



# Laughter is Good Medicine

2017 Leader's Guide and Member Handout  
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**Educational goals:** Recognize the physical and holistic benefits of laughter yoga. Learn to laugh as form of exercise. Practice laughter yoga by self, with partner or in groups.

**Community awareness:** Start a laughter club and invite others. Encourage particular populations, seniors or children, to incorporate laughter yoga into their daily activities. Celebrate World Laughter Day, May 7, 2017 (first Sunday of May each year.)

**Public Contacts:** Publicize and/or sponsor laughter club meetings.

## **Understanding Laughter Yoga:**

One universal human characteristic that is recognized throughout the world is laughter. Laughter is referenced in the Bible, Proverbs 17:22.

Dr. Madan Kataria, Mumbai, India physician and author of Laugh for No Reason, is the founder of Laughter Yoga, a movement since 1995 has spawned laughter clubs all over the world. He believes laughter yoga can provide physical and holistic benefits. To receive these benefits, a person would need to laugh continuously for at least 10 to 15 minutes. The laughter would need to be deep and loud, and coming from the diaphragm.

Laughter yoga can be used anywhere, (work, fitness centers, yoga classes, senior centers, schools, colleges), with any population, or any age. Laughter yoga can be practiced alone, with a partner, or in large or small groups, sessions could be conducted by telephone, cell phone Facetime, Skype or watch videos or YouTube.

To participate, one does not need a reason to laugh, no yoga mat or gear, just comfortable clothing. Laughter yoga will include clapping in rhythm; breathing and stretching; laughter exercises with child-like play and pantomime and quiet, calming meditation

Other individuals who contributed to modern therapeutic laughter are Norman Cousins, author of Anatomy of an Illness; Dr. William F. Fry, psychiatrist, Stanford University, CA; Dr. Lee Berk, Loma Linda University Medical Center; Dr. Hunter (Patch) Adams, founder and director of Gesundheit Institute, a holistic medical community; and Dr. Annette Goodheart, psychotherapist, inventor of laughter therapy and coaching and has used laughter to treat cancer, AIDS, depression and other illnesses.

There are two kinds of laughter, mind and body. Mindful laughter is a response to humor. Laughter from the body is devoid of humor, it is "fake" or volunteer laughter. Researchers have concluded that the body can not differentiate between real or volunteer laughter, the benefits are the same. Physical and holistic benefits of laughter yoga are:

- Healthy aerobic exercise (cardio workout) will bring more oxygen to the brain and body, thus producing an energetic feeling; tone muscles of the heart, face and diaphragm; reduces blood pressure and improves respiration. One minute of mirthful laughter equals 6 minutes on rowing machine.

- Relaxes the entire body, reduce anxiety, relieves tensions, decreases levels of stress hormones, fights depression and improves one's mood with the release of certain brain cell chemicals called endorphins.
- Boosts the immune system to resist illnesses and helps the body to heal faster.
- Improved quality of life. "Laughter is a positive energy which helps people to connect with other people quickly and improves relationships." [Web site [laughteryoga.org](http://laughteryoga.org)] People are attracted to others who laugh.
- Restores playfulness. During early childhood, a child may laugh hundreds of times a day. But when reaching adulthood, laughing may occur only 10-15 times a day.
- Provides a positive attitude. "Laughter helps to create a positive mental state to deal with negative situations and negative people. It gives hope and optimism to cope with difficult times." [Web site: [laughteryoga.org](http://laughteryoga.org)]

**Laughter Yoga sessions may run from 10 to 60 minutes.**

**Part 1- Warm Up-** Begin with warm-up exercises that involve clapping and synchronizing movements. The parallel (palm to palm) hand clapping stimulates the acupressure points on the hands and increases energy level.

- Clap with a 1-2; 1-2-3 rhythm. Continue clapping moving hands up, down, swinging side to side, and/or in a circle. Variations: Jumping in place, in circle.
- Clap 1-2 and chant "ho, ho". Clap 1-2-3 and chant "ha-ha-ha". Breathing should be from the belly with deep inhales and exhales. Continue by moving in all directions, thus also stretching is achieved. Move around room.
- Lion Laughter may be used as a warm-up, stretching face, tongue and throat.

**Part 2- Deep Breathing and stretching exercises with laughter.** To help release big belly laughs, practice deep breathing and stretching throughout whole session.

- Located just below your ribs is your diaphragm. Activate your breath from your diaphragm. Place your hands on your diaphragm. Focus on taking full inhales and exhales through the nose, thus expanding and contracting your diaphragm. Inhale then exhale deeply for the count of four through your nose. Try holding breathe before exhaling. Next, as you exhale, release one to two big belly laughs. Continue to do this, deepen your breath equally on your inhales and your exhales with an even breath cycle, with laughter at the end of every exhale. Try Santa Clause Laughter, deep Ho, ho, ho.
- Variations: Inhale reaching above your head, exhale while bending forward to floor. Do side stretches bending left then right. Rotate arms in side circles. Breathe in all way down to toes. Breathe out to farthest star in galaxy. Rabbit Breathing-three short breaths in, then one long exhale laugh. Alternate Nostril Breathing-Pinch off left nostril, inhale; then pinch off right nostril to exhale while laughing.

**Part 3 – Laughter Exercises.** Duration of each exercise should last 45 seconds. To lengthen and/or keep the exercise feeling fresh, a leader may do variations, increase or decrease the tempo and/or volume or do "Simon Says" thus allowing participants to create variations, etc. The leader concludes each laughter exercise with the slogan (repeated twice) "Very good, Very Good, (clap, clap)" then cheer of "Yeah" (arms extended upward). Before the next laughter exercise, do deep breathing and stretching sessions. Leader may select as many laughter exercises as needed. Note: The more one puts into this activity, the more one will

benefit. Enjoy the childlike playfulness. Smile. Laugh. Make eye contact, even when exercising by self.

**Part 4 – Cool Down.** This is a time to employ meditation and guided visualizations, thus conclude with a sense of calm. If desired, the room's lights may be dimmed, creating a relaxing atmosphere.

- Do quiet and slow, deep breathing exercises. Participants may close their eyes.
- Do humming or sing the Om song for about 5 minutes. Do either to your own melody.
- With eyes closed, participants visualize a serene landscape, or life event.

**To conclude,** leader says: "Very good, Very good." Group says: "YEAH!"

**Laughter Exercises.** [Note: L. = Laughter; LY = Laughter Yoga]

1. Greeting L.: Western Wave; Single handshake; Double handshake; Static Shock handshake (extend hand but react as if receive static shock); Namaste (palms together, chest level, and bow head as making eye contact); High 5's; Miss High 5's. Move slow. Move fast. Make eye contact.
2. Milkshake L.: Pour into left cup, "Ha-a-a"; then pour into right cup, "Ha-a-a"; Drink with "Ho-ho-ho."
3. Cellphone L.: Laugh while using a cell phone: talk, watch video, text, or view pictures.
4. Credit Card Bill L.: Hold, read, point to a bill, share with others while laughing.
5. Just Laughing for No reason: Left shoulders, then hands, just laugh.
6. Argument L.: Pointing index finger and shaking hand to "person." Use facial expressions.
7. One Meter L. (Measuring Cloth): Extend arm to side, hands together, "Ho" move one hand along arm then body stopping at elbow, "Ho", shoulder, "Ho", chest, "Ho", shoulder, "Ho" then extend both arms out, "Ha, Ha, Ha." Change directions and speed.
  - a. Variation: One Centimeter (inch) "He, he, he" with each centimeter/inch.
8. Hearty /Heart Opening L.: Hands over heart, start a hearty laugh, outstretch arms.
9. Swinging and Vowel L.: Starting low, hold swing seat, push seat forward and up over head while sounding out a vowel sound- A, E, I, O, U and Y.
10. Lion L.: Thrust out tongue, widen eyes, and stretch hands out like claws while laughing.
11. Appreciation L.: Hand gestures of Thumbs up and OK.
12. Forgiveness L.: Asking for forgiveness-hands layered over heart and facial expressions; Giving forgiveness-extending hands out and facial expressions.
  - a. Variation: use 3 exercises together-Argument, Forgiveness, and Appreciation.
13. Laugh at Yourself: Point to yourself.
14. Electric shock/Static Shock L.: refer to Greeting L. number 1.
15. Hot Soup L.: Hot from spice or temperature-Eat from bowl, thrust out tongue, shaking hands, waving hands to cool mouth.
16. Aloha L.: "A, lo, ha-ha-ha" (draw out syllables) while dancing in hula skirt.
17. Laughter/Giggle Cream L.: Open jar, get on fingers, whenever the cream is applied, giggle.
18. Bird or Chicken L.: Chick in egg, pecking out of shell, walking around. Bird flying.
19. Mental Floss L.: Holding floss through ears, floss cobwebs out of your mind.
20. No Money L.: Put hands in pockets, pull hands out with expressions of no money
21. Jackpot L.: Scratch off lottery ticket, discover you are winner, be joyful and celebrate.
22. Calcutta L.: Ho, Ho (hands pushing front, outward); Ha, Ha (hands pushing downward). Do slowly, then fast. Do softly then loudly.

- a. Variation of Ho Ho: Push to side; above head; diagonally above head; turn to back.
  - 23. Crying L.: Alternate Cry laugh when slumping forward; then joyful laugh raising back up.
  - 24. Gradient L.: Start by smiling, slowly begin gentle chuckle, intensity to hearty laughing.  
Reverse.
  - 25. Heart to Heart L.: Hold another person's hands, and laugh.
  - 26. L. Center: Search for laugh center, with each touch, laugh; ending at the head.
  - 27. Silent L.: Open mouth wide, laugh with no sound. Look into other people's eyes, use funny gestures.
  - 28. Shy L.: Hands over mouth. Could follow with Peek-A-Boo L.
  - 29. Elevator L.: Group closely together, use Gradient L., and make eye contact.
    - a. Becomes Boat Swaying L.: Group sways to port (left) side, then starboard (right) side.
    - b. Becomes Roller-Coaster L.: Hold safety bar, wave to spectators, ride up, and drop down.
  - 30. Motorbike/Motorboat/Lawnmower L.: Small engine with pull starter. One pull-Ha, two pulls-Ha Ha. Engine starts-Ha, Ha, Ha. Move around. Wave, smile and laugh to others.
  - 31. Creative L.: Use gibberish, change shape of object, pass object to next person, etc.
  - 32. L. Orchestra: Leader conducts 3 sections (Ho Ho, Ha Ha and He He).
  - 33. Airport/Flight L.: Create a story by pantomiming the airport and the flight.
  - 34. Household Chores L.: Pantomime household chores.
  - 35. L. Revival: Patient on floor, group gathers around, with laughter, patient is revived.
  - 36. Party L.: Create a story by pantomiming going to, arriving at, being a guest, etc.
  - 37. Head on Belly L.: Group on floor, second person has their head on belly of first person.  
Laugh.
  - 38. Bull's Eye L. (Sunflower L.): In circle, on floor, heads in center. Laugh. Take selfies.
  - 39. Centipede L.: On floor, in a line, head next to head, Move arms and legs. Laugh.
  - 40. Rowing L.: On floor (or chairs) in row (s), bend forward and backwards as moving oars.
- Other LY exercises from another YouTube presented by Robert Rivest:
- 1. Jungle Theme: Elephant (riding or being the animal); Too many Bugs (slap away bugs); Tarzan (grab a vine, swing, Tarzan yell); Chimpanzee (pantomime actions of), etc.
  - 2. Farm Theme: Cowboy L. (riding horse, twirling rope); Milking cow, etc.

**Reviewed by** Mary Landes, director of interactive services of Salina Journal and volunteer leader of Survivorship Yoga, YMCA, Salina, KS.

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