

Laugh For No Reason--It 's Good For You!

You've heard it many times--laughter is the best medicine. And people all over the world are experiencing the healing effects of laughter through laughter yoga, the brainchild of Dr. Madan Kataria from Mumbai.

Just what exactly is laughter yoga and what are its benefits?

According to Sebastian Gendry, World Operations Director of Laughter Yoga, founder and manager of the American School of Laughter Yoga, "laughter helps us keep healthy by enriching the blood with ample supplies of oxygen, the lifeline of our system. It helps to remove the negative effects of stress, acts as a pain killer and boosts the immune system. Native and traditional healers have long believed that without an uplifted spirit there is not enough energy or vital force for a person to completely experience healing."

But there is more to laughter, he claims. "Laughter puts us intensely in the moment. The ability to fully live and experience the 'now' is of utmost importance because it is the only moment where we can experience happiness." In essence, laughter is something that can be done any time of the day, by any one. Simple, unrestrictive, it is an activity that has truly democratic values. And the positive effects of laughter are numerous.

Laughter is a stress buster. It reduces levels of stress hormones epinephrine and cortisol. Laughter strengthens the immune system. Recent research into the effects of laughter by Dr. Lee S. Berk, Professor at Loma Linda University, California, demonstrates that laughter increases the count of natural killer cells and antibody levels. Laughter therapy also helps to increase antibodies (immunoglobulin A) in the mucous of the nose and respiratory passages. Healing can be promoted through laughter.

Laughter is also anti-ageing. Laughing contractions tone facial muscles and expressions. They increase blood supply to the face, which is why people look flushed when they laugh. The influx of blood supply and nutrients nourishes the skin and makes it glow. People look younger and more approachable when they laugh. By the same token, their laughter can be infectious and generate more laughter.

Laughter is aerobic exercise; it stimulates heart and blood circulation. Dr. William Fry of Stanford University claims that one minute of laughter is equivalent to 10 minutes on the rowing machine. It contributes to a sense of well-being because more oxygen is taken in during laughter. It is also an exercise suitable for all, including those confined to a bed or wheelchair.

There is no doubt that laughter is an universal tonic. According to Henri Bergson in his essay on the meaning of the comic, laughter is not only the great equalizer, it is the great masseuse of emotions: "It is the business of laughter to repress any separatist tendency. Its function is to convert rigidity into plasticity, to readapt the individual to the whole, in short, to round off the corners wherever they are met with."

We have all experienced the cathartic effect of a good laugh. Think of the last time you had a deep belly laugh and think of the way your laughter dispersed whatever tension you had in your body. An internal massage, laughter restores us to holistic wisdom--everything, even the worst and most unacceptable becomes soft and approachable within a comic perspective.

The upshot of it all is: laugh and the world laughs with you. Live life laughing. You have nothing to lose, except your grumpy corners!

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About the Author

Mary Desaulniers Ph.D will be interviewing Sebastian Gendry on VoiceAmerica 7th Wave Network Internet Radio show "Reclaiming The Body's Wisdom" beginning October 5/06 . Get details at <http://www.GreatBodyat50.com>