Laughter IS the Best Medicine
How to Prevent Hardening of the Attitude with Laughter Yoga

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Objectives
- What is Laughter Yoga and how did it begin?
- Benefits of Laughter; is Laughter the Best Medicine?
- How is Laughter Yoga being used? Could you use it?
- Experience Laughter Yoga!

Laughter Yoga
History of Laughter Yoga

- Laughter clubs started by Dr. Madam Kataria 1995 in India; Steve Wilson 1998 in USA
- Dr. Kataria started in a park with 5 people telling jokes
- Yoga teacher wife emphasized laughter exercises similar to pranayama yoga breathing (extended exhale)
- 7000+ Laughter Clubs in over 70 countries!
- No jokes, no comedy, just laughing! Everyone can do it and teach it!

Humor vs. Laughter

Humor:
- funny is subject to:
  - culture-language
  - intelligence
  - tastes-preferences
  - values
  - mood
  - personal-subjective
  - may not laugh
  - often poke fun & laugh at someone or something

Laughter:
- a physical act; universal; innate; develops before language
- no sense of humor needed to laugh
- laugh with someone or something not at them
- only 10% of laughter is in response to jokes
- highly contagious!

Patient Chart Humor

1. Patient has chest pain if she lies on her left side for over a year.
2. The patient has no previous history of suicides.
3. I saw your patient today, who is still under our car for physical therapy.
4. Patient was seen in consultation by Dr. x, who felt we should sit on the abdomen and I agree.
Benefits of Laughter

• **Respiratory**: increases respiratory activity & O2 exchange
• **Cardiovascular**: stimulates heart rate & blood pressure followed by relaxation & vasodilatation
• Helps reduce stress; decreased cortisol, dopac and adrenaline.
• Profound opportunity to be present in the moment; powerful distraction...ancient form of laughter meditation

Most studies have looked at humor not laughter yoga

Benefits of Laughter

• **Immune System**: IgA significantly increased, also IgM and IgG, increased spontaneous lymphocyte blastogenesis, NK (natural-killer) cell activity & complement 3; can have sustained effect!
• **Muscles**: relaxes tension; enhanced endorphins often diminishing pain.....Anti-aging!
• **Brain**: stimulating both hemispheres at the same time; coordinating all the senses & producing a higher level of brain processing, enhanced creativity, alertness & memory; increased dopamine; may lessen anxiety & may help with depression.
• **Digestive Tract**: internal organ and lymph massage results in increased peristalsis, improved digestion; serotonin release.

Research by Dr. Michael Miller

Michael Miller M.D., Center for Preventive Cardiology at University of Maryland
• Laughter Group: view 30 mins. qd of self-selected humor (sitcoms, funny movies etc.)
• At 2 mos. Laughter Group:
  • Lower epinephrine and norepinephrine levels
  • Increased HDL
  • Lower levels of inflammatory markers hs-CRP, TNF-α, IFN-γ, IL-6

Research by Dr. Michael Miller

At 1 yr. Laughter Group

**HDL**
- 26% Rise (Laughter Group)
- 3% Rise (Control Group)

**C-Reactive Protein**
- 66% Decrease (Laughter Group)
- 26% Decrease (Control Group)
Research by Dr. Michael Miller

- "Benefit we saw in the endothelium is similar to the benefit we see with aerobic exercise." quote by Dr. Miller.
- Suggested rx. 15 mins. of laughing/day
- Would compliance improve if this is what we recommended?

Research by Dr. Lee Berk
Psychoneuroimmunolgist Loma Linda Univ.

- Anticipation of “mirthful laughter”, watching a humorous movie had surprising effects.
- Beta-endorphins increased by 27%
- Human growth factor (HGH-which helps with optimizing immunity) increased by 87%
- No increase found in the control group who did not anticipate watching a humorous movie

Mental Health Benefits

- Adds joy and zest to life; increases energy
- Helps eases anxiety and fear
- Reduces stress
- Elevates mood
- Help ease depression
- Shifts perspectives
- Enhances resilience
- Allows presence in the moment of the laughter

Social Benefits

- Social Benefits:
  - Strengthens relationships
  - Attracts others to us
  - Enhances teamwork
  - Helps defuse conflict
  - Promotes group bonding
  - Decreases social isolation

  “Laughter is the shortest distance between two people”
Connects Us to Our Inner Joy

• “Stop Leaving Your Laugh to Chance” Dr. Kataria
• Allows us to Laugh at Ourselves Freely
• Happiness is Fleeting but Inner Joy Always There
• Connects Us to Something Larger than Ourselves
• The Universal Language of Laughter-Global Connection

Random Laughter Class Evaluations

• Therapeutic Laughter Yoga Evaluation Data: Participant Evaluations from November 2013

Random Laughter Class Evaluation

Overall Stress Level
44% Reduction in Stress!

Objective Evaluation-Biofeedback

Relaxation Response
Objective Evaluation Post Laughter Breath Training

- Respiration Monitor (stretch gauge)
- Capnometer

Objective Evaluation Post Laughter Capnometer Graph

How Is Laughter Yoga Being Used?

- Everywhere & and Internationally!
- Sr. Centers
- Schools
- Prisons
- Corporations
- Hospitals-Clinics
- Cancer Centers
- Wellness Centers
- Mental Health Centers
- Performing Arts
- Stress Management
- Yoga Centers
- Weight Loss Programs
- Aquatics

Laughter Yoga In the Hospital

Laughter Yoga In Cancer Hospital Chicago U.S.A.flv
Laughter Yoga In the Hospital

• UCSF Osher Center Therapeutic Inpatient Program
• Outpatient Cancer Center Program
• Free public classes

Let’s Laugh!!!

• Breathing-Why it’s called Laughter Yoga
• Simple Stretches
• Clapping
• Laughter Exercises

“Every Smile is a New Beginning”

Resources

  laughterourbestmedicine.com;
  osher.ucsf.edu; corrigant@ocim.ucsf.edu
• Laughter Yoga International
  laughteryoga.org
• World Laughter Tour
  worldlaughtertour.com
• Association for Applied Therapeutic Humor
  aath.org
• Jest for the Health of It, jesthealth.com
  “The Therapeutic Value of Laughter in Medicine”
• Laughter Yoga Call Line: 1-712-432-3900; code 6071292#; from 3 a.m. to 10 p.m.
• Additional Journal references in handout