



## Laughter Therapy: Become a Piece of Peace

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## ABSTRACT

The human race has only one effective hidden weapon that is laughter. A person who laughs easily has ability to overcome adversity and sadness in an effective manner. A good laugh is sunshine in the house that has the power to heal a lot of hurts in physical, emotional and social problems of every individual.. The laughter therapy provides pain relief, encourage relaxation, reduce stress and we can have best peaceful life.

## KEYWORDS

*Laughter, Therapy, Peace*

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## INTRODUCTION

Laughing is an excellent way to reduce stress in our lives, and can help you to cope with and survive a stressful lifestyle. Laughter provides a full-scale workout for your muscles and unleashes a rush of stress-busting endorphins. Since our bodies cannot distinguish between real and fake laughter, anything that makes you giggle will have a positive impact. You do not need to be happy or have a sense of humour to benefit from a good laugh. Over the years, researchers have conducted studies to explore the impact of laughter on health. After evaluating participants before and after a humorous event (i.e., a comedy video), studies have revealed that episodes of laughter helped to reduce pain, decrease stress-related hormones and boost the immune system in participants.

Today more than ever before, people are turning to humor for therapy and healing. Medical journals have acknowledged that laughter therapy can help improve quality of life for patients with chronic illnesses. Many hospitals now offer laughter therapy

programs as a complementary treatment to illness.<sup>1</sup>

### **The healing power of laughter**

We were born with the gift of laughter. Laughter is a natural medicine. It lifts our spirits and makes us feel happy. Laughter is a contagious emotion. It can bring people together. It can help us feel more alive and empowered.

Laughter therapy, also called humour therapy, is the use of humour to promote overall health and wellness. It aims to use the natural physiological process of laughter to help relieve physical or emotional stresses or discomfort.

Research supporting laughter therapy

A growing body of research supports the theory that laughter may have therapeutic value. According to some studies, laughter therapy may provide physical benefits, such as helping to:

- Boost the immune system and circulatory system
- Enhance oxygen intake
- Stimulate the heart and lungs



- Relax muscles throughout the body
- Trigger the release of endorphins (the body's natural painkillers)
- Ease digestion/soothes stomach aches
- Relieve pain
- Balance blood pressure
- Improve mental functions (i.e., alertness, memory, creativity)
- Laughter therapy may also help to:
  - Improve overall attitude
  - Reduce stress/tension
  - Promote relaxation
  - Improve sleep
  - Enhance quality of life
  - Strengthen social bonds and relationships
  - Produce a general sense of well-being<sup>2</sup>

## PART1

### PRACTICING LAUGHTER YOGA ON YOUR OWN

#### 1. Warm up by clapping your hands.

Most laughter yoga sessions begin with warm-up exercises that involve clapping and synchronizing your movements. Begin by clapping with your hands parallel to each other, which will stimulate the acupressure points on your hands and increase your energy level.

- Continue to clap with a 1-2-3 rhythm, moving your hands up and down

and swinging them from side to side as you clap.

- You can then try your first chant, in rhythm with your hands. Say “ho ho, ha-ha-ha”, breathing from your belly with deep inhales and exhalations.

- You can continue clapping and chanting as you move around the room in a circle or from side to side. Make sure you are breathing from your diaphragm with deep inhales and exhales as you clap and chant.

#### 2. Perform lion laughter exercise

Another warm up you can try is lion laughter, which is derived from the Lion Posture. Stick your tongue out fully and keep your mouth open. Stretch your hands out like the paws of a lion and roar, and then laugh from your belly. You should feel a nice stretch in your facial muscles, your tongue and your throat. It will also help you to loosen up and play around.<sup>3</sup>

#### 3. Practice deep breathing exercises with laughter.

Another key element of laughter yoga is stimulating deep breathing to help you release big belly laughs. You should practice deep breathing throughout your entire laughter yoga session to allow you to access deep laughs<sup>4</sup>

- Activate your breath in your diaphragm, which is located just below your ribs. Place your hands on your



diaphragm and focus on taking full inhales and exhales through your nose, expanding and contracting your diaphragm.

➤ Inhale deeply for the count of four and then exhale through your nose to the count of four. As you exhale, release one to two big belly laughs. Continue to do this, deepen your breath equally on your inhales and your exhales with an even breath cycle, with laughter at the end of every exhale.

➤ You can also chant a mantra as you inhale and exhale, such as Forgive / Forget, Live / Let live, Release/Heal.<sup>5</sup>

#### **4.Do playful exercises.**

Loosen up by trying playful exercises to encourage laughter and joy. The idea is to motivate yourself to laugh for no reason other than out of joy and fun.

➤ Sing a playful song that goes “Every little cell in my body is happy/ Every little cell in my body is well/ Feel so good ..... feels so swell”. As you do this, tap your head, shoulders, knees, and toes. You can also add a deep laugh after you sing each line.

➤ Do a vowel laughter exercise, where you pick up your right hand and say the letter “A” by drawing out the vowel. Then, pretend to toss the letter “A” aside. Continue with the letter “E”, picking up your right hand and drawing out the vowel.

Then, pretend to toss the letter “E” aside. Do this for “I,O, and U”.

➤ Try the electric shock laughter exercise by pretending every surface and object you touch gives you a shock of static electricity, from touching a wall to touching a part of your body. Jump back every time you touch something, smiling and laughing as you do this.

➤ Chant “Very good” and “Yay” after every exercise to cultivate playfulness and joy. You can also swing your arms in a V shape as you say these chants.<sup>6</sup>

#### **5.Try value based laughter exercises.**

These laughter exercises are made to help you practice laughing and deriving positive feelings from certain emotions or situations. In these exercises, you will confront a strong emotion and learn to laugh at it, finding the fun and joy in negative emotions<sup>7</sup>

➤ Start with the embarrassment laughter exercise, where you think of an embarrassing incident and retell it out loud in gibberish, laughing as you re tell it. You may raise your hands and clap as you do this, focusing on speaking only gibberish and laughing as you “tell” the embarrassing story.

➤ Do the applause exercise, where you clap quietly and make quiet humming noises to signal approval. Let the humming get louder until you are laughing and



clapping faster and wilder. Try to be as loud as possible to show your approval and really applaud as you laugh.

➤ Try an apology or forgiveness exercise, where you think of a person you would like to apologize to and say “I’m sorry”, or think of a person you would like to forgive and say “I forgive you”. You can then laugh after you show forgiveness or accept an apology. You can also do this with actions by holding your ear lobes, crossing your arms, bending at the knee and laughing.

## PART2

### PRACTICING LAUGHTER YOGA WITH A PARTNER OR A GROUP

#### **1. Greet everyone with laughter exercise.**

Most laughter yoga sessions with a partner or a group begin with a greeting exercise, as this helps everyone get used to laughing in front of each other. Start by introducing each other in gibberish, using made up words instead of real words. You can then initiate a greeting with a handshake, where you look into the person’s eyes and laugh gently. You can also place your hands together in prayer at the centre of your chest, make eye contact with the person, and laugh gently.

➤ If there is a leader in the group, the leader can walk around the room and clap, laughing with a “ho ho ha haha”. The rest

of the group should then respond “very good, very good, yay!” and clap with their arms raised.<sup>8</sup>

#### **2. Do a hearty laughter exercise.**

Get everyone more accustomed to deep, hearty laughter by doing a hearty laughter exercise. Have everyone sit in a circle side by side and then have one person give the command, “1,2,3”. On three, everyone should start laughing at the same time, trying to match the tone and pitch of each other’s laughter. Then, have everyone spread their arms out towards the sky, tilt their head back, raise their chin, and laugh heartily. The laughter should come straight from the heart.

➤ After everyone has laughed heartily, someone will start to clap and chant “ho ho ha haha” five to six times. Everyone should start to chant with him. At the end of sixth chant, the exercise is complete. Have everyone take two deep breaths.

#### **3. Try an argument laughter exercise.**

This exercise is great for getting the group to communicate with each other through laughter. Divide the group equally on opposite sides of the room.

➤ Have the groups look at each other and point at each other. Then, encourage them to laugh at each other with big belly laughs. Continue this for three to four



minutes, with each group laughing louder and louder at each other.

#### **4. Practice a good job laughter exercise.**

This is a good exercise to end a laughter yoga session. Have everyone sit in a circle and make eye contact as they give each other a “thumbs up”, “high fives” and laughs. This will reinforce the positive aspects of the session and function as a way for the group to bond with each other.

### **PART 3**

#### **UNDERSTANDING LAUGHTER YOGA**

##### **1. Be aware of the philosophy of laughter yoga.**

Laughter yoga was created by Dr. MadanKataria, “The Laughter Guru”, who believes in the power of laughter and its ability to provide physical and holistic benefits. To reap the scientifically proven benefits of laughter, you will laugh continuously for at least 10 to 15 minutes in a laughter yoga class. The laughter must also be loud and deep, like a belly laugh coming straight from your diaphragm. Laughter yoga classes create a safe, open space where you can laugh loudly and fully for prolonged periods of time.

➤ According the philosophy of laughter yoga, it is important to maintain a sense of childlike playfulness and openness when practicing this form of yoga. Rather than rely on your sense of humor or laughing at something you find funny, you

will commit to laughing on a daily basis and teach your body and mind to laugh on command.

➤ Through a combination of deep breathing, physical movements, and deep laughing, laughter yoga ties the mind and body together, creating harmony between them. Though you may not feel happy or motivated to laugh, laughter yoga can help you learn to laugh as a form of exercise.

##### **2. Keep in mind the physical benefits of laughter yoga.**

There are many physical benefits associated with laughter, especially with laughter done on a consistent basis for thirty minutes to one hour a day. These benefits include:

A higher release of endorphins: Laughter has been proven to encourage the release of endorphins, which are feel good opiates that carry signals of attachment and bonding to your brain. They also create a happier state of mind and boost your sense of self-worth and optimism.

Improved circulation to your lymphatic system: Deep laughter involving deep inhales and exhales can help to ensure your major organs are fully oxygenated, giving you big bursts of energy and release. It can also massage your lymphatic system and promote better circulation to your digestive and lymphatic systems.



- A stronger immune system: Better circulation can also boost your immune system and increase the amount of anti-viral and anti-infection cells in your body.
- A healthier cardiovascular system: Laughter can help to lower your blood pressure and your pulse rates, ensuring your cardiovascular system are functioning properly.
- A form of catharsis and stress relief: Laughter is also a known form of catharsis and release, helping to release blocked emotions, mental issues, and any depression or anger. Laughter can function as a nonviolent way to release heavy emotions you may be carrying that could be detrimental to your health.

### **3. Recognize the holistic benefits of laughter yoga.**

There are also holistic benefits to laughter yoga, which can help to improve your overall health, physically and emotionally. These include:

- Better emotional intelligence: Laughter encourages a sense of play and childlike behavior, which can help to improve your emotional intelligence and your social skills.
- An increased sense of joyfulness: Prolonged laughter can help you feel joy and have fun, despite any obstacles or problems you may be experiencing. Feeling joy is primarily a physical

experience and you will be able to feel a real sense of joy doing laughter yoga.

- A better grip on negative emotions like depression, anxiety, and stress: Through laughter, you can exert a better sense of control over negative emotions that may be bringing you down, such as depression, anxiety, and stress.<sup>9</sup>



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