

Laughter Yoga

For Health & Happiness



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Laughter Yoga International
Bangalore, India

Basic Learning Course Book

When You Laugh
You Change
When You Change
The World Changes

Laughter Yoga

For Health & Happiness

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Founder

Laughter Yoga Clubs Movement

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First Edition 2016

Second Edition 2017

Published by:

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Preface

In this book you will learn about Laughter Yoga clubs movement, which started in 1995 from a public park in Mumbai with just five people and has today become a worldwide movement with thousands of laughter clubs in more than 100 countries. It has provided enormous health benefits and has changed the quality of life of tens of thousands of people. Apart from social laughter clubs, Laughter Yoga is also being practiced in companies, senior centers, schools, colleges, universities, physically and mentally challenged institutes, prisons and with police personnel etc.

Laughter clubs are social clubs, where people get together and practice laughter exercises combined with yogic deep breathing and stretching exercises. All social laughter clubs are free of cost everywhere in the world.

Laughter Yoga movement is under the aegis of Laughter Yoga International Foundation which is a non-profit organization with its headquarters in Bangalore, India. Our mission is health, happiness and world peace through laughter.

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Why We Need To Laugh More Today

Stress and depression on the rise: In this high pressure, high tension, modern world, laughter is fast disappearing. Stress is the number one killer today, while depression has become the number one sickness. More than 70 - 80 percent illnesses are related to stress. Medical treatment is becoming expensive and people are spending huge amount of their hard earned money on it.

Scientific research on laughter: Many scientific studies in the last few decades have proved that laughter has a profound impact on the body and mind. It not only helps prevent sickness; but also helps in healing long term chronic illnesses like heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, arthritis and even cancer.

Most people are not happy today: Another reason people are not laughing enough is because they are not happy as they are constantly being bombarded with negativity. On their part, they are attaching more value to personal achievement and trying to



Dr. Kataria in Bangalore Laughter Club

seek material pleasures in life, most of which are temporary and do not make anyone happy.

How To Laugh & Who Will Make You Laugh

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 it to a new level. It is a breakthrough technique allowing laughter to actually be prescribed as part of a daily routine in order to realize all of the health benefits. It enables everyone to laugh, even those who are serious, introverted and uncomfortable being funny.

Origin Of Laughter Yoga

Inspired by articles on benefits of laughter and scientific research, Dr. Madan Kataria, a medical doctor from Mumbai started the first laughter club in March 1995 with just 5 people in a public park. In the beginning, the group resorted to jokes and funny stories but they soon ran out of them as the jokes started becoming negative and offensive.

Dr. Kataria finally found the answer he was looking for. It was based on a scientific fact that the body cannot differentiate between acted and genuine laughter and that both produced the same 'happy chemistry'. Convinced by this fact, Dr. Kataria decided to make laughter as a form of exercise. The next morning 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 soon others followed. The group was laughing like never before and the hearty laughter



Laughter Yoga Founders – The first five people who created history on 13th March 1995

persisted for almost ten minutes. They created several laughter exercises – a kind of role play, like Greeting Laughter, Cell phone Laughter, Silent Laughter, Argument Laughter and many more.

Keeping complete wellness in mind, Dr. Kataria interspersed laughter exercises with deep breathing and stretching exercises from yoga, which proved to be a tool for good health and happiness. This breakthrough was the birth of Laughter Yoga. The participants experienced enormous health benefits and it starting spreading all over world. This unique exercise routine has today become a global phenomenon helping thousands of people to live a much better life.

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 and stretching exercises. 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

Many people ask why they should force themselves to laugh and what's wrong in laughter coming naturally and spontaneously by watching funny movies, jokes and comedies.

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

1. Laughter should be sustained: In order to get scientifically proven health benefits of laughter, we need to laugh at least for 10 to 15 minutes; it should be sustained laughter. As natural laughter hardly lasts for 3-4 seconds at a time, it is not sufficient to bring about physiological and psychological changes in our body. Since in Laughter Yoga laughter is done as an exercise, we can prolong our laughter as long as we want. It brings measurable physiological changes like increasing the oxygen level in the blood, muscle relaxation, blood circulation and release of certain hormones in the body.

2. Laughter should be deep: To reap the health benefits of laughter, laughter has to be hearty 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. Laughter should be unconditional: Natural laughter that courses through our life depends upon many reasons and conditions, but the fact is that there are not many reasons which make us laugh - This means we invariably leave laughter to a chance; it may happen, it may not. In contrast, in Laughter

Yoga clubs, laughter is unconditional and we laugh for no reason. We do not leave laughter to a chance, but do it out of commitment. This is a guaranteed way of getting the health benefits of laughter.

How Often Should One Laugh

As a matter of fact we should laugh every day. In order to keep ourselves in a good mood, to keep our mind positive and to make our immune system stronger we must laugh 15-20 minutes daily. This is only possible by doing Laughter Yoga exercises, which provides deep and sustained laughter.

The best option is daily laughter clubs like we have in India and some other countries. In the West, laughter clubs meet once a week or once in 15 days, which is also good enough. But in case you cannot attend these laughter sessions due to certain constraints, don't be disheartened. You can learn to do Laughter Yoga all by yourself at home or join Skype laughter clubs online which happens almost every hour around the world. This will ensure your daily dose of laughter.

Connection Between Yoga And Laughter

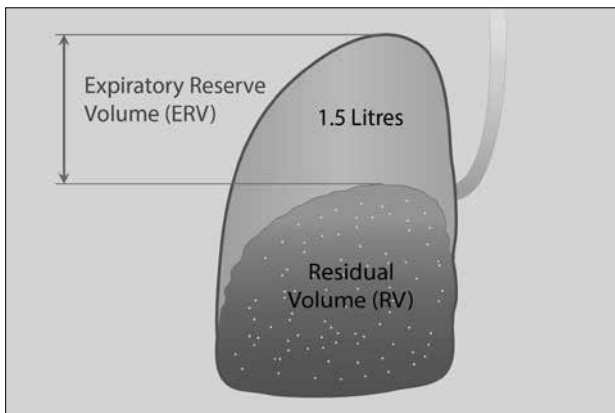
The word Yoga arises from the Sanskrit root *Yuj* which means to get hold of, integrate and harmonize. It means getting hold of our lives, integrating all aspects of life and harmonizing our bodies with our minds, spirits and society. As the concept of Laughter Yoga evolved, Dr. Kataria found a deep connection between the basic fundamentals of yoga and what one did in laughter clubs. He incorporated deep breathing exercises from yoga in between laughter exercises, which helps to increase the net supply of oxygen to the body and brain.

Breath is life: Breathing is fundamental to life. One can live without food and water for several days, but cannot survive if breathing stops for even few minutes. According to yogic philosophy, we are alive because the cosmic energy from the Universe flows into the body through the breath, which is the life energy force or *Prana*, as called in yoga.

From a medical point of view, the most important component of breath is oxygen. Due to stress and negative mental state, breathing becomes shallow and irregular. We tend to hold our breath whenever the mind is upset or in a state of turmoil. This leads to lack of oxygen and accumulation of carbon dioxide in the blood which further causes anxiety, stress arousal and emotional reactions.

More oxygen from exhalation: The hallmark of yoga breathing is that we should exhale longer than inhale so as to get rid of as much of the residual air from the lungs, and bring in fresh air and more oxygen for the next breathing cycle. Have you ever realized what are we doing while laughing? Actually, we are exhaling. During laughter, exhalation lasts much longer than in regular breathing. In normal breathing we inhale and exhale only 500 ml of air while there is 1500 ml of residual and stale air (expiratory reserve volume) which has more carbon dioxide. This can be forced exhaled by laughter exercises which bring more oxygen to our body and brain.

Breathing capacity and laughter: The principal organs of respiration are the lungs. Due to sedentary lifestyle we do not utilize the full capacity of our lungs. As a result, part of our lung cells does not participate



in oxygen and carbon dioxide exchange. Laughter and deep breathing exercises open up all the cells of the lungs and also the respiratory passages. This leads to an increase in breathing capacity, also called vital capacity.

Diaphragm activates parasympathetic system: It is important to know that diaphragm is a major muscle of respiration which separates the thoracic and abdominal cavity. Two thirds of breathing takes place by the movement of the diaphragm and only one third by the expansion of the rib cage. Under stressful situations, most people breathe from the chest and do not use their diaphragm.

Both laughter and yogic breathing exercises are intended to stimulate the movement of the diaphragm and the

abdominal muscles. The diaphragm is connected to a special branch of the autonomic nervous system called the parasympathetic system or the calming branch responsible for relaxation. The opposite is the sympathetic system, also known as the stress arousal system. One can turn off the stress arousal system simply by learning to move the diaphragm.

The most important exercise done in laughter clubs is the chanting of ho ho ha ha ha, which helps people to focus on abdominal muscles so that they can learn to train their diaphragm and laugh from the belly.

Change your breathing, change your mind: There is a direct relation between the breathing pattern and the state of mind. When under stress breathing becomes fast, irregular and shallow. There are spells of breath-holding according to the number of disturbing and negative thoughts crossing the mind. In contrast when the mind is at peace, breathing becomes more slow, regular and deep.

Breathing is the only process that has a dual character. It goes on automatically and is under the control of the unconscious mind, but it can also be consciously regulated or changed. Through the practice of belly laughter and deep breathing, we can learn to change

our breathing pattern from shallow to deep and easily alter the thoughts in the mind. Even if one has disturbing thoughts, with deep breathing, the body will not experience stress response.

Laughter Yoga connects people: Unconditional laughter connects people from different cultures, countries, no matter what language they speak or how they live. Laughter Yoga promotes a strong union between those who laugh together resulting in family-like bonds, providing social interaction and networking – essential for happiness. The goal of Laughter Yoga is to connect people with one another at heart level without judgment – this is the true meaning of yoga.

Laughter Yoga promotes spiritual growth

Laughter Yoga goes beyond just laughing. It not only fosters a feeling of physical well being, it enhances the spirit and touches the emotional core. It has the power to change the selfish state of mind to an altruistic state of mind. It has been proven that people who laugh are likely to be more generous and have more empathy than those who don't laugh.

This inner spirit of laughter becomes apparent as people develop a state of internal peace. The

worries and intense goals that have driven their lives become less important. People become aware that true happiness comes from giving unconditional love, caring for others, and sharing with each other. Laughter Yoga inspires members to make the world a better place not only for themselves, but for everyone.

Scientific rationale of yoga and laughter

According to the yogic philosophy the food we eat should be digested properly and the nutrients must be well circulated in the body and finally be metabolized to produce energy. For doing all this, the most important component is oxygen. Therefore, the digestive, circulatory and the respiratory systems should all be equally efficient so as to maintain optimum health.

Let us examine how Laughter Yoga contributes to strengthen the digestive, circulatory and respiratory systems.

Toning the digestive system: All the principal organs of digestion like the stomach, intestines, liver and pancreas are situated in the abdominal cavity and are supported by strong core muscles on all sides. The movement of the abdominal muscles and



World Laughter Day Celebrations at Copenhagen, Denmark

the diaphragm during normal respiration naturally provides a gentle massage to these organs.

In Laughter Yoga we have different styles of belly laughter that exercise the abdominal muscles and the diaphragm simultaneously. Scientists have referred to laughter as 'internal jogging' that goes right inside the belly and readjusts the internal organs. Regular laughter exercise not only strengthens the abdominal muscles and gives an internal massage, but also holds the abdominal organs in their proper places. This ensures proper digestion and absorption.

Strong circulatory system: All the body's nourishment is absorbed into the blood. It is processed in the liver, passed on to the central pumping system

of the heart, and pushed throughout the body through a network of blood vessels. Similarly, the blood, after supplying the nutrients, collects the wastes of metabolism and returns to the heart and lungs for purification.

The most important organ of circulation is the heart. Laughing promotes a healthy heart. A constant change in intra-thoracic pressure while laughing and breathing helps to draw in venous blood, returning from all the major vena cavae of the upper and lower body.

In a good bout of laughter, there is dilation of blood vessels all over the body. We've all seen or experienced this as a flushed appearance and feeling of warmth. Pulse rate and blood pressure rise as the circulatory system is stimulated before settling down, below the original levels. In a nutshell, laughter helps tone the circulatory system of the body.

Strengthens respiratory system: Once all the nutrients are carried to the tissues, they need oxygen to metabolize. Laughter and breathing exercises help to increase the breathing capacity of the lungs and increase the net supply of oxygen to the body.

The Concept & Philosophy Of Laughter Yoga

Laughing for no reason is the core philosophy of Laughter Yoga methods. Some of the most commonly asked questions about laughter are: Do we need a sense of humor to laugh? How can we laugh when we don't feel like laughing or are not in a good mood? How can we laugh when we have so many problems in life? How do children laugh 300 to 400 times in a day, while adults laugh only 15 times? Can we learn to laugh? Here are the answers to questions which defines the five key concepts and philosophy of Laughter Yoga.

1. Do we need a sense of humor to laugh?

Most people believe that one must have a sense of humor to laugh, but Laughter Yoga has proven otherwise. No one is born with a sense of humor, which is the brain's capacity to perceive, relate and experience a situation, and judge if the situation is funny or not. Sense of humor is a mental and intellectual phenomenon - very individual and cultural. Moreover, many people cannot

identify with a sense of humor and believe that it needs special talent and skill to be humorous.

Laughter arising out of humor is conditional. It depends upon a reason to laugh, person's state of mind, level of happiness and life satisfaction. But, laughter in Laughter Yoga is unconditional; it is an outcome of childlike playfulness. By indulging in playful activities, laughter club members reduce their inhibition and shyness, which helps to open up their perception, thereby enabling them to see more humor in daily life.

Dr. Robert Provine a pioneer researcher on laughter says that laughter which comes in our daily life does not really come from humor and jokes. It actually comes from the little things people do or experience when they are with friends or likeminded acquaintances. In fact, they laugh 30 percent more as they enjoy the company. They do not need any funny situation or a humorous stimulus to laugh.

2. How can you laugh when you're not in a good mood?

Theory of motion creates emotion: There is a two - way link between body and mind. Whatever happens to the mind happens to the body. If you



Laughter Club members are of every age group - school children, college students, housewives, doctors, engineers and elderly people.

observe sad and depressed people, their bodies are also depressed. They walk slowly, talk slowly and their body movements are also slow.

The opposite is also true; whatever happens to the body happens to the mind. Dr. Kataria remembers what his father said, 'If you're sad, don't sit idle. Keep doing some physical work or go for a walk and jog, you will feel better'. And he was right; one always felt better by keeping the body active. This is known as theory of motion creates emotion.

Psychologist William James in 1884 found that bodily expression of any emotion can reinforce a similar emotion in the mind. The connection works both

ways: from mind to body and body to mind. For example: Acting sad and depressed (for example sitting in a moping, depressed posture and replying to questions in a sad and dismal voice) soon leads to real emotional sadness. Actors who portray strong emotions often tell of real-life emotional repercussions. Many film and theater actors have reported that while performing tragic roles they experience a real sadness.

Laughter Yoga is based on two models

i. Humor model or mind-to-body model: Do you know why children laugh 300 to 400 times in a day while grown-ups laugh only 10 to 15 times? It's because adults use their cognitive ability to first comprehend humor and then laugh. This model relies on the ability to understand what's funny and amusing. For example, the extent to which a person laughs at a given joke depends on the quality of the joke, the narration and also the state of mind of the listener.

But, the model has its limitations. It does not guarantee how much a person will laugh. It's conditional: dependent on a sense of humor, the state of mind and the quality of the external stimulus.

You will not laugh much if you hear the same joke second time.

ii. Childlike model or body-to-mind model: If you observe children, you will find that they laugh the most while playing. Their laughter comes straight from the body and does not make use of humor which is mind. This clearly shows that for children, the source of their laughter is within the body. We, too, can use it whenever necessary by moving the body at our own will. The significant feature of this model is that the person must actively participate in laughter and humorous activities.

Laughter Yoga and laughing without any reason helps to cultivate this childlike playfulness. Once you learn to play, laughter is a natural outcome. When you learn to induce laughter in the body, the mind just falls in step. The physical model of laughter is easy to practice for most people - they are relieved not to feel the pressure to identify with the mental part of humor.

3. How can you laugh when you're not happy?

We often hear people say, "How can I laugh when I have lots of problems in my life, I am going through hard times and there is nothing to laugh about?" Yes,

you can laugh even when you're not happy – this is what we learn from Laughter Yoga experience.

Fake it until you make it: There is an old saying, “If you are not happy, act like a happy person and you will become one.” There is great wisdom and science behind “acting out happiness”. Medical research shows that even if you pretend to laugh or act happy, your body produces happy chemicals. According to the principles of neuro linguistic programming (NLP), there is hardly any difference between thinking about doing something and actually doing it.

Therefore, whatever may be the source of laughter; it leads to the same physiological changes occurring in the body. Many actors, all over the world, have experienced the effect of faking emotions. They often felt sick after enacting a sad and depressing role, which clearly indicates that if acting sad can make one sick; acting happy can make one healthy. We have a saying in Laughter clubs: **“We don’t laugh because we’re happy; we’re happy because we laugh”**

Difference between happiness and joy: Laughter Yoga makes a clear distinction between happiness and joy. Happiness is a conditional response subject



Laughter Yoga club at Nasik India

to fulfillment of desires of the mind and is related to happenings in the past and the future and hardly ever deals with the present. Do you remember how long you stayed happy after getting that diploma, car, job, or new house that you had worked so long for? The sad fact is that even if the conditions are fulfilled, happiness is often fleeting as it is quickly displaced by new conditions—the idea of forever-moving goalposts.

In contrast, joy is unconditional commitment to be happy from within despite life's problems. Joy can easily be triggered by joyful activities like laughing, dancing, singing and playing. It is

purely a physical phenomenon while happiness is a concept of the mind.

Even when you're going through hard times, you can definitely get involved in joyful activities and once you become joyful, your body will experience physiological and biochemical changes. It will release certain neurochemicals from your brain cells and make you feel good and once you feel good within, the perception of the outer world will change. Laughter Yoga is all about learning to be joyful and navigate happiness in a much better way.

4. What is the source of laughter in children?

It is true that children can laugh hundreds of times in a day, while grownups laugh very little. Have you ever observed when children laugh? They laugh all the time while playing. Laughter is not about laughing. It is actually about cultivating childlike playfulness. Once you learn to play, you don't have to laugh. Laughter will be the natural outcome of your playful inner child. In Laughter Yoga clubs we encourage people to be like children and cultivate childlike playful behavior through laughter exercises. This helps them to get over their inhibitions and shyness and loosen up.

5. Can we actually learn to laugh?

“I have been a serious person all my life. Can I learn to laugh now?” Some people believe that they cannot learn to laugh because it is a part of their personality and cannot be changed. Either you’re a serious person or a laughing person right from the beginning - this is actually not true. We were all laughing a lot as children, but as we grow up, we lose our laughter due to reasons like serious environment, insecurities, fears and discipline.

The good news is that you can train your body and mind to laugh at will. It is very simple. Repetition is the mother of any skill. By repeating any bodily behavior over a period of time, the mind begins to generate a predictable response and it becomes a new habit.

With repetitive laughter exercises, the body starts reacting out of reflex before the conscious brain can rationalize and think. Throughout our lives, we are conditioned in both positive and negative ways. With Laughter Yoga, the brain develops new neuronal connections that produce happy chemistry in the body. These reactions can be triggered simply by laughter exercises, and doing certain actions of the body, which lead the mind to experience the emotion of joy - no matter what.

Is Laughter in Laughter Yoga Forced or Real?

This is the most common question people ask when they see laughter club members laughing in a park. They feel laughter in laughter clubs is forced and not spontaneous or real. The fact is that laughter in Laughter Yoga is both intentional as well as spontaneous.

Laughter as an exercise: Instead of calling it forced laughter why not call it a laughter exercise, which helps to exhale stale air out of the lungs and bring more oxygen to the body and brain and also has many health benefits. Ever since laughter clubs became popular, many universities all over the world have conducted scientific studies showing that even laughter as a form of exercise has the same benefits as those of real laughter.

From forced to real laughter: If you observe the members of a laughter club objectively it feels like they are laughing forcefully. But those who

participate in laughter sessions know that though they may start off by doing laughter in a form of an exercise; very soon it turns into real laughter. The two important tools which help to convert this fake laughter into contagious and natural laughter are eye contact and childlike playfulness. When you learn to play like child, laughter comes naturally.

Mirror neuron theory: Everyone knows laughter is infectious, but did you know why? This is because our brain has specialized cells called mirror neurons. It is said that we mimic other people's emotions. For instance, when you see another person laughing, you feel like laughing. Similarly, when you see someone crying, you feel like crying. Since in Laughter Yoga clubs, we laugh in groups; it helps laughter get contagious.

Laughter exercises activate laugh muscles: Laughter Yoga helps to increase our capacity to laugh each day. According to research studies, if you use your laugh muscles on a regular basis, they will respond more spontaneously whenever there is something amusing.

Difference between being funny and having fun: When we look at laughter clubs objectively and see

people laughing for no reason, it seems silly and awkward. Most people feel inhibited and are shy of laughing without any reason. They would rather laugh naturally, instead of forcing it. Subjectively, if you ask a laughter club member, they will tell you that they are totally into it and there is nothing funny about it. It is all about having fun. The difference between being funny and having fun is that when one is being funny, he is performing and acting in order to make others laugh. On the other hand, in laughter clubs, people are not making others laugh; they are making themselves laugh.

There are very few people who have the ability to perform and be funny. In contrast, what we do in a laughter session is that we play like children and cultivate our childlike playfulness, which is easily done in a group. Laughter is not about the physical act of laughing; it is all about bringing out the inner child which allows you to play as a grownup. Once you learn to be playful, laughter becomes a natural outcome of play.

Willingness to laugh: Willingness is the most important factor in laughter clubs. The members laugh voluntarily with full commitment. This makes it easy for the group to laugh because when the mind



Laughter Club in action in Sydney, Australia

is willing; anything is possible. In contrast, when the mind is not willing to laugh, nobody can make you laugh. But why reserve our laughter only for times when something funny or amusing happens? All you need to do is to give yourself permission to laugh - and nobody can stop you. We have to make an effort if we want to add more laughter to our lives. This commitment is the reason laughter club members laugh and remain joyful through life in spite of the ups and downs.

Difference between laughter, comedy shows and other humor based activities

People laugh in the laughter club as well as when they watch a comedy show or any other humor based activity. Let us understand the difference between laughter in a laughter club and in all other comic situations:

1. Laughter clubs promote laughter as a genuine form of exercise along with breathing techniques based on yoga, which brings about physiological and chemical changes that are conducive to good health, while in a comedy show the only objective is amusement and entertainment, not health.
2. Members of laughter clubs are active participants, while in a comedy show people are merely passive audience being entertained. It has been proved that people who actively participate in any humor and laughter activity get more benefits, than those who passively receive humor and laugh.



Laughter session at a park in Ahmedabad (Gujarat), India

3. Among laughter club members the source of laughter is within the body and one can generate laughter with conscious effort and commitment, anytime he or she wants to. On the other hand, when you are laughing by watching funny movies or comedy shows, the source of laughter is outside your body and depends upon external stimulus.

4. Humor is very individual and subjective, while laughter is universal. When jokes are used to evoke laughter, many people don't understand them or like them as they sometimes get offensive and hurtful. Laughter clubs operate on a value system that minimizes and eliminates this risk. When humor occurs in a laughter club session, it

is a spontaneous occurrence within the group, not forced, expected or required.

5. When you're laughing in a laughter club, it takes a while for people to open up and drop their inhibition and shyness. But as they learn to laugh every time; their laughter gets better and they're able to laugh more. Whereas when you laugh at humorous situations and jokes, there is no certainty of how much you will laugh.

6. Laughter clubs can meet as often as the group wants, without becoming stale or boring. The members are encouraged to keep contributing their creative inputs like inventing their own exercises, which keep their self-interest and motivation very high.

7. Since laughter clubs are a global network, they have common methods and values. All laughter professionals and members share ideas and provide encouragement and inspiration to others. New exercises are always being invented and we even learn the necessary cultural adaptations too.

What Happens In A Laughter Yoga Session

There are three components of a complete experience of Laughter Yoga:

- Laughter Yoga Session
- Laughter Meditation
- Guided Relaxation (Yoga Nidra)

All these components can be done one after the other if done indoors. But, like in Indian laughter clubs, which are normally conducted in public parks, groups only do laughter sessions and stretching exercises. Every Laughter Yoga session is led by a laughter leader or teacher, who explains and gives commands for different laughter exercises.

Four steps of Laughter Yoga:

1. Clapping: We clap with our hands parallel to each other for full finger-to-finger and palm-to-palm contact and chant ho ho ha ha in unison. This stimulates acupuncture points in the hands and

increases energy levels. This is a kind of warming up exercise to loosen inhibition and shyness and for those who find it difficult to laugh without any reason.

2. Deep breathing: Laughter exercises are interspersed with deep breathing exercises which increase our breathing capacity and bring more oxygen to our body and brain.

3. Childlike playfulness: The objective of Laughter Yoga is to cultivate childlike playfulness which helps one to laugh without any reason, keeps the energy levels high and builds enthusiasm. We have special childlike cheers in Laughter Yoga clubs - 'Very good very good yay!

4. Laughter exercises: Laughter exercises are the mainstay of the session. We do intentional laughter in a group but with eye contact and childlike playfulness, it turns into real laughter.

Most Popular Laughter Exercises

Greeting Laughter: It is always good to start the laughter session with Greeting Laughter as it helps to connect the group as they shake hands and make eye contact. This is called Handshake Laughter. One can shake hands and look into the eyes while laughing gently (Western way of greeting). The Indian way of greeting is to join both the hands (Namaste Laughter). Alternatively, a group can do a greeting gesture from different cultures and laugh at the same time. There could also be other ways of greeting, according to the region, state or country. This is followed by 'ho ho ha ha ha' chanting and clapping 5-6 times and deep breathing twice.



Hearty Laughter: In this exercise one laughs by throwing their arms up and laughing heartily, looking



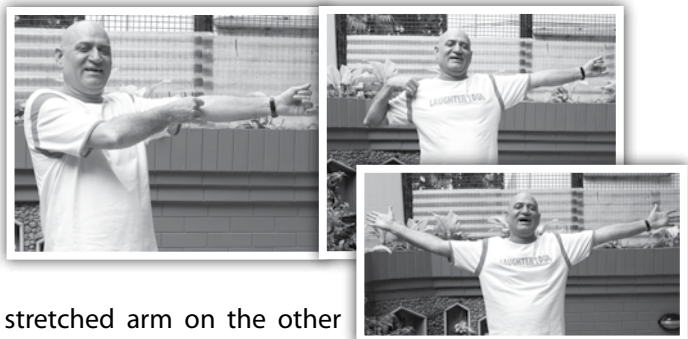
towards the sky. When you're laughing heartily with your arms stretched out and mouth wide open, laughter comes from deep within. It's a very good physical and psychological release.

Milkshake Laughter: This is the most popular laughter exercise which people enjoy all over the world. Participants are asked to hold two imaginary glasses of milk or coffee and at the instruction of the leader, they pour the milk from one glass into another while chanting *Aeeeeeee*, and then pour



it back into the first glass again saying *Aeee...* After that, everyone laughs and pretends to drink milk. This process is repeated 3 – 4 times.

One Meter Laughter: This laughter exercise is very playful, in which one pretends to measure one meter of fabric. It is done by moving one hand over the



stretched arm on the other side, and extending to the shoulder (like stretching to shoot with a bow and arrow). The hand is moved in three jerks by chanting *Ae...., Ae....., Aeee.....*, and then participants burst into laughter by stretching both the arms and throwing the head a little backwards and laughing from the belly. This cycle is repeated 3-4 times.

Lion Laughter: This laughter has been derived from a Yogic posture known as *Simha Mudra* (lion posture).



In this, the tongue is stuck out fully, while keeping the mouth wide open. With eyes wide open, the hands are stretched like the paws of a lion and instead of roaring we laugh from the belly. This is a very good exercise for facial muscles and it improves blood supply to the thyroid gland. It also helps to get rid of all inhibition and shyness.

Silent Laughter with mouth wide open: In this exercise participants open their mouth as wide as possible, then laugh and make different gestures while showing their palms to each other. This is a great exercise for abs.

Cell Phone Laughter: Participants hold imaginary mobile phones and try to laugh, pretending they're listening to something funny. They make different



gestures as they move around in the group to meet other people, and continue to laugh.

Argument Laughter: In this exercise people point their index finger and laugh while wagging their fingers at each other as if they are laughing and



arguing at the same time. This is a very playful exercise and can also be done by two groups facing each other and pointing their fingers as if laughing at each other.

Appreciation Laughter: In this exercise, the tip of the index finger is joined with the tip of the thumb, while



the hand is moved forward and backward. People look at different members as if they are appreciating the other person. Another variation of this laughter is putting both the thumbs up and looking at the other person as if appreciating.

Gradient Laughter: This laughter is practiced at the end of the session. Members are asked to come closer to the leader. Gradient Laughter starts with bringing smiles on faces and looking around at each other. Slowly, gentle giggles are added by the leader. Others follow and start giggling too. Gradually, the intensity of laughter is increased and the members



burst into hearty laughter for about a minute. It is very refreshing and infectious.

Bill Laughter: Pretend to hold your mobile bill, electricity bill or any other bill in your hand and imagine it to be a hefty amount. Point out at the bill and laugh while showing it to others.



Laugh at yourself: Point your index finger towards your heart and laugh. This is a great ego busting exercise. You can also point both your index fingers and laugh.

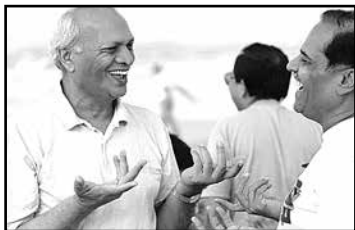
Hot Soup Laughter: Imagine you are drinking soup which is spicy or eating any food which is really chilly hot. Shake both your hands saying he he he.



Laughter Cream: Pretend to take some cream in your hand and rub it on your face while laughing. You can also put the cream on someone else's face.



Just Laugh: "Why are you laughing?" "I don't know, I'm just



laughing." With your elbows bent, turn your palms upwards and shrug your shoulders as if saying you're are just laughing for no reason.

Forgiveness Laughter: This is also known as apology laughter. Do this by catching both your ear lobes and act as if you're saying sorry. Or else, you can bow down with your arms apart and palms facing upwards, which is also a way of apologizing.



Laughter Meditation

The second part of a laughter session is Laughter Meditation. While doing Laughter Yoga exercises we make an effort to laugh, but with group dynamic, laughter becomes spontaneous and effortless after a while. It flows like a fountain. This is a state of Laughter Meditation. Here you don't do laughter; you become laughter. It is a deeper experience of unconditional laughter; a kind of laughter in which tears start rolling down your cheeks and your sides



Laughter meditation in progress at Chicago Laughter Club

start aching. Maybe you'll find yourself rolling on the floor laughing. Still it is without any jokes, humor or comedy.

Laughter Meditation is the purest kind of laughter and a very cathartic experience that opens up the layers of the subconscious mind and you will experience laughter from deep within. In this, you have to put make a concerted effort to completely detach yourself on mental and emotional level, from one's own feelings and thought processes, as well as from the physical world, to prevent distractions.

On the other hand, while laughing, we do not have any conscious thought process, and all our senses naturally and effortlessly combine in a moment of harmony, to give joy, peace and relaxation. In other types of meditation you need to concentrate a lot, to take your mind away from distracting thoughts, which is easier said than done. Therefore, laughter is the easiest form of meditation, and one that brings instant relaxation.

How does it work: To get the deep experience of laughter without any humor there are certain factors leading to Laughter Meditation, which are eye contact, group dynamic and silence. In between



Laughter Meditation in progress in Ahmedabad India

bouts of laughter a brief period of silence further deepens laughter.

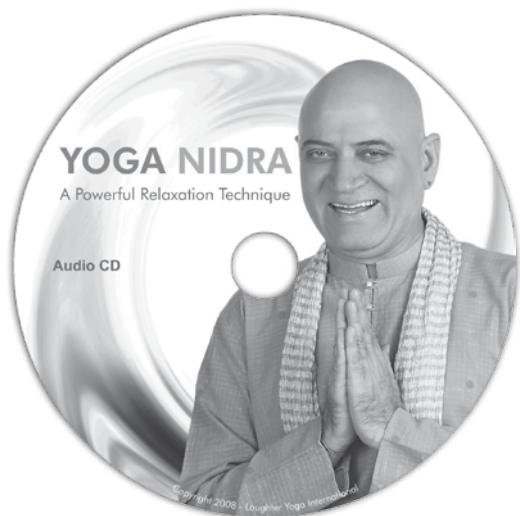
How to start: You can initiate Laughter Meditation by doing Gradient Laughter where people start laughing slowly and softly in the beginning and gradually increase the intensity of laughter slowly and gradually. Soon, it becomes infectious and sets off a chain reaction to infect other people.

Yoga Nidra In Laughter Yoga

Yoga Nidra is a part of Laughter Yoga program and is used for relaxation and grounding at the end of a laughter session and meditation. Yoga Nidra means yogic sleep, where your mind is fully conscious and awake but your body goes to sleep.

Sleep is a natural recharge mechanism of our body and mind. In today's stressful life, many people are not getting enough sleep. They feel drowsy during the day and cannot focus and concentrate on their work. As a result efficiency and performance drops. Our body and mind has tremendous capacity to work and perform provided we know how to recharge periodically.

Yoga Nidra is a powerful relaxation technique, which helps you to recharge quickly so that you perform to the maximum. Just 30 minutes of Yoga Nidra will give you the relaxation equivalent to two hours of



ordinary sleep. If you don't get enough time to sleep or the quality of sleep is not good, just do Yoga Nidra anytime in the day for a quick recharge and it will make you feel fresh and energized, and you can work more than you normally do.

Normally, it is done indoors. You just have to lie down or sit on a chair and listen to the voice of the facilitator and follow the instructions, which are simple and easy. It is a very powerful relaxation technique, which anyone can do. You can also download the instructions on your mobile phone and play it whenever you want; it only takes 20-30 minutes.

Singing, Dancing And Laughing

Many Laughter Clubs end their session with singing dancing and laughing. The core philosophy of Laughter Yoga is not seeking happiness from external sources, but cultivating it from within which is called joy. External happiness is not certain and is conditional. It depends upon getting what you want, but many a times you do not get everything that you want. Conversely, joy which is called happiness from within can be triggered by the simplest of physical activities, such as singing, dancing, playing and laughing which are called 4 elements of Joy.

As children we had all these elements but as we grow up, joy is lost to inhibition and self-consciousness that often limit participation in lighthearted activities. Laughter club is an ideal platform which gives permission to become like a child again and bring those elements back, making singing, dancing, playing and laughing easier within a safe environment. Therefore,

at the end of laughter session many laughter clubs have incorporated group singing and dancing. They sing popular songs from films, cultural songs, jingles and even nursery rhymes from their school days and finally end up laughing.

Singing is a mind-body activity that can be used to express emotion, influence thought and bond human beings. Medical studies have shown that singing can reduce stress, lower heart rate and blood pressure, improve lung capacity, decrease pain and elevates mood.

People usually find it difficult to sing alone as they feel they are not good singers. Though it requires special talent to have a singing voice, it becomes easier to sing in a group - for example singing the national anthem, devotional or singing birthday songs. The same holds true for dancing. Most people hesitate to dance individually, but it becomes easier when we dance together during festivals, weddings and any celebrations.

Who should not do Laughter Yoga

Laughter Yoga is like any other aerobic exercise and all the conditions apply as that of any other aerobic activity like swimming, jogging, running etc. Should you experience any pain, discomfort and breathlessness, you must discontinue Laughter Yoga and take medical advice.

People with following conditions must take medical opinion before doing Laughter Yoga exercises:

Hernia: Hernia is very common in elderly people and in those who have chronic cough and prostate enlargement. If you notice any swelling in the groin area while laughing or experience any pain, you must consult your doctor before doing laughter exercises regularly. Hernia normally needs surgical correction.

Incontinence in women: This is most common in women. If there is involuntary passing of urine while laughing or coughing you must consult your doctor. This may be due to sagging of the uterus or weak ligaments.

Bleeding hemorrhoids: Those suffering from bleeding from any part of the body must be very careful while doing laughter exercises.

Heart problem with chest pain: If you experience any chest pain while doing any exercise you must consult your doctor.

Pregnancy: Women with history of miscarriage and those in the last two months of pregnancy must take precaution and see the doctor before doing Laughter Yoga.

Major surgeries: One must wait for at least three months after any surgery before resuming any strenuous exercises.

Epilepsy: Those with a history of epileptic seizures must be careful as change in any emotional state can trigger an epileptic attack. Take expert opinion.

Cold & flu: In case of severe attack of cold & flu, wait for some time as the virus might spread to other members.

Severe backache: If someone has prolapsed inter-vertebral disc (slipped disc), one should not do laughter and other exercises, unless advised by their physician. Any forward and backward bending can aggravate the symptoms of slip disc.

Health benefits Of Laughter Yoga

There is an ever increasing demand to open more and more laughter clubs in the world because people are inspired and motivated by the enormous health benefits derived from doing Laughter Yoga. These benefits can be felt from the very first session and members report amazing improvement in their physical health, as well as a more positive mental attitude and higher energy levels. The first thing they say is that they don't fall sick very often. 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.

5 Major Benefits Of Laughter Yoga

1. Good mood and more spontaneous laughter:

Whether it is your personal, business or social life your mood affects everything you do. If your mood is good, you can do things much better. Laughter Yoga helps to change your mood within minutes



Certified Laughter Yoga teacher Elsie from New York going strong at 85

by releasing certain chemicals from your brain cells called endorphins. You will remain cheerful and in a good mood throughout the day and will laugh more than you normally do.

2. Healthy exercise to beat stress: Laughter Yoga is like an aerobic exercise (cardio workout) which brings more oxygen to the body and brain, thereby making one feel healthy and energetic. It is a single exercise routine which reduces physical, mental and emotional stress simultaneously.

3. Health benefits: You can't enjoy life if you are sick. Laughter Yoga strengthens the immune system which not only prevents you from falling ill, but also

helps to heal a variety of conditions like hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, depression, arthritis, allergies, asthma, bronchitis, backache, fibromyalgia, migraine headaches, menstrual disorders, cancer and many others.

4. Quality of life: Quality of life depends upon the quality of good friendships we have. Laughter is a positive energy which helps people to connect with others quickly and improves relationships. If you laugh more, you will attract many friends.

5. Positive attitude in challenging times: Everyone can laugh when life is good, but how does one laugh when faced with challenges? Laughter helps create a positive mental state to deal with negative situations and negative people. It gives hope and optimism to cope with difficult times.

Laughter Yoga For Wellness

Laughter Yoga is a complete package for physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being of an individual. It has all the elements of perfect health building activity. Therefore, it is not about the concept or the philosophy which attracts them; it is about what they get and how it benefits their lives.



Laughter Yoga session in progress at Zurich, Switzerland

Best cardio workout: As life has become more sedentary and stressful, people find it hard to stick to any exercise routine. Laughter Yoga is an ideal alternative as it can be compared to any aerobic exercise. Just 10 minutes of hearty laughter is equal to 30 minutes on the rowing machine. It is ideally suited for busy professionals and business people who have very little time to exercise.

More oxygen: Oxygen is one of the primary catalysts for all metabolic reactions in the human body. Ongoing scientific studies show that lack of oxygen is the major cause of most diseases. Negative emotions constrict the supply of oxygen and induce shallow

chest breathing. Laughter Yoga exercises facilitates longer exhalation and deep breathing through the diaphragm. This helps in flushing the lungs of stale residual air and increasing the net supply of oxygen.

Increases 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 increases circulation to flush the body and organs of waste products leaving us ready to operate at peak performance.

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, they suppress their emotions. Laughter Yoga helps free flow of emotions and releases pent up feelings. It defuses painful emotions like fear, anger and resentment; instead cultivates positive emotions like unconditional love, generosity, openness, compassion and willingness to help and serve others.

Laughter Boosts Immune System

Laughter Yoga strengthens the immune system and one does not fall sick easily. Our experience with regular laughter club members is that they don't suffer from frequent cold & cough and upper respiratory tract infections. This indicates that their immune system has become stronger. Scientific studies show that it takes at least 2-3 months of regular laughter practice to bring about changes in the immune system.

Depression

Depression is the number one sickness in the world today. Depressed people seldom laugh; but if they do laugh regularly, they are less likely to be depressed. Laughter increases the levels of dopamine and serotonin in the brain cells. We have seen that many laughter club members were able to reduce anti-depressant medication doing laughter exercises. In fact, some have completely stopped the medication.

Laughter Yoga provides social support which helps to prevent depression, usually brought on by loneliness and isolation. It is like an extended family which connects people and creates lifelong relationships.

Anxiety & Panic Attacks

When in a stressful emotional state or turmoil, breathing becomes faster, shallow and irregular. People hold their breath which leads to an accumulation of carbon dioxide in the blood. Laughter Yoga provides an excellent cardiac workout. It lowers the amount of residual air in the lungs, replacing it with oxygen-rich air and reducing the level of carbon dioxide in the lungs, thereby reducing the risk of pulmonary infection.

By shifting the breathing pattern from shallow to deep diaphragmatic breathing, Laughter Yoga stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which is the cooling branch of the autonomic nervous system and the opposite of the sympathetic stress arousal system. This scientific phenomenon coupled with yogic breathing helps to loosen stress and relieve anxiety.

Heart Disease & Hypertension

Dr. Michael Miller, a leading heart researcher from Maryland University & Medical Center discovered that laughter dilates blood vessels promoting circulation and reducing blood pressure. Having too much



Laughter Yoga session at Mumbai club

cholesterol in the blood can lead to the hardening and narrowing of the arteries (atherosclerosis) in the major vascular systems. A daily dose of laughter reduces cholesterol, improves blood circulation to the heart thereby proving to be a great preventive to hypertension and heart disease.

Laughter Yoga & Diabetes

Diabetes like heart disease is a major health hazard worldwide. Laughter Yoga exercises help to control fasting and postprandial blood sugar as proved by scientific research done in Maribor University, Slovenia. It also reduces the stress hormone cortisol responsible for increase in sugar levels; in effect

lowering the blood sugar and helping a diabetic patient. It even increases the blood flow to the pancreas, which improves the production of insulin.

Bronchitis & Asthma

People suffering from allergic bronchitis, asthma and smoker's bronchitis (COPD) can benefit from laughter exercises. They have a lot of residual air in their lungs, which can be removed by laughter exercises, thereby increasing their oxygen levels and improving the breathing capacity.

Laughter exercises also help to remove the thick mucus from the inner lining of the bronchi which improves the flow of air into the lungs. One of the common reasons why people get asthmatic attacks is due to infection. Laughter Yoga strengthens the immune system and significantly brings down the frequency of asthmatic attacks.

Laughter Yoga For Cancer Patients

Cancer is on the rise and has become the second major killer after heart attack and strokes. Cancer centers all over the world are incorporating Laughter Yoga exercises as a complementary therapy along with traditional forms of treatment. When someone

has cancer, it causes tremendous emotional disturbance and mental stress. Laughter exercises quickly help to reduce the trauma and put their mind in a positive state, thus enabling them to cope with the disease in a better way. Since Laughter Yoga is a physical method, it is ideally suited for cancer groups who can practice laughter as a form of exercise with no need of any humorous intervention.

Laughter Yoga increases the oxygen level in the body cells and rapidly increases immunoglobulin levels that help fight infection and increases the number of natural killer cells (NK cells) in the blood, which plays a key role in cancer prevention. It should be combined with other forms of treatment to provide cancer patients with an improved quality of life and the best possible chance of survival.

Laughter Yoga For Chronic Illnesses

There are many illnesses which have no cure and one has to take lifelong medication. Laughter Yoga exercises can help to reduce the symptoms of patients with rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, diabetes, blood pressure, auto-immune disorders like multiple sclerosis and other chronic diseases.

It also keeps their mind positive, effectively enabling them to manage their disease on a daily basis.

Laughter Yoga & Pain

There are two types of pain people experience in life. One is due to some physical illness and the other due to some emotional disturbance in the mind. Laughter Yoga exercises is a great remedy for release of emotions and lessening of pain as it releases endorphins or natural opiates that are more potent than equivalent amounts of morphine.

It also helps in reducing physical pain in those suffering from arthritis, spondylitis and muscular spasms of the body. Most laughter club members, especially seniors, usually suffer from arthritic pain but it is seen that after doing laughter exercises, the intensity of pain decreases significantly.

How Laughter Healed Norman Cousins' Incurable Spine Disease

In 1979, celebrated American writer Norman Cousins published his book 'Anatomy of an Illness' in which he explains his battle with the potentially fatal and extremely painful disease, Ankylosing Spondylitis, and describes his discovery of the healing powers



A Laughter group enjoying Hearty Laughter in South France

of humor and other positive emotions. He found, for example, that ten minutes of mirthful laughter gave him two hours of pain-free sleep. His story baffled the scientific community and inspired a number of research projects. Included was the discovery that laughter causes our body to produce endorphins, which are natural painkillers.

Testimonials from Laughter Yoga Practitioners

Maria Manninen, Finland: My life has been pretty tough for many years and I spent lots 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 Skype laughter club online. 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, Israel: 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 then told myself that I would do my best even if I have



to fake laughing. And that's what I did. I brought my body and open-heart to the laughter club and shared with the group what was going on with my life. That laughter session was the most powerful experience I have ever had in my life. I found the ability to tap into inner resources I did not know I had at a time when I felt weak and powerless. Laughter club members were so loving and supportive that I still feel lucky to be surrounded by so much loving kindness.

Brigette, Denmark: Laughter really changed my life. I 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 also use laughter as my personal stress management therapy to keep my stress levels low, as I have a very stressful job. Laughter works on both physical and

psychological level; therefore the whole health care can be transformed through laughter.

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 my outlook.

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 half. My husband and children are surprised at my changed attitude. They had never seen me laughing like now. I feel relaxed and can sleep better. Thanks to Laughter Yoga, it has really worked like magic.

Anna Zakharova, Moscow: I've had a difficult time in my 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 rule out 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. In fact, for 15 years I was looking for a spark to ignite my passion for painting and Laughter Yoga helped me achieve it.

Marilyn Fogelquis, USA: I'm not a funny person. Neither can I tell jokes or remember them 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 to my life and great pleasure and has provided the opportunity and skills to bring laughter and joyfulness to so many people in our community. Laughter Yoga has also been a blessing in helping me deal with the lingering illness and death of a family member.



Michael Shineberg, Germany: After my father passed away there was a point I was grieving so heavily that I was getting lost in it and it was weakening my spirits. I wondered what I was going to do as I seemed to 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 I could cope with my tragedy.

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

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!

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.

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. Even my specialist was amazed when he realized the tumor, that I had for some time, 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. I feel very energetic, there is less pain and I can easily do a lot of things. People remark I look better and younger!

Dianne Theil McNinch, USA:

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 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 I happened to see it 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 Yoga group. Next day, I met laughter teacher Jeffrey who finally guided me to my initial session.

Just two months after my first Laughter Yoga experience, I had amazingly decreased the use

of medicines by almost 80 percent and eventually stopped all of it.

Vijay Sabarwal: I joined the Jalvayu laughter club, Noida, in April 2015, when I was suffering from hipbone & lung cancer and was in a wheelchair, unable to stand. After joining the club I found a radical change in myself. My health improved and I gained some weight. I was able to walk with the



walker and could even drag my wheelchair to the club. I could stand and do Laughter Yoga for almost half an hour as well as my daily work. I felt totally independent, as I didn't need anybody's help. I could feel my cancer disappear and my digestion improved. Thanks to Laughter Yoga which has really done wonders for me and continues to give hope to others who are depressed or ailing.

Applications of Laughter Yoga

Initially, Laughter Yoga clubs were only intended to be social clubs where people could come and laugh and reap the benefits of laughter for health and well being. As and when the laughter clubs movement spread across the world, people started taking Laughter Yoga to different areas where it was needed the most. I was pleasantly surprised how this simple idea developed and pervaded everywhere providing people with enormous benefits according to their needs.

Here are some areas where Laughter Yoga has been implemented successfully:

- Social laughter clubs
- Laughter Yoga in business world
- Laughter Yoga for seniors
- Laughter Yoga for children
- Laughter Yoga in fitness centers & yoga studios
- Laughter Yoga in hospitals
- Laughter Yoga for people with special need
- Laughter Yoga for physically and mentally challenged
- Laughter Yoga in prison and with police

Laughter Yoga for Business World

With continuous stress workplace becomes serious and most of the time people think that serious people are more responsible and more productive. This is not true. More productive people are those who take their work seriously, but take themselves lightly.

Scientific research shows that laughter can help resolve many major workplace issues. The business world is now beginning to consider laughter seriously as a tool to improve workplace performance and increase productivity and profitability.

7 Compelling Reasons To Bring Laughter Yoga In Your Organization

1. Quickest way to reduce stress: Though there are many methods being used to reduce stress, Laughter Yoga is the quickest and one can feel the benefits from the very first session. Laughter Yoga is a single exercise which reduces physical, mental



Laughter session with company officials in Germany

and emotional stress simultaneously and brings an emotional balance. It increases positive emotions and decreases negative emotions. Even highly talented and skilled employees cannot perform well if they are emotionally disturbed.

2. Healthy exercise for busy people: Laughter Yoga works like an aerobic exercise. Dr. Williams Fry of Stanford University proved that 10 minutes of hearty laughter is equal to 30 minutes on the rowing machine. This helps to stimulate heart rate, increase blood circulation, supply oxygen and eliminate toxins.

3. Peak performance: At a given time, performance depends upon mood and Laughter Yoga has the

power to change the mood state within minutes by releasing neuropeptides from the brain cells called endorphins. Science tells us that the brain needs 25 percent more oxygen than other body organs. Laughter Yoga increases the net supply of oxygen which helps in optimal performance and boosts energy levels.

4. Team building: 'People who laugh together work together.' Laughter Yoga is a powerful tool that connects people easily with each other. It also helps to develop a positive mental attitude, hope, optimism and enhances communication skills to help in teambuilding.

5. Motivation and communication: For people working in front office, sales & marketing Laughter Yoga helps to bring a smile on their face and generate good feelings within the body. This enhances their communication and motivational skills thus increasing their client base and customer delight.

6. Innovation and creativity: The childlike playfulness in Laughter Yoga stimulates the right brain activity, which is the seat of creativity. This helps generate new ideas and insights about workplace issues and problems. As one needs to introduce new

ideas and constant innovation to stay ahead in this highly competitive market, Laughter Yoga helps people become more creative and innovative.

7. 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, enhance learning skills, mental concentration and potential.

How To Start A Laughter Yoga Session In Your Company

Just 10-15 minutes of Laughter Yoga session in your company can greatly improve the work environment and help create a happy and energized workforce. It will boost their efficiency, build emotional intelligence and will make them happy and healthy. If you have a group of at least 15-20 people, we can initiate laughter sessions and also train in-house leaders who can conduct these sessions on a regular basis. We can also organize research based Laughter Yoga session for three weeks to show the scientific evidence about its benefits.

Laughter Yoga In Senior Centers

With advances in medical science, life expectancy has gone up and the population of senior citizens is increasing alarmingly. As ageing brings a lot of health problems, seniors themselves as well as governments all over the world are spending huge amount of money on health care.

As the joint family structure crumbles and youngsters steer away from parents, seniors particularly in the west find themselves alone either in aged care facilities or old-age homes where they hardly laugh and smile. Though they live with likewise people and there is a community feeling; they still yearn for their family. They are prone to frequent bouts of depression that often leads to a debilitating condition. All they need is to talk to someone, and friends to share their emotions.



Dr. Kataria leading a session in a senior center in Canada

When we talk about seniors they fall into two categories: first are those who have just retired and can become a part of social laughter clubs as they are physically active. Second are those who live in aged care facilities or old age homes and are unable to look after themselves and need assistance to take of their daily needs.

Benefits of Laughter Yoga for seniors

Adds more laughter to life: As we age we laugh much less, but Laughter Yoga is a great way to bring back laughter and joy into the lives of the elderly. It also helps people understand that they do not need a reason to laugh. Because of dementia and Alzheimer's

disease, seniors often cannot comprehend jokes or find anything funny. This is because humor is a mental and cognitive phenomenon. As Laughter Yoga does not rely upon a sense of humor or cognitive function, anyone can laugh heartily. Therefore, it is a great form of exercise and seniors can get multiple health benefits from it.

Promotes physical health: As we grow older most seniors have ailments like high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma and other age related problems. Laughter Yoga helps in healing by strengthening the immune system, increasing oxygen to the body cells and bringing a positive mental state.

Supports good mental health: Many seniors suffer from depression, frustration and anger. As they lose loved ones and their health, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a positive mental attitude. Laughter Yoga changes a person's biochemistry in a way that supports good mental health regardless of their circumstances.

Increased social connection: Laughter Yoga allows for strong social bonding with friends, relatives, fellow residents at care facilities as well as care givers and medical personnel. Even persons with dementia



Laughter Yoga session in a senior center in Canada

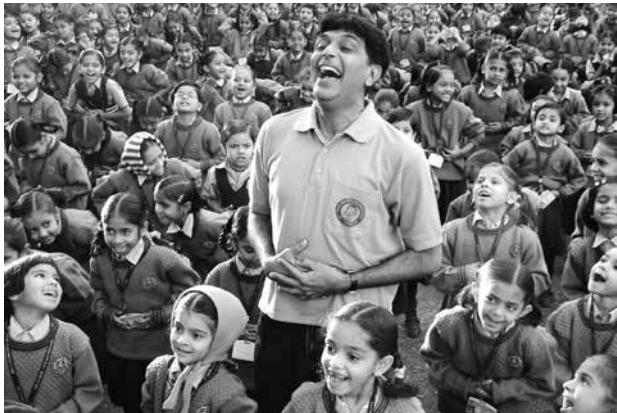
can forge meaningful connections with Laughter Yoga. This development of friendship decreases loneliness and increases quality of life.

Laughter Yoga adds to longevity: Laughter Yoga gives elders a reason & purpose to living fully every day. It is successfully being practiced by individuals in their 70s, 80s & even 90s. As the population becomes increasingly older every day, Laughter Yoga is a tool for transformational ageing and increased longevity.

Laughter Yoga for School Children

Researchers tell us that children laugh 300 – 400 times a day during play, but what is happening to childhood in our modern world? Today's children are faced with different childhood realities. There is an increasing need for laughter and playfulness in children of all ages as they strive to meet the demands of school, college and parents.

Laughter Yoga can help children cope with stress and also replace some of the play and laughter time that they are losing to formalized educational systems and changes in lifestyle. It is the best technique which inducts more laughter into their lives. It promotes group laughter without the needs for humor or jokes. It has proved very effective when incorporated in the education system, as it helps to eliminate the factors that cause stress levels among students and hinder healthy relationships.



Laughter Yoga session with school children in Surat, India

Major stress factors in children

Low concentration: Studies show a huge leap in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Children with this disorder are extremely hyperactive and find it difficult to concentrate for even short periods. They act on impulse and often appear to have no sense of danger. An extended hearty laughter improves blood circulation and flushes the lungs of stale residual air. This helps in better concentration power, increases the learning ability and helps to enhance academic performance.

Academic pressure: Children are faced with a competitive academic environment from an early

age as they are constantly being pressured by their parents and teachers to attain excellent grades. Schoolwork results in many symptoms of stress and high social anxiety. As they learn to laugh unconditionally, they become adept at handling pressure as laughter builds self confidence and the ability to handle stress by boosting the immune system and releasing endorphins in the brain which 'kick start' good feelings and reduce stress.

Parental pressure: Parental expectations many times lead the children to strive for unrealistic goals, which if unfulfilled can bring on serious stress and prove to be detrimental to their mental and physical health. A general decrease in parenting skills leaves children deprived of strong moral and emotional guidance and role models.

How Does Laughter Yoga Benefit Children

Promotes healthy emotional development: It is through play that children develop emotional intelligence when they grow up. However, children today are not playing much physically; they are glued to their mobile phones, television and computer screens. Laughter Yoga encourages them to play and express themselves fully, which is good for emotional development.



Laughter Yoga session with street children in Mumbai

Increases academic performance: By increasing the net supply of oxygen to the body and brain, Laughter Yoga helps children stay focused for peak academic performance.

Builds physical stamina: As a physical exercise, Laughter Yoga helps develop healthy bodies. With regular practice, children maintain a healthy weight and are energized to play all kinds of sports effectively. Laughter exercises increase the breathing capacity, thereby increasing stamina for sporting performance.

Develops self-confidence: By encouraging boisterous self-expression, children can find their own voice. Their leadership skills and self-confidence naturally grows.

Laughter Yoga exercises reduces inhibition and shyness leading to self-confidence in public speaking and other stage performances.

Enhances creativity: Because Laughter Yoga has play at its core, right brain thinking is practiced, which enhances creativity on a number of levels.

How To Start Laughter Yoga In Your School

We have developed different techniques which will work for school children. If you want a laughter session in your school, we can provide training to the teachers for doing a 5 minute session during the morning assembly and a 10 minute session in the classroom.

Laughter Yoga & College Students

College students face a lot of stress due to tremendous pressure of competition in every field. They want to excel and get good grades in order to find a good job and better career opportunities. But studies show that good marks and a high IQ is not a guarantee for being successful. Almost 70 -80 percent success in life depends upon the emotional quotient (EQ), which is the ability to understand and regulate one's emotions, as well as those of others in order to build strong relationships.



Dr. Kataria leading a session in an orphanage in South India

Laughter Yoga exercises is a great tool for college and university students to reduce stress and develop high EQ levels. We can help different colleges and universities to start laughter groups on the campus.

Laughter Yoga For Personal Development

Laughter Yoga is an excellent tool for personal development especially for younger people. It enhances mental skills and abilities that improve their performance in every sphere of life. It is a powerful means for self confidence as it helps to overcome inhibition and shyness. It not only improves communication with people, but also creates a safe environment to connect and come

closer. This goes a long way in achieving success in business life, personal life and social life. It also develops personality and leadership qualities. Childlike playfulness in Laughter Yoga enables people to communicate and express their emotions freely.

Yoga Studios & Fitness Centers

Laughter Yoga is a great value addition for those practicing traditional yoga. Ten minutes of laughter session can be easily incorporated at the end of a yoga class. Laughter exercises can also be combined with other fitness programs like aerobics, gym exercises and even swimming.

Laughter Yoga In Hospitals

It is said that happy patients come from happy doctors and nurses. Laughter Yoga sessions can be an excellent tool for healthcare workers. If they are in a positive mood and are feeling good, they will be able to serve their patients well. Laughter Yoga is good for patients recovering from long term illnesses as it helps in healing and counters stress and depression, and is also very beneficial for family members taking care of these patients.



Laughter session with mentally challenged children in Perth, Australia

Mentally & Physically Challenged

Laughter Yoga is very effective for mentally & physically challenged people like those suffering from cerebral palsy, paralytic conditions, mental retardation, visual impairment, hearing and speech impairment, and those with chronic diseases like Multiple Sclerosis. It helps to alleviate feelings of negativity, depression and trauma. Laughter exercises make them cheerful and more energized throughout the day and it is seen that they respond better to physiotherapy commands. Laughter Yoga is also very effective for caregivers looking after them over a long period of time.



Laughter Yoga session with blind school girls in Mumbai

Laughter Yoga With The Blind

Laughter Yoga is excellent tool for the visually impaired as they too harbor a lot of depression and frustration. Technically, laughter exercises for the blind are done in a different manner. We use touch as a method to connect and ask the participants to hold each other's hands and put their arms around each other and laugh.

Laughter Meditation too can be done if they sit very close to each other as the sound of laughter is infectious. As the blind are usually good at singing, laughter exercises can easily be combined with singing, which makes them more joyful and happy.



Laughter Yoga session with deaf and mute children in Udaipur, India

Laughter Yoga With Deaf & Mute

In India, several organizations for the deaf & mute children have incorporated Laughter Yoga exercises and have found it to be very effective. Since they cannot hear the instructions, we use sign language with the help of their teachers. The technique is called "Follow the leader". As children are very good at imitating, we ask them through sign language to follow the instructor– and it works very well. In our experience with several organizations we found there was a significant improvement in their speech and they were able to express themselves far better than before.



Laughter Yoga session in Mumbai prison

Laughter Yoga With Prison Inmates

With increase in crime all over the world, prisons are overburdened with prisoners living under extremely stressful circumstances. They experience a lot of anxiety and trauma due to overcrowding, improper hygiene, lack of food and basic amenities. This keeps them in a state of constant confusion, which invariably leads to lifelong damage of emotional stability. This negative mindset is very difficult to change. In fact, it gets more deep-rooted and allows hardly any room for reform.

Prisoners harbor a lot of anger and depression inside of them which needs to be removed in order

to prevent them from committing further acts of crimes, whether it be inside or after being released from jail. Laughter Yoga has been proven that it helps in resolving long standing negative emotions in criminals and places them in a more positive frame of mind.

Laughter Yoga is the only tool that reduces stress almost instantaneously. Being cathartic in nature, it helps to release pent up feelings through laughter, thus improving the physical, mental and emotional wellness of prisoners. It also provides new ways to deal with these strong emotions in a healthy, non-violent and non-confrontational way.

How to get Involved in Laughter Yoga

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. 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.

Those who have tried Laughter Yoga can feel the benefits from the very first session and this is why it is spreading so fast all over the world. Now the question is how to get involved in Laughter Yoga.

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

How To Join / Start A Laughter Club

One of the simplest ways to bring more laughter into your life is to join a laughter club or better still, start one! These clubs are a worldwide network of social



This is how a typical Laughter Club looks like in India

clubs run by volunteers under the aegis of Laughter Yoga International based in Bangalore, India. You can go to our website laughteryoga.org and click on "Find Laughter clubs". If there is one in your area, you can get trained as a laughter leader and start your own club. You can also find different types of trainings e.g. leader training, teacher training etc. on our website.

Laughter Yoga International is a non-profit, non-political and non-religious organization and all the laughter clubs are free of cost. However, in some countries if there is a cost involved in hiring the venue for the laughter club, people can contribute by way of donations. We provide free training to volunteers who want to start social laughter clubs.

Skype Laughter Club

The demand for Laughter Yoga has increased exponentially and we are getting inquiries from all over the world from people who wish to practice Laughter Yoga and get multiple benefits from it. At many places there are no laughter clubs, no laughter leaders or teachers and no laughter classes. So how does one practice laughter exercises?

Skype laughter club is the answer where you can do Laughter Yoga every day. We now have these clubs around the world, happening almost every hour and people can join according to their convenience. Skype laughter sessions are happening many times in a day and are suitable for different time zones. Just choose a convenient time and laugh several times in a day if you wish to.

Skype laughter club is an online community of laughter lovers from all over the world who connect and laugh on Skype daily. It is a great way to practice Laughter Yoga every day for everyone, especially for laughter teachers and leaders. Remember, you can only get the benefits of laughter if you laugh every day for at least for 15 – 20 minutes, and what better way than to laugh from home on Skype 365 days!

How to join Skype laughter club

What you need is a computer with Skype (it is free to download www.skype.com) internet connection, a headset or a microphone and speakers. Here are the steps:

Step 1 – Add “laughterclub” to your Skype contacts. We will accept your request and you are on.

Step 2 – Choose a convenient time according to your time zone and you will find a list of different laughter sessions on our website.

Step 3 – Before starting a session, the coordinator of Skype laughter club sends out a message inviting the online contacts to join. If you wish to join the session please send a message saying “I am in... ho ho ha ha ha... Please call” or send a smiley sign. At the scheduled time you will get a call and you can join in.

Skype laughter session timings: You can find skype laughter session timings in different time zones on our website www.laughteryoga.org.

Learn to Laugh Alone at home

With our experience of daily laughter practice, we found that even if you laugh all by yourself, it has the same benefits. The only thing is that laughing alone is a bit challenging – one may feel awkward and may not enjoy as much as they do in a laughter group. But, if you get used to laughing on purpose by attending regular laughter sessions or training workshops, it becomes easy to laugh alone. There are some training videos on how to laugh alone, which you can find on our website.

Factors That Facilitate Laughing Alone

Willingness to laugh: A willingness to laugh creates a positive mindset, 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 it 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.

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. 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 body and mind can be trained to laugh at will and just like learning to ride a bicycle, once learnt, the technique will never be forgotten.

Every person is different: 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 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

Open your mouth wider: 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. Wear loose and comfortable clothes for breathing and laughter exercises.

Duration and ideal time: You can begin with 5 minutes and gradually increase the duration to 10-15 minutes taking breathing breaks in between. 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.

Warm-up exercises: Before starting laugh alone exercises, try some warm-up exercises like 'ho ho ha ha' and 'very good, very good, yay'. These exercises will be even more fun if you do them alone in front of a mirror. Do them gently in the beginning and gradually increase the intensity until you get comfortable.

Ho Ho Ha Ha exercise: 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 then say 'ha ha' as you push your hands downwards. Slowly sway your entire body from left to right, bend your knees slightly, as you speed up saying, 'ho ho ha ha ha.' After doing this a 5-10 times, do some deep breathing exercises. 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 'haaaaaaaaa' and continue to laugh.

Very Good, Very Good, Yay!: This is a common exercise used in laughter clubs to cultivate childlike playfulness. Clap, as you simultaneously say 'very good' twice, then throw your arms upwards and exclaim "yay." These are also called childlike cheers.

5 Laughter Exercises For Laughing Alone

1. Fake it until you make it: This is the slogan of all laughter clubs, based on a scientific fact that even if you are faking a particular emotion, the body cannot differentiate between real and fake emotions. You can fake laughter by making different sounds like ha ha ha he he he he ho ho ho. Initially it may seem awkward, but with repeated practice your body will get conditioned and the moment you start faking laughter it will get into the real laughter mode very quickly.

2. Breath holding technique: Spread your arms in front, then inhale and bring your fists back towards your chest. Hold your breath for 2-3 seconds and then burst out laughing, as you exhale. Repeat twice or thrice.

3. One meter laughter: It is preferably done in a standing position but can also be done while sitting. Stand with your feet a little apart and take both your hands to the left. Then slide one arm over the other and stretch it to the opposite shoulder and pretend to measure one meter of fabric. There are three stages as you do this: First is when you touch the elbow while sliding, second is



when you reach the opposite shoulder and the final position is when you stretch both your arms, push your chin up, open your mouth a bit wider and laugh heartily.

4. Aloha laughter: Derived from the traditional Hawaiian greeting it is ideally performed in the morning as soon as you wake up. Sit on your knees and place some cushions in front of you. Raise your arms, push up your chin and start saying a pronged 'Aloooooo' in a crescendo. Then end it by saying a loud 'haaa' and laugh heartily. Go down as you do this and dig your head into the cushions. Carry on laughing and don't stop if you're enjoying it. It is a feeling of total release.



Two steps of Aloha Laughter

This can also be performed while standing. Just raise your arms, put up your chin and say 'Aloooo' in a crescendo. End it with saying 'haaaa' and laughing out loud.

This exercise should not be attempted by people suffering from positional vertigo as they might feel giddy on bending down. Also remember to pad your bed well with cushions so that you don't hurt yourself as you bend down.

5. Holding your knees laughter: This exercise facilitates the upward movement of the diaphragm by pressing the abdominal muscles. It also helps to increase the blood flow to the brain thus improving

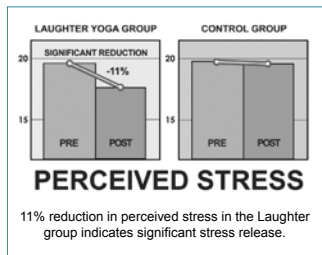
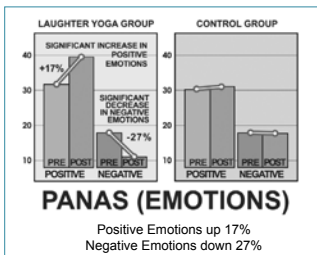
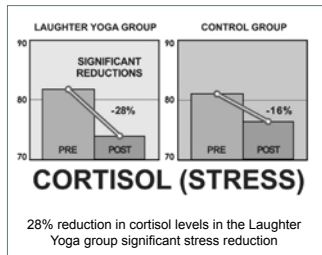
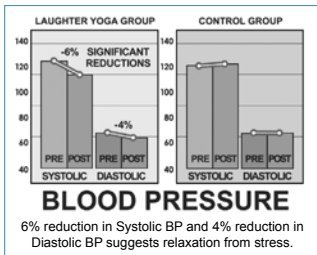


the circulation. Lie down on your back, hold your knees together with both your hands and slowly bring them closer to your chest. While doing this, push your chin upwards and keep your mouth a little open and exhale. Then release your knees and inhale while taking in deep breaths.

Scientific Studies On Laughter Yoga

Dr. William F. Fry, psychiatrist at Stanford University, while studying physiological effects of laughter in the late 1960's demonstrated that most of the body's major physiological systems are stimulated by laughter. He proved that mirthful laughter provides good physical exercise and can decrease the chances of respiratory infections.

Dr. Lee Berk, PhD at Loma Linda University Medical Center and his team of researchers found that laughter also reduces the level of stress hormones and results in improved immunity. He documented that laughter increases the level of immunoglobulin IgA, a special immune protein that guards us from respiratory tract infections, and that laughter increases the number of natural killer (NK) cells, a type of white cell that plays an important role in protecting us from tumors.



Dr. Michael Miller at the University Of Maryland School Of Medicine reported that laughter also dilates and expands the blood vessels, which increases blood flow and reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Scientific Studies Done On Laughter Yoga

Scientific studies on Laughter Yoga have been conducted in India, USA, Germany, Australia, S. Korea, Philippines, Slovenia and Japan. In 2006 Svyasa a leading research organization in Bangalore conducted the first Laughter Yoga research and

proved that it reduces blood pressure and cortisol levels (stress hormone). It also increases positive emotions and decreases the negative ones, thereby bringing emotional balance.

US study conducted in 2007 showed that Laughter Yoga exercises helps to improve personal and social efficacy of employees in the workplace, which is an indicator of emotional intelligence.

Studies conducted at Tehran University proved that Laughter Yoga reduces depression and improves wellbeing among cancer patients. Maribor University in Slovenia also showed reduced blood sugar levels after Laughter Yoga exercise.

World Laughter Day World Peace Through Laughter

World Laughter Day is customarily celebrated on the first Sunday of May every year. The celebration of this day is a positive manifestation for world peace and is intended to build up a global consciousness of brotherhood and friendship through laughter. We have thousands of laughter clubs in over 100 countries and it is fast becoming a global family. Our mission is to bring good health, joy and world peace through laughter.

On this day, laughter club members, their friends and families congregate in important squares and public parks around the world, demonstrate Laughter Yoga exercises and spread the awareness about laughter clubs. They take out a peace march holding placards about the benefits of laughter.



World Laughter day celebrations in Mumbai in 1999

Bringing World Peace Through Laughter: Laughter is a universal language we all speak without any barriers of caste, creed or color. Laughter club is a powerful tool to connect people from different cultures and countries and provide social network of people who care for each other. By setting up laughter clubs all over the world we are creating a worldwide community of like-minded people who believe virtues like unconditional love and laughter generosity & forgiveness.

Formula is very simple – **“When you laugh; you change and when you change the world changes around you.”**

Laughter Yoga University

The demand for Laughter Yoga has increased exponentially. People want to start free social laughter clubs and incorporate Laughter Yoga in companies, senior centers, schools, colleges, universities, organizations for physically and mentally challenged, prisons, among police personnel and other fields to help people get the benefits of Laughter Yoga.

Since Laughter Yoga is an actual technique, one needs to learn its methods in order to conduct laughter sessions in different areas of application. Laughter Yoga University is a non academic university and is a kind of teaching, coaching and training institute where people can learn different levels of training programs.

The headquarters of Laughter Yoga University is in Bangalore, India from where we conduct these programs for trainers, who in turn can train others in different countries. We are also developing new



programs for seniors, school children, college students, and business people. We also customize Laughter Yoga sessions for people with special needs. This university will provide all training material like books, DVDs, CDs, manuals in different languages to facilitate comprehensive learning of Laughter Yoga, its methods and skills.

Different Types Of Trainings Available In Laughter Yoga University

Since group laughter without reason is a new concept, one is required to understand the basic philosophy and learn the different skills in order to conduct a successful laughter session. We need

proficient laughter leaders who can lead a group of people through Laughter Yoga exercises along with Yogic breathing and Laughter Meditation. To facilitate knowledge and skills, we have developed different types of trainings, seminars and workshops conducted by trained Laughter Yoga professionals.

There are 3 levels of trainings:

1. 2 Day Certified Laughter Yoga Leader Training (CLYL): These trainings are done by certified Laughter Yoga teachers for 2 days, at the end of which participants are certified as laughter leaders.

What you will learn in this training: This is a basic training on how to lead a laughter session for social clubs, corporate organizations, seniors, school children and people with special needs. You will acquire the basic facilitation skills of how to lead a group of people through laughter session and meditation. You will also learn the history, concept, philosophy and different steps of Laughter Yoga and Laughter Meditation.

During this course, you will also learn why we need to laugh more today, scientific research on laughter and its effects on human physiology and behavior,

essential link between yoga and laughter and the multi health benefits of Laughter Yoga.

2. 5 Day Certified Laughter Yoga Teacher Training (CLYT): During the course, you will learn how to lead a group of people through simulated Laughter Yoga techniques and skills of converting this simulated laughter into real infectious and spontaneous laughter without using jokes, comedy or humor. You will be given an opportunity to lead a laughter session during practice sessions.

You will also learn the powerful technique of real and deeper Laughter Meditation, where you do not have to make any effort to laugh, and laughter flows like a fountain. You will be taught how to lead the people through guided relaxation and other grounding techniques. You will get the opportunity to watch video presentations

This is a 5 day intensive training course for laughter leaders conducted primarily by Dr. Kataria and some authorized laughter teachers or master trainers. At the end of the training, laughter leaders are certified as laughter teachers and have been given an in depth knowledge about leading Laughter Yoga in different areas of application along with promotion, marketing, PR and training skills.

Who needs it: Anyone who is committed to spreading Laughter Yoga will benefit from this training. It will be of special interest to: • Yoga and fitness teachers • HR and management training professionals • Health care professionals • Teachers and sports coaches • Psychologists and psychiatrists • Entertainment professionals • Senior care workers • Marriage and family therapists • Life coaches and alternative therapists • Sales managers • Tourism professionals & tour guides

Laughter & Silence Retreat

This is a new self awareness program based on age-old Indian wisdom that our life is like a house with five rooms: 1. Self 2. Family 3. Work 4. Social 5. Spiritual If we want our house to be clean or our life to be balanced we need to clean all the rooms and take care of all these areas of life. Most people are focused on their work, leaving other areas of life unattended. This creates an imbalance.

Why laughter & silence: It is said that laughter deepens your silence and silence deepens your laughter. Unconditional Laughter that follows silence is very deep and intense. It comes from the diaphragm and flows like a fountain. This will help

to transcend your conscious and judging mind and unfold the layers of your subconscious mind which helps you to get in touch with your true inner self.

Learning through silence: Silence meditation is a very powerful tool to help you understand what is going on with your life. At the deepest level you get new insights, creative ideas and what you can do about them. It enables you to learn more about your personality, behavior and your belief systems thereby ensuring a much deeper and real assessment of one's nature and disposition.

Self- learning & parallel learning: Each participant will share their experience, insights and ideas about all the five rooms everyday for 2 hours in the evening. You will learn from your own experience and also by listening to others. This is called parallel learning.

Laughter Yoga professional career options

All social clubs are free but any teaching, coaching and trainings based on Laughter Yoga methods are chargeable. If you wish to do Laughter Yoga in companies, corporations, or conduct coaching programs, personal development programs etc. you can charge a fee and become a Laughter Yoga professional.

Laughter Yoga

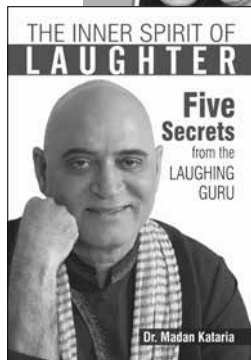
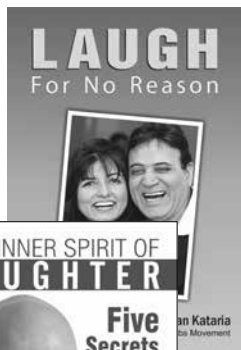
Learning Resources

If you don't have a laughter club in your vicinity, and it is difficult to start one, just dip into our resource center where we have numerous books, training videos learning kits, e-books and other products. You can learn Laughter Yoga methods and enhance your skills by buying these products from our online shopping center.

Laughter Yoga products available on www.laughteryoga.org/shop

Books

- Dr. Kataria's book, 'Laugh For No Reason' in English and other languages
- The Inner Spirit Of Laughter
- Five Secrets From The Laughing Guru



DVDs

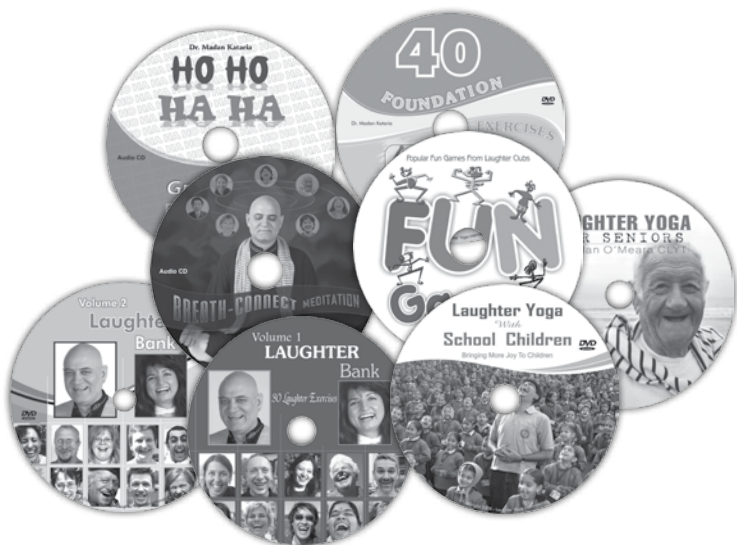
- Laughter Yoga Concept And Session
- Laughter Yoga Alone
- Laughter Yoga Training
- Laughter Yoga Learning
- Laughter Yoga One on One Coaching
- Laughter Yoga For Seniors
- Laughter Yoga for School Children
- Laughter Yoga In Business
- Laughter Yoga Bank (40 Foundation Laughter exercises + Laughter Bank vol 1 + Laughter Bank vol 2)
- Fun Games

Audio CDs

- Yoga Nidra
- Humming Meditation
- Exhalex Relaxation Technique
- Breath Connect Meditation
- Ho Ho Ha Ha Dancing Laugh & Dance Party

Other Products

- Laughter Yoga T- shirts
- Fun game cards
- 'It's Time to Laugh' watches and clocks



- Laughter Yoga badges
- Laughter Yoga key rings
- Laughter Yoga Umbrellas

Laughter Yoga Online Learning Center

Laughter Yoga Online Learning center provides gives you the opportunity to get an in-depth knowledge about Laughter Yoga methods, history, concept, philosophy, steps, benefits and different applications through videos, explained in detail by Dr. Kataria, the founder of Laughter Yoga movement. The unique features of online learning center are: no DVD player

or DVDs, no shipping cost, most economical and life time membership. It is a great library for those who want to acquire a knowledge base and wish to become Laughter Yoga professionals in future.

IMPORTANT: By watching these videos you cannot get any certification. For that you have to undergo the training sessions in person.

Laughter Yoga APP

Laughter Yoga University has just launched its App on both android and i-phone application, which can be viewed on smart phones, i-pads and tabs. This App will keep you informed about Laughter Yoga activities around the world in text and videos. We will update the latest news, laughter club activities, training programs etc. You can also learn Laughter Yoga exercises by watching videos. This App is absolutely free. Download it by searching in Google Play Store and Apple Store by typing 'Laughter Yoga University'.

Founders Of Laughter Yoga

Laughter Yoga is a brainchild of Dr. Madan Kataria, a medical doctor from Mumbai, India. He started the Laughter Yoga Clubs movement in 1995, supported by his wife Madhuri Kataria, a yoga teacher. Laughter Yoga has today grown into a worldwide movement with thousands of laughter clubs in over 100 countries.

Spreading rapidly in USA, Europe, Australia, the Middle East, Asia and Africa, this new concept has been widely covered by prestigious publications like the TIME magazine, National Geographic, and the Wall Street Journal and featured on CNN, BBC, US networks and the Oprah Winfrey Show.

Dr. Kataria has dedicated his entire life for bringing health, happiness and world peace through laughter. He is associated with a number of research projects to measure the benefits of laughter.

