private, safe haven for laughing alone. You can be as funny as you want to be without the fear of anyone watching. Daily laughing during your shower will program the body, so that the moment the water is turned on, you will automatically begin laughing. That is the benefit of repeating any activity and combining physical behavior with it.

Walking and laughing: While walking alone, find a private area, and then laugh at the top of your lungs, as you experience real freedom.

Laughing in the car: Laughing alone exercises can be very effectively used during trying times on the road with traffic tie-ups and other daily irritants. Instead of losing patience, laugh away those situations and release the anger and stress. The “ho ho ha ha” exercise works well without sound, but it all depends upon your level of comfort as you might be aware of other people watching you laughing. Instead of cursing the driver who cut you off, laugh instead. He will be shocked and you will feel so much better, not to mention, your heart and blood pressure will also thank you!

Laugh at yourself – Ha Ha Mantra: Laughing at yourself is not about degrading, but a gentle reminder that life is serious and we must take ourselves lightly in order to keep our spirits high. Instead of laughing, just say



“Laughter Yoga is a kind of prolonged exhalation which helps us to get rid of stale air from our lungs”

slowly, dragging out each “ha” – “haaaaa haaaaa haaaaa” - a few times and it will make you feel much better, as it changes the negative perspective of the situation. I always use this “ha ha” mantra when I mess up something or drop food on my shirt or when something falls from my hands.

Ha Ha Mantra for free floating hostilities: “Free floating hostilities” are freely available infuriating situations in daily life that give rise to irritability and stress. Combat these hostilities with the “Ha Ha” mantra. Each time you find yourself heading for a really bad mood, remember to slowly say, “haaaaa haaaaa haaaa”, it will work wonders.

Laugh your way through household chores: Laugh while doing repetitive household chores like washing dishes, mopping floor, vacuum cleaning, hanging clothes, and cleaning windows. Not loud laughter, just a gentle giggle will help change your perspective toward mundane chores and make them less daunting.

Singing

Expression through voice is a way to communicate emotions. Music has a major impact on daily life, affecting both behavior and mindset. It can also act as a type of catharsis for pent-up feelings. Laughter Yoga

uses the element of singing and music routinely to bring an inner sense of joy, as well as to help people to connect and bond, while overcoming self-consciousness and reticence. Laughter Yoga Clubs in Japan and the Philippines are using singing routinely as a part of their program.

From the Laughter Yoga University programs we have discovered simple methods of group singing that encourages even the most reluctant to participate by using easy rudimentary vowel sounds and one to two word vocalizations set to music. There are YouTube videos that demonstrate some of the technique for viewing.

Connections between singing and happiness are great, especially when singing in a group. Singing in group creates social ties, forces concentration on the words being sung, keeping the brain active and the spirit young. Singing, as with laughing, engages the mind with only one thing, the song. During that time, the mind is free from all other thought – work, money or family issues do not exist while the mind is focused on the song. Singing necessitates deep breathing that reduces stress and is key to meditation and other relaxation techniques. Psychologically, it has the positive effect of reducing stress levels through the action of the endocrine system, which is linked to the sense of emotional well-being



“The easiest way to be happy is to act like a happy person; this is what we learn in Laughter Yoga”

Dancing

As good as singing is for you, dancing is even better! In addition to all the benefits of singing, dancing goes several steps further. Dancing increases flexibility, improves range of motion, builds muscle, and keeps joints lubricated, thereby preventing arthritis. It improves balance, burns calories at a rate of 5-10 calories/minutes, depending on the intensity of the dance, increases HDL, the good cholesterol and decreases LDL, the bad cholesterol. Dancing retards the aging process, is a heart-healthy aerobic exercise, increases lung capacity, decreases blood pressure, and increases endorphins, thus relieving stress and tension.

Additionally, dancing is a social activity that increases self-esteem and self-confidence, facilitating an overall feeling of well-being. It is culturally diverse – every nation could meet on the dance floor and dance in harmony.

Perhaps most impressive is the 21-year study recently published in the New England Journal of Medicine which found dancing can reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia in the elderly. Those over the age of 75 in the study who engaged in

reading, dancing and playing musical instruments and board games once a week had a 7 percent lower risk of dementia compared to those who did not; however, those who participated in these activities at least 11 days a month had a 63 percent lower risk! Interestingly, dancing was the only physical activity out of 11 in the study that was associated with a lower risk of dementia. So, it's time to get your dancing shoes on!

Many social Laughter Clubs now include dancing at the end of the session, whether as a grounding dance or as a social activity.

Playing

Laughter comes from play; so the more we play, the more we laugh. Children are naturally playful, though as adults age responsibility overtakes our natural proclivity to be playful. It is an essential quality for building creativity, exploring the unknown and developing areas of our life with ease and beyond childhood it becomes more important to incorporate it into our lives as there is such stress that forms around our grown up responsibilities.

Children while playing learn to explore, be curious, look for solutions, become innovative and they typically go beyond the borders and boundaries that want to contain them. Adults can also sharpen skills,

“Laughter Yoga increases positive emotions and decreases negative emotions; you will develop Emotional Intelligence”

“ Laughter Yoga is like an aerobic exercise (cardio workout) which brings more oxygen to the body and brain thereby making one feel more healthy and energetic ”

reduce stress and find some solutions while learning to express themselves more creatively.

Life brings challenges that can either bring out the best in you or the worst, according to your mindset. “Becoming the problem”, taking yourself and the challenge too seriously, makes it difficult to think outside the box in order to problem-solve; however, when you “play” with the problem, often it is transformed into an opportunity for creative learning. Play is a necessary component of healthy living.

Just the simple act of play like blowing bubbles or wearing something that makes you feel playful activate the concept, so turn on the fun with ideas and remembrances of building sand castles, flying kites, pillow fights, and more. The more you remember and engage in the feeling, the more you will feel playful.

Test Your Laughter Quotient

Where are you with laughter? Are you laughing enough? Is laughter all about laughing? – Not at all. Go through this questionnaire and find your Laughter Quotient (LQ). Once you know your LQ, it is time for you to make a strategy of how to bring more laughter and joy into your life and to the lives of people around you.

Find Your Laughter Quotient

The following questionnaire has been formulated according to the concept and philosophy of Laughter Yoga and it will help to determine your ability to laugh for no reason, your ability to express emotions, your communication skills and if you incorporate the 4 elements of joy like singing, dancing, playing and laughing in your life and other such parameters necessary to make life more joyful and happy.

Rate each question/statement on a scale of 1 to 5:

1 = Not at all true

2 = Slightly True

3 = Moderately True

4 = Mostly True

5 = Absolutely True

1. I laugh a lot everyday
1 2 3 4 5
2. My source of laughter is driven from my internal desire to laugh and have fun
1 2 3 4 5
3. I use humor daily to perceive, express and experience a given situation in a humorous way
1 2 3 4 5
4. I add physical playfulness and a playful mental attitude while interacting with others
1 2 3 4 5
5. I sing for no reason everyday
1 2 3 4 5

6. I dance for no reason everyday
1 2 3 4 5
7. Everyday, I express freely my positive and negative emotions
1 2 3 4 5
8. Everyday, I have a high percentage of positive thoughts
1 2 3 4 5
9. I am peaceful and calm often
1 2 3 4 5
10. Frequently I feel excited and passionate about life
1 2 3 4 5
11. I express myself as an extrovert often
1 2 3 4 5
12. I am satisfied and happy with life
1 2 3 4 5
13. My physical, mental & emotional well-being is relaxed often
1 2 3 4 5
14. I am able to communicate and interact with strangers easily
1 2 3 4 5

15. I often feel refreshed and energetic
1 2 3 4 5
16. I stay positive during challenging times
1 2 3 4 5
17. I am connected to a lot of friends
1 2 3 4 5
18. It is easy for me to laugh for no reason
1 2 3 4 5
19. I often perform random acts of kindness
1 2 3 4 5
20. I have the ability to be silly in the presence of others
1 2 3 4 5

Scoring section:

If your score is 80 - 100: You are a great laughier. Keep it up!!

If your score is 60 - 79: You are good at laughing, but can be better

If your score is 40 - 59: You laugh very little and need to laugh more.

If your score is under 40: You have a serious problem and need to do something to bring more laughter in your life.

