



Dr. Kataria School of Laughter Yoga

Certified Laughter Yoga Leader Training Manual



Before Getting Started...

Training Materials

- Please study this manual thoroughly before your training.
- Dr. Kataria's Book: *'Laugh for No Reason'* – we strongly advise you order a paper or e-book copy from our shop at www.laughteryoga.org/shopping/index.php.
- Laughter Yoga Resources Pack: This 'must-have' package includes a DVD of media clips & videos of Laughter Yoga in specialized applications as well as a presentation for use in introductory seminars. It also includes a CD with printable scans of important articles on Laughter Yoga, a selection of Laughter Yoga photos you can use, copies of research documents, logos & artwork, printable liability release forms and other useful materials. This is available from our online shop against payment of a small donation plus shipping costs.

Guidelines for CLY Leader training

- Know laughter (understand, discuss, explain).
- Do laughter (practice, practice and practice).
- Be laughter (feel, live and breathe laughter).

Important

Certification and certificates are granted only by the Dr. Kataria School of Laughter Yoga. Please ensure that you receive an official certificate issued by the Dr. Kataria School of Laughter Yoga signed by Dr. Madan Kataria and that your teacher registers you on our website as a Laughter Yoga Professional.

CLYL training can be provided by any CLY Teacher registered with Laughter Yoga International. You are advised to check that your teacher is listed on the official Laughter Yoga website www.laughteryoga.org.

Trademark

By entering into training you confirm your agreement to the following:

The term 'Laughter Yoga' in English and other translations is the trademark of Dr. Madan Kataria and Laughter Yoga International. This term may be used by certified Laughter Yoga professionals to promote Laughter Yoga; it must not be incorporated into the name of any company, business entity, organization or website domain without express permission in writing from Laughter Yoga International.

For any queries in this regard please contact by post: Laughter Yoga Trademark, A-1 Denzil, 3rd Cross Road, Lokhandwala Complex, Andheri West Mumbai 400053 India or by e-mail to trademark@laughteryoga.org.

Published by Dr Kataria School of Laughter Yoga - Version 10/2007

We appreciate the contribution of Sebastien Gendry, Bill Gee; Janine Grobler, Jeffrey Briar, Ira Flynn, Mary Tadokoro and Sue Ansari to this manual.

Alert us to mistakes and suggest improvements: e-mail laugh@laughteryoga.org.

Index

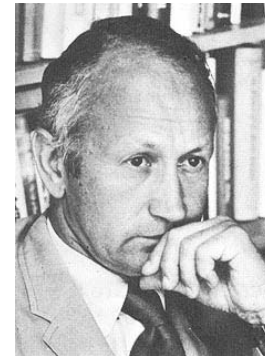
Chapter 1 History of Therapeutic Laughter & Laughter Yoga Clubs	4
Chapter 2 Laughter Yoga	6
Chapter 3 Unique Features of Laughter Yoga	8
Chapter 4 The Physiology & Psychology of Laughter	11
Chapter 5 Hard-wired Stress and Laughter Systems	13
Chapter 6 Benefits of Laughter Yoga	14
Chapter 7 Contraindications to Laughter Yoga	16
Chapter 8 The Laughter Yoga Session	16
Chapter 9 What Happens in a Laughter Yoga Session	18
Chapter 10 Laughter Meditation	19
Chapter 11 Running Laughter Yoga Sessions	22
Chapter 12 The Laughter Leader	24
Chapter 13 Social Laughter Clubs	25
Chapter 14 Starting a Laughter Club	27
Chapter 15 Promotional Seminars	28
Chapter 16 Laughter Yoga as a Career Choice	30
Chapter 17 Laughter Yoga for Seniors	31
Chapter 18 Laughter Yoga for Children	33
Chapter 19 Laughter Yoga Professionals	36
Appendix 1 Laughter Yoga Best Practices	38
Appendix 2 The Importance of Oxygen	39
Appendix 3 Forty Foundation Exercises	40
Appendix 4 More Laughter Exercises	41
Appendix 5 Two-Day CLY Leader Training Guideline	43
Appendix 6 Laughter Games	45
Appendix 7 Laughter Chanting	47
Appendix 8 Laughter Yoga Liability Release	48

Chapter 1. History of Therapeutic Laughter & Laughter Yoga Clubs

Many individuals have contributed to the history of modern therapeutic laughter. It is beyond the scope of this training to talk about all of them. We have chosen to highlight those who have inspired the development of Laughter Yoga.

NORMAN COUSINS, celebrated writer:

In 1979 he published a book '*Anatomy of an Illness*' in which he described a potentially fatal disease he contracted in 1964 and his discovery of the benefits of humor and other positive emotions, in battling it. 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.



Norman Cousins

DR. WILLIAM F. FRY, psychiatrist, Stanford University, California:

He began to examine the physiological effects of Laughter in the late 1960s and is considered the father of 'gelotology' (the science of laughter). He demonstrated that most of the body's major physiological systems are stimulated by mirthful laughter. One of his studies confirmed that 20 seconds of intense laughter, even if 'faked', can double the heart rate for three to five minutes. Dr. Fry proved that mirthful laughter provides good physical exercise and can decrease your chances of respiratory infections. He showed that laughter causes our body to produce endorphins (natural painkillers).



Dr. William Fry

DR. LEE BERK, PhD, Loma Linda University Medical Center

Inspired by Norman Cousins, Dr. Berk and his team of researchers from the field of psycho-neuro-immunology (PNI) studied the physical impact of mirthful laughter. In one study heart attack patients were divided into two groups. While one was placed under standard medical care, the other half watched humorous videos for thirty minutes each day. After one year the 'humor' group had fewer arrhythmias, lower blood pressure, lower levels of stress hormones, and required lower doses of medication. The non-humor group had two and a half times more recurrent heart attacks than the humor group (50% vs. 20%).



Dr. Lee Berk

DR. HUNTER (PATCH) ADAMS, MD

Immortalized in film by Robin Williams, Patch inspired millions of people by bringing fun and laughter back into the hospital world and putting into practice the idea that "healing should be a loving human interchange, not a business transaction". He is the founder and director of the Gesundheit Institute, a holistic medical community that has been providing free medical care to thousands of patients since 1971. He is the catalyst for the creation of thousands of therapeutic care clowns worldwide.

It is important to realize that all these individuals relied on humor to create and/or study the effect of laughter.



Dr. Patch Adams

DR. MADAN KATARIA, MD

In March 1995, this medical doctor in Mumbai, India was writing an article 'Laughter - The Best Medicine' for a health journal. In his research he discovered many modern scientific studies that described at great length the many proven benefits of laughter on the human mind and body. In particular, Dr. Kataria was impressed by Norman Cousins' book '*Anatomy of an Illness*' and the research work by Dr. Lee Berk.

Profoundly inspired and being a man of action, Dr. Kataria immediately decided to field-test the impact of laughter on himself and others.

At 7 am on 13th March 1995 he went to his local public park and managed to persuade four people to join him in starting a 'laughter club'. They laughed together in the park that day to the amusement of bystanders, but the small group quickly grew to more than 50 participants within a few days.

In the initial meetings they stood in a circle while one person would step to the centre to tell a joke or a funny story. Everybody enjoyed and felt good for the rest of the day.

After two weeks they hit a snag. The stock of good jokes and stories ran out, and negative, hurtful and naughty jokes started to emerge. Two offended participants complained that it would be better to close the club than to continue with such jokes.

Dr. Kataria asked the club members to give him just one day to develop a 'breakthrough' that would resolve the crisis. That night he reviewed his research and finally found the answer he was looking for: our body can not differentiate between acted and genuine laughter. Both produced the same 'happy chemistry'.

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....

The results were amazing. For some the acted out laughter quickly turned into real laughter --- this was contagious and very soon others followed. Soon the group was laughing like never before. The hearty laughter that followed persisted for almost ten minutes. This breakthrough was the birth of **LAUGHTER YOGA**.

Realizing that there were ways other than humor to stimulate laughter, Dr. Kataria developed a range of laughter exercises including elements of role-play and other techniques from his days as an amateur dramatic actor. Realizing the importance of childlike playfulness, he developed further techniques to stimulate this within the group.

As Yoga practitioners, Dr. Kataria and his wife **MADHURI KATARIA** (co-founder of Laughter Yoga), saw the similarities between laughter and Pranayama exercises and incorporated elements from this ancient form of Yoga into Laughter Yoga, including the deep breathing exercises now used between laughter exercises to deepen the impact. What resulted is Laughter Yoga: a blend of yogic deep breathing, stretching, and laughter exercises that cultivate child-like playfulness.

The **LAUGHTER CLUB MOVEMENT** started with just five people in 1995 and spread across India like wildfire. In 1999 Dr. Kataria made his first foreign tour to the United States at the invitation of psychologist Steve Wilson (USA).

Mrs. Kataria accompanied her husband Dr. Kataria through years of intense travel as they visited dozens of countries to spread the message and techniques of Laughter Yoga around the world.

Today, Laughter Yoga is a worldwide phenomenon, with more than 5,000 clubs today in 55 countries including India, USA, Canada, Australia, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium,



Dr. Madan Kataria



Madhuri Kataria

Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Finland, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Dubai.

Chapter 2. Laughter Yoga

Laughter Yoga is a unique exercise routine, which combines unconditional laughter with yogic breathing (PRANAYAMA). Anyone can laugh without relying on humor, jokes or comedy. Laughter is initially simulated as a physical exercise while maintaining eye contact with others in the group and promoting childlike playfulness. In most cases this soon leads to real and contagious laughter. Science has proved that the body cannot differentiate between simulated and real laughter.

Laughter Yoga is the only technique that allows adults to achieve sustained hearty laughter without involving cognitive thought. It bypasses the intellectual systems that normally act as a brake on natural laughter.

Laughter Yoga sessions start with gentle warm-up techniques which include stretching, chanting, clapping and body movement. These help break down inhibitions and develop feelings of childlike playfulness. Breathing exercises are used to prepare the lungs for laughter, followed by a series of 'laughter exercises' that combine the method of acting and visualization techniques with playfulness.

These exercises, when combined with the strong social dynamics of group behavior, lead to prolonged and hearty unconditional laughter. Laughter exercises are interspersed with breathing exercises. Scientifically it has been proved that twenty minutes of laughter is sufficient to develop full physiological benefits.

A Laughter Yoga session may finish with 'laughter meditation'. This is a session of unstructured laughter whereby participants sit or lie down and allow natural laughter to flow from within us like a fountain. This is a powerful experience that often leads to a healthy emotional catharsis and also a feeling of release and joyfulness that can last for days. This can be followed by guided relaxation exercises.

Laughter Yoga is normally performed in a group under the direction of a trained and certified Laughter Yoga leader. No special clothing or equipment is required although comfortable clothes that allow free movement are recommended. It can be practiced almost anywhere, but be heedful that the loud noise does not disturb others. Laughter meditation is best enjoyed in a quiet private place where one can sit or lie down comfortably.

Why is it Called Laughter Yoga?

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, harmonizing our bodies with our minds, spirits and society.

There are many paths of Yoga. For example HATHA Yoga is concerned with balancing the energies through body postures or ASANAS, KARMA Yoga deals with actions of selfless service, kindness, and generosity (Mother Theresa was a famous Karma Yogi), BHAKTI Yoga is Yoga of devotion, etc.

The primary reason Dr. Kataria named this technique "LAUGHTER YOGA" was because he incorporated Pranayama, the ancient science of yogic breathing into laughter exercises. This has a powerful and immediate effect on our physiology and has been used for more than four thousand years to influence the body, mind and emotions.

According to yogic philosophy, we are alive because the cosmic energy from the universe flows into our body through our breath which is the life energy force or "PRANA". The very essence of our life is breathing. Due to stress and negative emotions, our breathing becomes irregular and shallow, thus affecting the flow of Prana through our body.

A Quick Laughter Yoga Explanation

An important part of being a Laughter Yoga professional is being able to explain it to others quickly and completely.

DEVELOP AND PRACTICE YOUR OWN 2 MINUTE EXPLANATION being careful to incorporate each point below. You will be asked to demonstrate your explanation during training.

- It is a fun new exercise system sweeping the world.
- Developed by an Indian medical doctor in 1995.
- Anyone can laugh without jokes, humor or comedy.
- We laugh as an exercise, but real laughter quickly develops.
- We cultivate child-like playfulness and joy.
- We combine breathing exercises from Yoga (Pranayama) with laughter exercises.
- It increases the supply of oxygen to the body and brain.
- Laughter Yoga is based on the scientific fact that even if you laugh as an exercise your body can't tell the difference & you get the same physiological benefits.
- Laughter Yoga is a body-mind exercise. By laughing with our body we initiate powerful positive changes in our body, mind and emotions.
- It started with just 5 people in 1995 and has spread world wide with more than 5000 laughter clubs in 55 countries.

The Importance of Oxygen:

From a medical point of view, the most important component of breath is oxygen.

Dr. Otto Warburg, President, Institute of Cell Physiology, Nobel Prize Winner (Dr. Warburg is the only person ever to win the Nobel Prize for Medicine twice and be nominated for a third), said about the importance of oxygen:

"Deep breathing techniques increase oxygen to the cells and are the most important factors in living a disease-free and energetic life. When cells get enough oxygen, cancer will not and cannot occur."

PLEASE SEE APPENDIX 1 at the end of this manual to find out what other international authorities have to say about importance of oxygen and health.

MORE OXYGEN FROM EXHALATION

The primary characteristic of yogic breathing (Pranayama) is that exhalation be longer than inhalation, thus ridding the lungs of residual air which is then replaced by fresh air containing a higher level of oxygen.

A normal inhalation fills just 25% (tidal volume) of our total lung capacity. The remaining 75% (residual volume) remains filled with old stale air. Respiration becomes even shallower when compounded by stress.

To keep our lungs healthy and provide enough oxygen for our bodies to perform at peak levels we need to take deeper breaths and flush the stale air from our lungs.

The secret to breathing deeper is to exhale more fully. Focus on strong exhalation and the inhalation of fresh air will look after itself.

Laughter is the fastest and easiest method of exhaling longer and flushing our lungs.

TRAINING YOUR DIAPHRAGM

Most laughter and yogic breathing exercises are intended to stimulate the movement of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles that help activate the parasympathetic system which is the calming branch of the autonomic nervous system. This is opposite to the sympathetic system which is the stress arousal system.

The stress arousal sympathetic system can be turned off simply by learning to move the diaphragm.

Laughter Yoga – Connecting 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 --- that is the true meaning of Yoga.

Inner Spirit of Laughter:

Laughter Yoga goes beyond just laughter. Dr. Kataria has developed (and continues to develop) techniques to stimulate childlike playfulness, to adjust the aerobic and stretching component, and to promote emotional flow and release.

Laughter Yoga can improve your physical health, release negative thoughts and emotions, and get in touch with your spiritual nature. It helps us to develop an attitude of forgiveness, generosity, compassion, and helpfulness while actively seeking the happiness of others.

Laughter Yoga often yields powerful unexpected changes --- these include:

- A change from an 'I want'/taking/selfish state of mind to a loving/caring/giving state of mind with increased empathy and compassion towards the members of the laughter group and towards others as well.
- A new ability to laugh at things that previously would have caused stress or anger, along with a new sense of forgiveness.

As we consciously seek happiness we must be mindful of bringing happiness to those around us --- this is essential for us to remain happy.

The inner spirit of laughter promotes the ideas of 'appreciation' and 'forgiveness' as powerful tools to connect with people and raise their spirits, thus increasing their happiness and also our own.

Combined, these principles can provide a powerful life-changing experience that we call the Inner Spirit of Laughter.

Chapter 3. Unique Features of Laughter Yoga

You Don't Need a Sense of Humor to Laugh

People believe that in order to laugh one must possess a good sense of humor.

Sense of humor is the brain's capacity to perceive, relate, and experience a situation, judging if the situation is funny or not. In other words a sense of humor is required for conditional laughter.

No one is born with a sense of humor. In fact, a child's ability to tell jokes is hopeless --- they often start laughing *before* the punch line. Children don't laugh because they have a sense of humor, they laugh because it is in their nature to be joyful.

We acquire this judgmental skill as our mental abilities develop during mid and late childhood and as we are programmed from joyful to conditional laughter.

To develop the ability to laugh joyfully once again, adults must remove layers of inhibition, programming and mental roadblocks created by self, family, and society. Beneath these barriers lies an infinite ability to laugh.

Teaching an inhibited person to develop the ability to laugh is like clearing a drain blocked with rocks and rubble. Once the rubble is removed, laughter will flow naturally again.

Laughter Yoga facilitates this cleaning process. As the years of programming are cleared, the natural joyful laughter inside us is released and begins to flow.

Laughter Yoga techniques are effective even for people who have lost their laughter or have absolutely no sense of humor. People often tell us, "I am depressed, I cannot laugh", or "I don't feel like laughing". We say, "That doesn't matter. Just bring us your willing body and we will make you laugh."

Once released, natural laughter is hard to stop. Even in a country like India where people hardly ever laugh or smile in public, hundreds of thousands of people laugh daily in public parks. People who never used to smile are now laughing playfully.

While a sense of humor may lead to conditional laughter, unconditional laughter certainly helps to develop a sense of humor.

An amazing example of this is a retired company secretary who lived near Dr. Kataria. After a lifetime career of dour behavior (his own description) during which he almost never laughed or even smiled he joined a local Laughter Yoga club with daily morning sessions. Two years later he won the All-India Laughter Championship. The next year he won it again, and the third year they made him a judge in order to give others a chance!

Difference between Happiness and Joyfulness

Let us consider two approaches to happiness.

1. MINDFUL HAPPINESS is a conditional response (if a certain condition is fulfilled, then I will be happy). This approach is related to how your life was in the past or how it will be in the future, but it almost never occurs in the present moment. The sad fact is that even if the conditions are fulfilled, happiness is often fleeting as it is quickly displaced by new conditions (moving goalposts).

Do you remember how long you stayed happy after getting that diploma, car, job, or new house that you had worked so long for?

2. JOYFULNESS is the basis of Laughter Yoga. Joyfulness is an unconditional commitment to be happy, despite the challenges of life. Joy is an emotion that can be triggered at will by indulging in any joyful activity such as laughing, playing, dancing or singing. During periods of joyfulness, physiological and biochemical changes take place that afford a sense of well-being, completely altering negative outlooks on life and its challenges.

Two-way Link between the Body and Mind

Psychologist William James in 1884 found that the state of mind, whether positive or negative, is mirrored in a matching bodily expression or 'body behavior'. In his research he found that each emotion in the mind has a corresponding behavior in the body.

He discovered that bodily enacting any emotional behavior triggers corresponding changes in the state of mind. The connection works both from mind to body and body to mind.

Consider that:

- Sexual thoughts lead to arousal of sex organs in the body, but stimulation of the body's erogenous zones also induces sexual arousal in the mind.
- 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 theatre actors have told Dr. Kataria that while performing tragic roles they experience a real sadness.

Dr. Dale Anderson, MD (Minnesota, USA) tells of an American actress who played tragic roles for so long that she fell into depression with classic physical symptoms. After extensive physical testing, her doctors declared her physically healthy, but psychologists suggested she stop playing tragic roles and turn to comedy. Followed their advice her symptoms and depression completely disappeared.

The same phenomenon can be observed in athletes participating in competitive sports. Physically they act in a brave and courageous manner, shouting and making body gestures to put their mind into a positive (winning) state, thus reducing their fear and anxiety. Soldiers use similar tactics when preparing to attack, often shouting at the top of their voices to 'psych themselves up'. This bodily expression of courage creates matching emotions in the mind.

Theory of Motion Creates Emotion

There is a well-established link between the body and mind. Whatever happens to the mind happens to the body. For example, notice that depressed and sad people show depression and sadness through their bodily actions. Speech and movement are visibly slowed.

Dr. Kataria relates, "My father said that if you are sad don't sit idle, keep your body busy: engage in physical activity, go for a walk or jog and you will feel better. And it's true; I did feel better by keeping my body active."

Even when unhappy, behaving or acting happy will bring the mind to a state of happiness. Bring laughter to your body and your mind will soon follow.

Laughter Yoga uses the two-way body-mind link to change the state of mind through voluntary physical gestures including repetitive clapping, chanting, and specific body movements, together with laughter and breathing exercises.

This effect is so powerful that we have seen Laughter Yoga overcome severe depression in thousands of people all over the world.

Teaching your body to laugh

Few know that the body can be trained to laugh at will. It is like learning to ride a bicycle -- once learned it is never forgotten.

Repetition is the mother of any skill. The repetition of any bodily behavior over a period of time leads to the generation of a corresponding emotion in the mind. The brain develops new neuronal circuits for a particular body-mind activity that is repeated again and again.

According to the principles of neuro-linguistic association and to scientific research, there is very little difference between thinking about doing something and actually doing it.

Thoughts in the mind whether real or imaginary produce similar physiological changes in the body. When a particular set of experiences are repeated over and over, the body develops a fast 'knee jerk' reaction that is triggered without involving thinking and the rational brain. This is called conditioning.

The famous Russian scientist Pavlov's experiments with dogs are classic examples of conditioning. Every time he gave food to the dogs, he would ring a bell. After several days of repeating the process the dog's brains developed an association between the ringing of the bell (physical sensory experience) and the food. After some time he stopped giving food to the dogs and just rang the bell. He found that just ringing the bell produced saliva in the mouth and gastric juice in the stomach as if food had been given.

The brain can be cheated by such conditioned reflexes. Before the conscious brain can rationalize and think, the body already starts reacting. In everyday life these conditionings happen during both positive and negative experiences. Repetitive experience of any kind can lead to automatic conditioned response.

In laughter clubs members develop positive conditioning with the emotion of joy and bodily experience of laughter by doing Laughter Yoga exercises repeatedly over a period of time.

Clapping in a rhythm, chanting "Ho Ho Ha Ha Ha" in unison and repeating positive affirmations like "very good, very good, yeah" are a few example of bodily expressions of joy practiced repeatedly in laughter clubs. By repeating these exercises the brain develops new neuronal connections to produce happy neuropeptides and hormones in the body that can be triggered by the repetition of this physical action.

In NLP language eliciting such a bodily reaction is called an "ANCHOR". By performing a joyful anchor action with the body, the mind can experience the emotion of joy complete with the chemical reactions it triggers.

World Peace through Laughter

One of Dr. Kataria's objectives for Laughter Yoga is to promote world peace through laughter. Some people find this idea fanciful, but an understanding of the science of emotions and emotional contagion in particular shows how this might be achieved.

The practice of Laughter Yoga causes the body to release into the bloodstream high concentrations of communication substances related to feelings of happiness, warmth, unconditional love, bonding, tolerance, forgiveness, generosity, and compassion. Let's call this a joy cocktail.

The presence of this 'JOY COCKTAIL' of hormones and neuro-peptides precludes the production of other hormones and neuro-peptides that correspond with hatred, fear, violence, jealousy, aggression and the emotions associated with war and oppression.

By practicing Laughter Yoga in groups, the level of joy cocktail is raised to high concentrations through the multiplier effect: people leaving Laughter Yoga sessions go forth and interact with many people who are in turn affected to varying degrees by this powerful emotional state of joy. They in turn 'infect' other people they come into contact with...

You will experience this 'chain reaction' for yourself after your first Laughter Yoga sessions. Not only will you cheer up your friends and family but you may also cheer up the bus driver and others on your bus, the people you work with, the staff at the shop and more. They in turn will cheer up others, and so on.

Chapter 4. The Physiology & Psychology of Laughter

Hearty group laughter has profound short- and long-term effects on our minds and body:

ANTI-STRESS

- Undoes the effects of stress by reducing stress-related hormone and peptide levels (these effects are sudden and long-lasting). Recent studies on a group of 50 IT professionals in Bangalore, India found that stress hormone levels (cortisol) dropped significantly after Laughter Yoga sessions.

FEEL-GOOD HORMONES

- Releases endorphins, a self-manufactured natural opiate that has been scientifically shown to carry messages of attachment and bonding (the scientific terms for love), and to stimulate feelings of caring and forgiveness in addition to acting as a natural painkiller. Endorphins create a positive state of mind and boost optimism, self confidence and feelings of self-worth.

IMMUNE SYSTEM

- Quickly boosts our immune system with fast increases in levels of anti-viral and anti-infection cells and also cells that fight cancer. Laughter increases the levels of immunoglobulin A (IgA) that is the first line of defense protecting us against viral infections such as coughs and colds.
- Lee S. Berk, PhD (Clinical Research 1989) found that laughter may attenuate some stress-related hormones and modify NATURAL KILLER CELL activity (NK cells protect us from cancer), resulting in immunomodulation. Labott supports Berk's findings (Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 1990) and concludes that laughter results in improved immunity. In a study at Canada's University of Waterloo (Well Being Journal), it was well documented that laughter increases the levels of immunoglobulin IgA and IgG. Norman Cousins (Prevention March 1988) also states that laughter serves as a blocking agent against disease.

OXYGEN AND AEROBIC EXERCISE

- Provides an excellent cardio and mid-body workout. The heart rate increase in one minute of hearty laughter can take ten minutes to achieve on exercise machines.
- Dr. W. Fry states that laughter is a good aerobic exercise. He says that one minute of hearty laughter is equal to 10 minutes of rowing or jogging. Lloyd (Journal of General Psychology, 1938) showed that laughter is a combination of deep inhalation and full exhalation, inspiring excellent ventilation, wonderful rest and profound release.

INCREASED CIRCULATION

- Causes an 'internal jogging' that massages and promotes circulation to the digestive and lymphatic systems.
- Increases circulation to flush the body and organs of waste products leaving us ready to operate at peak performance.
- Facial flushing from improved circulation leaves the skin glowing and radiant.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

- In children social play is critical to the development of social skills and emotional intelligence. Restricted play results in deficient social skills which can lead to life-long mental, emotional, physical and social problems.
- Laughter promotes childlike playful behavior. New research shows that playful adults continue to learn social skills and improve their emotional intelligence.

GROUP DYNAMICS

- Mirror neurons in the brain cause us to experience the emotions of people we communicate with. Being with laughing people, we experience their laughter which makes it easier for us to laugh.
- Each time we establish eye contact with people who are laughing, our mirror neurons add their laughter experience to our own. This additive effect increases the concentration of laughter-related hormones and neuropeptides in our bloodstream and further reduces the effects of stress.

IMPROVING SOCIAL CONNECTION

- The number of social interactions a person has each day is a direct indicator of his health, wellness and longevity.
- Laughter Yoga, especially in Social Laughter Clubs provides caring social interactions shown to be the number one reason for happiness worldwide (after food & lodging).

CATHARSIS

- By enhancing the free flow of emotions, laughter can dislodge blocked emotions stored in the body. Suppressed or blocked emotions can cause ongoing physical,

mental and emotional problems. Their release can be life changing. Laughter provides an excellent non-violent method for emotional release and catharsis.

ANTI-AGING

- Many older practitioners claim the facial exercise of laughter reduces wrinkles and sagging by firming and toning facial muscles, making them look younger.
- Exercise is known to slow the aging process. Laughter Yoga is a fun and easy exercise for all age groups and has a very high stick-with-it level.

Chapter 5. Hard-wired Stress and Laughter Systems

Stress is the number one enemy of health today.

The body's stress response system was developed during prehistoric times. In response to stress, the body releases a STRESS COCKTAIL of hormones and neuro-peptides into the blood to instantly prepare for a 'fight or flight' response that may demand extreme physical action. This response allows the body to perform superhuman physical feats.

The stress cocktail shuts down or disrupts a number of important body systems not required for 'fight or flight' action, including the immune, circulatory, digestive and sexual systems. It also constricts many capillaries and blood vessels to reduce bleeding in case of a wound (increasing blood pressure), dumps huge amounts of glucose into our blood to provide fighting energy (disrupting the body's sugar control system), pumps up muscle groups for fighting or fleeing, and more.

In prehistoric times when this stress system was developed and became hardwired into the body, stress situations occurred only occasionally, allowing the body plenty of time to dissipate the stress cocktail.

However, today we are subjected to constant (or chronic) stress that results in the continuous release of stress-related substances into the body. Without time to dissipate, the stress cocktail can reach toxic concentrations and attack the body, resulting in a wide variety of stress-related illness.

These include cardiovascular problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease and heart attacks; arthritis; asthma and other allergic conditions; diabetes; cancer; chronic fatigue; anxiety attacks; mood swings; psychological distress; depression; sleep problems; eating disorders; peptic ulcers; poor immune function; chronic pain; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); colds, flu and viruses; headaches and migraines; alcoholism and drug abuse and more.

More than eighty percent of all doctors' visits and medications prescribed today are for stress-related illnesses.

According to the Mayo Clinic, typical stress symptoms include a negative state of mind with a cynical, sarcastic and critical outlook; lack of motivation; irritability and lack of patience; lack of energy; lack of satisfaction with life and achievements; disillusionment; the feeling of facing insurmountable barriers; lack of productivity and efficiency; self-medication using food, alcohol or drugs to feel better or to not feel; changes in sleep and appetite habits; headaches, neck and lower back pain; loss of the ability to experience joy.

Laughter and Stress

Laughter is nature's counter to stress --- they are physiological opposites.

A clue to this may be found in the body's typical actions after extreme stress of the fight or flight kind: deep panting and using laughter to make light of events that provoked fear.

The predominance of one tends to prevent the other:

- Laughter quickly reduces the levels of stress chemicals and hormones in our body. Significant reductions can occur in minutes and last for days.
- Laughter switches on and boosts physiological systems that stress switches off, including the circulatory, digestive, sexual and immune systems.
- Stress, worry, fear and emotional problems stifle learning ability, creativity, teamwork, productivity, efficiency and motivation while laughter boosts and strengthens these attributes.
- Check the lists of stress-related illnesses and symptoms above. Hearty sustained laughter has exactly the opposite symptoms and effects. Stress promotes illness, depression and anguish. Laughter promotes health, wellness, emotional balance and joyfulness.

By providing an easy path to unconditional laughter, Laughter Yoga provides a quick way to reduce stress levels. This is beneficial for all but is especially important to people in high-stress jobs or living in high-stress relationships.

Not only can stress levels be reduced, but we can effectively protect our systems from the effects of further stress.

Laughter Boosting

The practice of using unconditional laughter to prepare for stressful events is known as 'LAUGHTER BOOSTING'. It is gaining popularity with speakers, actors and other performers to prepare themselves for presentations to audiences of all sizes.

Hollywood heartthrob Harry Hamlin recently used pre-performance Laughter Yoga sessions to boost his scores on the popular U.S. show 'Dancing with the Stars'. People are also using laughter boosting to prepare for job interviews and public speaking.

Laughter boosting can assist students to prepare for examinations and also help sports teams to prepare for optimal performance before competition.

Cases have been reported where people have utilized the enhanced endorphin levels provided by laughter boosting to undergo surgery without the use of anesthetics.

Chapter 6. Benefits of Laughter Yoga

Laughter is a healing force. The biggest changes occur in areas where an individual requires healing the most. Personal benefits may only become obvious as one becomes aware of them over time.

The following list of benefits is based on comments from tens of thousands of Laughter Yoga practitioners in India and other countries about the effects they have experienced.

LAUGHTER YOGA AS AN AEROBIC EXERCISE

Laughter Yoga is fun and a simple form of exercise that makes you feel good. It can provide a good workout without breaking a sweat. It is especially well suited for sedentary people and those confined to a bed or wheelchair and elderly people. Twenty minutes of laughter in the morning gives full of energy throughout the day.

- Laughter Yoga gives me a cardiac workout without having to dress or get sweaty.
- I didn't feel the workout but my body feels much better. Laughter uses more than half our muscles and works out our stomach, abs, back and pelvic groups.
- I can feel the difference in my facial muscles. I've lost wrinkles. My firmed-up facial muscles make me look much younger.

- I'm a fitness freak, but this is the only exercise that provides an internal massage of the digestive tract and internal organs such as the liver, spleen, pancreas, kidneys and adrenal glands.
- Laughter is the single activity that massages and creates circulation in our lymphatic system which is crucial to a healthy immune system and fighting cancer.

MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL BENEFITS

- Laughter makes it easier to cope with life and its challenges.
- Laughter puts us intensely in the moment. The ability to live life fully and experience the 'now' is so important because it is only in the 'now' that we can experience joy.
- Laughter helps us cope with challenges and conflict better because it gives us a better perspective. It shrinks the hurts and upsets of everyday life to a smaller, if not inconsequential size. Issues appear less overwhelming. We are touched by the issue, but not contained by it. If we pay too much attention to our issues, they can become our focus. If we are able to laugh about things they diminish. Even annoying traits of people we interact with suddenly seem less important and become bearable (or even endearing) when we laugh about them.
- Laughter makes us feel good because it defuses painful emotions like fear, anger and boredom by releasing them. That release can prevent or stop conflicts, ease tension and help us to see and understand others people's point of view.
- Laughter makes us generous to a level where we feel better giving than receiving. It lifts us up and makes life worth living.
- Laughter helps us relax. It reduces stress and tension.
- We enjoy the company of other people more than ever before.

CREATING POSITIVE ENERGY

- When people laugh together in a group, it creates a positive group energy originating from positive thoughts, emotions and feelings.
- It eliminates negative emotions and thoughts.
- It uplifts the atmosphere in the Laughter Yoga session making it conducive to a positive state of mind.
- Unconditional, thought-free laughter and non-judgmental communication with other members of the laughter group creates a field of spiritual energy resulting in relaxed and uplifted feelings.

BUILD SELF-CONFIDENCE

- Laughter makes us feel safer and more self-confident. It eases our awkwardness.
- When we make someone laugh they give us the gift of feeling witty.
- Laughter makes us feel comfortable in any situation. Past and current embarrassments seem to evaporate.

IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

- It is hard to remain in conflict with someone when you are laughing. Power struggles cause us to focus on our own needs and ignore the needs of others. Laughter interrupts the power struggle.
- Laughter allows us to be more open with each other. It creates a feeling of safety where issues seem less important. It allows us to express ourselves more clearly because we think more clearly and creatively when we laugh.
- When we laugh with others we are fun to be with and provide good company. Regular doses of laughter and play take the work out of staying in love with life and other people for a lifetime.

- Laughing makes us more likeable because it reduces our tendency to gain self-confidence by analyzing and judging others.
- When we laugh with others, criticism and sarcasm seem to evaporate. We are able to let them be themselves and enjoy them even more for that.
- Laughter is a pathway to unconditional love. Loving with the mind is conditional. Loving with the heart is unconditional. The bonding qualities of laughter allow us to feel such emotional closeness that we want to be physically and spiritually close as well.

LAUGHTER CHANGES 'WHO WE ARE' FOR THE BETTER

- We are creatures of habit that often behave in ways contrary to our self-image. Laughter Yoga allows us to re-program automatic responses. For example, laughing instead of becoming angry at a high credit card bill. Identify 'stressors' that habitually made you angry and specially design laughter exercises to reprogram your automatic or sub-conscious responses.

Chapter 7. Contraindications to Laughter Yoga

Laughter Yoga is not a miracle cure and should not be considered as a substitute for medical consultation for physical, mental and psychological illnesses, but it is a powerful natural complementary form of healing.

Laughter may not be suitable for everyone. It involves some physical strain and a rise in intra-abdominal pressure. It is contraindicated for people suffering from diseases that are in a severe and uncontrolled stage such as, but not limited to:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| ▪ Advanced (bleeding) piles and hemorrhoids | ▪ Heart disease |
| ▪ Any kind of hernia | ▪ High blood pressure |
| ▪ Any persistent cough | ▪ Incontinence of urine |
| ▪ Anything with acute symptoms | ▪ Major psychiatric disorders |
| ▪ Epilepsy | ▪ Severe backache |

People who have undergone major surgery should wait at least three months before doing Laughter Yoga. If in doubt first consult a medical professional for guidance.

Anyone undergoing physician-prescribed therapy that experiences improvements through laughter should seek the advice of their doctor before reducing dosage or stopping treatment.

Chapter 8. The Laughter Yoga Session

Laughter Yoga sessions vary according to the group and its objectives. Sessions conducted in hospitals, nursing homes, schools, for seniors or in business offices might be quite different to Laughter Yoga sessions for the general public.

Guidelines

- Laughter Yoga sessions are led by a laughter leader or teacher, who controls the session, explains and gives commands to start and complete different exercises.
- The leader guides members to start and complete exercises together for improved group dynamic.
- During most exercises group members keep moving and establish eye contact with others in the group.

- Most sessions focus on enjoyment rather than force when doing laughter exercises. Don't strain or force laughter out.
- We strive to cultivate childlike playfulness during Laughter Yoga exercises.

Clapping and Warming-Up Exercises

- Clap hands parallel to each other for full finger-to-finger and palm-to-palm contact, thus stimulating acupressure points in our hands to increase energy levels.
- Rhythm is added to the clapping to further increase energy levels and group synchronicity, often a 1-2, 1-2-3 rhythm.
- Movement is then added. There are many variations, but most move hands up and down and swing from side to side, with corresponding movements of the legs and feet.

Make clapping more joyful by using subtle movements of bending knees and nodding your head in rhythm. This feels like dancing. By this time almost everyone will already be in a better mood and smiling.

Chanting and Moving

- A simple chant is added to the clapping, normally HO, HO, HA-HA-HA. These are heavy exhalations that come from the belly to stimulate diaphragmatic breathing.
- Move around at random, smiling and making eye contact with others in the group.
- Add dance movements to boost feelings of happiness and joy.

Enthusiastic clapping, chanting and movement helps build a positive energy, gets the diaphragm moving and creates a positive group dynamic in preparation for laughter.

Gibberish

Gibberish is a language of sounds without meaning. Children speak gibberish when learning to speak and during play. Gibberish may be used as a warming up exercise in Laughter Yoga to help people to loosen up and reduce inhibitions and shyness.

Some people find gibberish easier if told what to 'talk' about. Different emotions can be expressed including happiness, anger, sadness, romance and more. It is a playful exercise and helps cultivate childlike playfulness.

Gibberish may be fast or at normal conversational speed. It generally involves a focus on tone, plus hand and body movements to convey meaning.

Silent gibberish is also fun and easier for some.

Deep Breathing Exercises

Laughter exercises are interspersed with deep breathing exercises to help flush the lungs as well as bring physical and mental relaxation.

A typical deep breathing exercise:

- From a relaxed standing position, bend forward at the waist to a point of comfort (different for everyone) while exhaling through the mouth to fully empty the lungs. Dangle your arms loosely. Bending over helps push the diaphragm up, enabling the lungs to be more fully emptied. Hold this position briefly.
- Straighten up slowly while inhaling through your nose, breathing in as deeply as possible. Raise both arms skyward, stretching the body and raising your head to completely open the airways. Hold and stretch for a count of three.
- Exhale slowly as the arms are lowered while bending to the start position. Try to exhale longer than you inhale in order to empty your lungs completely. Hold briefly and repeat at least once.
- A fun variation is exhale in hearty laughter.

Childlike Playfulness

One of the objectives of Laughter Yoga is to cultivate childlike playfulness that helps us to laugh without reason. A happy chant to use after an exercise:

- VERY GOOD (clap forward), VERY GOOD (clap forward), YAAAAAY (swinging arms up into a Y shape with thumbs up in childish exuberance and exhilaration).

Eye Contact

Eye contact helps to convert fake laughter into real laughter.

While doing exercises encourage all participants to move at random and continue to make brief, gentle and friendly eye contact with others.

In seated sessions encourage people to make eye contact with others by arranging seats to face each other, or by looking at their neighbors.

Keep the group tight rather than spread out to promote eye contact.

Yogic Laughter Exercises

Some exercises are based on yogic breathing (Pranayama), and a few are based on Yoga postures, including the ever-popular lion laughter performed with growling laughter.

Calcutta laughter (See Appendix 4, page 42) is a close variant of the Pranayama exercise Kapalabhati.

Playful Laughter Exercises

These help to reduce inhibitions and shyness and to convert simulated laughter into unconditional laughter. They often include method-acting techniques to shift our mindset, imagining and acting out a situation or a role. One-meter laughter, milkshake laughter, mobile phone laughter and hot-soup laughter are especially popular.

Value-Based Laughter Exercises

These are designed to 'program' positive feelings to gestures or situations while laughing, teaching our subconscious new auto-responses. Visa card laughter, appreciation laughter, greeting laughter, and forgiveness laughter are popular.

Physical Laughter Exercises

Some groups incorporate light physical exercises between bouts of laughter, especially when laughter clubs meet in the morning for seniors and special groups. Exercises chosen may promote mobility through stretching, ease cervical spondylosis, neck stiffness and frozen shoulders and other common complaints of seniors.

Some Laughter Yoga groups perform laughter exercises in a more energetic way and develop high energy exercises (like power Yoga). This can be invigorating with very high levels of energy being generated.

Chapter 9. What Happens in a Laughter Yoga Session

What happens during a Laughter Yoga session? Here's how a typical Laughter Yoga session might proceed:

Duration: 20-30 minutes. Each round of laughter lasts 30-40 seconds, followed by clapping and HO HO HA HA HA exercise. Take two deep breaths after every bout of laughter.

- Warm up clapping in 1-2.....1-2-3 rhythm then with HO-HO, HA-HA-HA chanting and maybe gibberish talking.

- Deep breathing inhale through the nose with prolonged exhalation, then chant VERY GOOD, VERY GOOD, YAY..... 3 times. (3-5 reps)
- Greeting laughter: join both the hands and greet in Indian style (Namaste), or shake hands (western style) with at least 4-5 people in the group.
- Hearty laughter: laugh by raising both arms to the sky with the head tilted a little backwards. Feel the laughter flowing from your heart to the universe. (3-5 reps)
- One-meter laughter: move one hand over the stretched arm on the other side and extend the shoulder as if measuring cloth. The hand is moved to a full wide stretch in three parts with chanting AE..., AE..., AEEE.... then burst into belly laughter with head thrown back. (4 reps)
- Milkshake laughter (aka lassi laughter): hold two imaginary glasses of milk/cocktails/lassi with arms outstretched at sides. On instruction, pour from one glass into the other with an overhead motion while chanting AEEE..., then pour back into the first glass while chanting Aeee.... After 4th pour all burst into laughter while 'drinking'. (4 reps)
- Cell phone laughter: hold an imaginary cell phone and laugh 'talk' with hand gestures and moving around the group to meet different people.
- Lion laughter: tongue fully out with eyes widest open, hands stretched out like lion claws roaring belly laugh. (3-5 reps)
- Silent laughter: mouth open wide and belly laugh without sound. Look into each others' eyes and make funny gestures.
- Humming laughter: closed mouth humming while moving in the group and shake hands with different people.
- Argument laughter: point fingers at different group members while arguing with laughter.
- Forgiveness/apology laughter: immediately after argument laughter catch your ear lobes with opposite hands and laugh while shaking your head (Indian style), or raise both your palms and laugh as if saying 'sorry' (western).
- Appreciation laughter: join your pointing finger with the thumb to make a small circle while making appreciative gestures to group members and laughing.
- Gradient laughter: gradient laughter starts with a smile, then gentle giggles building intensity till belly laughing. Slowly and gradually bring the laughter down and stop.
- Heart to heart laughter (intimacy laughter): come closer together, hold each other's hands and laugh. Or shake hands thankfully or hug – whatever feels right.
- Closing exercises and announcements.

Chapter 10. Laughter Meditation

Laughter Yoga exercises are sometimes followed by laughter meditation.

During laughter meditation laughter may flow from us like water from a fountain --- a more spontaneous and deeper experience than that achieved through Laughter Yoga exercises.

Guidelines to Achieve this Meditative State of Laughter

- Sit comfortably in an inward facing group so people can see each other and make eye contact. Not too spread out.
- Make it very clear to all that nobody must talk or try to communicate in any way with others (no eye messages, funny faces, and funny sounds) as this will engage the conscious mind --- the conscious mind must be disengaged.

- Sit in silence with eyes closed, keeping an awareness of your breathing. After silence open your eyes and sit in a relaxed position (not a Yoga posture).
- Initiate by simulating laughter in a slow and gradual manner as in gradient laughter. Soon one person begins genuine laughter and others follow. If not, we may alternate periods of quiet with Pranayama exercises to stimulate the diaphragm until natural laughter begins to break out, at which time we normally lie down and let the laughter flow.
- It is not unusual for people to undergo strong cathartic moments during laughter meditation. This is positive as they are releasing powerful emotions and emotional problems that may have been pent up for many years. Laughter may be interspersed with tears and even anger as emotions surface and are released in wonderful non-violent catharsis. Should this occur, allow it – do not comfort that person.
- Laughter often comes in natural waves. The leader may allow laughter to reduce, and then use techniques to restart the laughter, sometimes in multiple cycles. The best way to stimulate laughter can be to ask for silence. Care must be taken not to go on too long; this can be a physically demanding and emotionally exhausting experience.
- The leader will gently bring people out of meditation back to silence with a focus on their breathing. Laughter will continue to bubble up but the leader will take steps to settle the group before leading guided relaxation. The extent of the relaxation will depend on the group, session intensity, the time of day and other factors.

We do not allow children into laughter meditation sessions, since it is important that there be no distractions. Laughter meditation is most often practiced indoors as it is easier to eliminate possible distractions.

Explain to new participants that they may not 'get' laughter during their first, or even their first few laughter meditation sessions. Ask them to participate without expectations but with willingness and respect. If it doesn't work for them, they should remain silent and focus on breathing or practice light chuckling and try to keep their mind free of thoughts, simply enjoying the sound and energy of other people laughing around them until the session ends.

Grounding Exercises after Laughter Yoga

During Laughter Yoga, exercises stimulate blood circulation, raising the blood pressure for a period before it comes back below the base level. The muscles contract during a laughter session before they come back to their relaxation mode. Consequently, the real benefits of Laughter Yoga do not occur during the stimulation phase but become apparent after the session during relaxation.

During 12 years of Laughter Yoga experience, we have found that some people complain that although they laughed heartily during the session, especially during laughter meditation, they were left feeling emotionally unstable and 'empty' afterwards.

Laughter is a powerful dynamic energy that can open your sub-conscious mind and release pent-up feelings and emotions. After intense Laughter Yoga sessions some people become sad and start crying while others experience bouts of anger, irritability and other negative emotions. For that reason, it is important to do grounding exercises after Laughter Yoga sessions to normalize our systems and allow relaxation.

Here are some techniques that work well to ground the energy of laughter.

1. GUIDED RELAXATION

After laughter meditation energy levels can be too high to return directly to normal. To reduce these levels the leader may talk the group through guided relaxation, also called 'YOGA NIDRA', or yogic sleep.

This guided body tour brings immense relaxation by bringing complete awareness to different parts of the body as guided by the leader. There is no fixed route or sequence.

Lying supine, palms facing upwards with a little distance between your feet, ask the group to feel their body touching the ground and relax all their muscles. Ask them to scan through their bodies from head to the toe, releasing any muscular tension in any part of the body. Have them take a number of deep breaths, asking them to pay full attention to the instructions while you guide them through different parts of the body from top to bottom, as they put full awareness into different parts of their body and feel the relaxation.

One can start from the toes and go upwards to the head, or vice versa. The basic idea is to put one's mind into the body, voluntarily relaxing all the muscles.

Once you have understood that the body is a map, leading guided relaxation is simple.

Here is a sample sequence:

Head muscles / forehead muscles / eye brows / cheek muscles / jaw muscles / tongue

Neck muscles / shoulder muscles / upper back muscles / lower back muscles

Right upper arm / right forearm / right hand / thumb, index, middle, ring and little fingers

Left upper arm / left forearm / left hand / thumb, index, middle, ring and little fingers

Front of the chest / abdominal muscles / pelvic muscles

Right thigh muscles / calf muscles / foot / big toe, second, third, fourth and little toe....

Run the awareness throughout the body from the head to the toes and from toes to the head.

Remind them to be aware of breathing into the entire body --- to imagine that the whole body is like a balloon. When inhaling it becomes bigger, when exhaling it becomes smaller.

Ask them to feel the relaxation while exhaling slowly.

Let them rest in that relaxed state for a few moments. When the grounding period is 1-2 minutes from over, ask them to gently move their fingers and toes, then raise their hands to their face and cover their eyes and face cupping or rubbing gently with their palms, and finally to slowly turn to one side and move to a sitting position.

2. HUMMING

With eyes closed, take a long breath in and hum it out, actually saying the word "Hummm..." with upper and lower lips just touching each other. Vibrations are felt throughout the facial muscles, sinuses and eventually into the head. This exercise is also beneficial for those with chronic sinusitis and nasal blockage because humming vibrations help to dislodge mucus and also increase blood circulation.

Dr. Kataria recalls "When I was in Denmark doing laughter sessions in Copenhagen in 2005 I invited my Laughter Yoga friend Andreas from Malmo in Sweden to join me.

He had bio feedback equipment developed by Swedish Professor Bo from Karolinska Institute a famous stress research facility. We measured heart rate variability, carbon dioxide, oxygen, breathing rate and also blood pressure of the Laughter Yoga group for two days.

During the break I asked Andreas to connect me to the machine while I performed different laughter and breathing exercises to see which exercises had the maximum impact on my physiology. I was surprised to find that humming lowered my blood pressure significantly within a minute by more than 20 mm."

Humming has a powerful impact on the autonomic nervous system and can activate the parasympathetic system that is responsible for relaxation.

This exercise is most effective when done in a group. It is better to hum at the same time under the instructions of the leader. Humming together creates a unique resonance which is very calming. Different people have different breathing capacities; some people can hum longer than others.

When leading group humming ask participants to hum for as long as they can then inhale and repeat. Ten minutes of humming is recommended for grounding.

3. HO, HO, HA, HA, DANCING

Dancing is also a good form of grounding.

Good music with strong drumbeats is helpful but not necessary.

Participants should move their hands as if pushing forward the air, while doing Ho Ho twice, then push their hands towards the ground, while bending the knees slightly saying Ha Ha twice, moving around and dancing. While similar to Calcutta laughter this is performed much more slowly with the Ho Ho and Ha Ha being whispered or silent.

The emphasis here is on the dreamlike dancing and the grounding action of pushing hands down towards the ground with some slight flexing of the knees. Continue for at least 10 minutes.

Chapter 11. Running Laughter Yoga Sessions

Set Up

- Be mindful of others. Ensure there is no conflict with your surroundings. Laughter Yoga can be very noisy --- please do not disturb others. Close doors and windows to minimize noise levels if this will be a problem.
- Appropriate your space: put some posters or banners on the walls (if this is allowed). If you use only part of a large space, try to partition your area --- even with a row of chairs.
- Have chairs available in case some people cannot sit comfortably on the ground.
- Have a greeter at the door if possible to welcome newcomers.
- Make sure all persons coming for the first time sign a liability release form (see back cover of this manual).

Introduction

- Briefly introduce yourself and Laughter Yoga.
- Caution your group: we are going to clap, breathe, and laugh. Please do not strain. If in doubt, don't do it, just watch. If you lose control, feel free to walk out.
- Provide guidelines: make eye contact, keep moving and do not talk.
- Have an interactive session and ask questions. Get people to say YES as many times as possible.

Giving Commands

- The most important skill of a leader is to command participants to start together and laugh at the same time, building the group dynamic and energy through tempo. This requires clear commands and tone from the leader. Be full of energy, be audible and clear.
- Ending exercises efficiently is as important as starting them well. Use clapping or other techniques to stop the group and move quickly along without pause or interruption.
- Every leader will develop a personal style. A command to start may be ONE....TWO....THREE or ONE... TWO.... START... delivered slowly, loudly and building in volume.
- For deep breathing participants must start together as the timing of inhalation, holding and expiration should be carefully controlled to remain within group limits but push these limits gently. The command may be: NOW WE'LL TAKE A DEEP BREATH.... READY.... START.

- Practice giving instructions and starting groups in stretching and other exercises. The leader will often demonstrate the exercise to show the movement, speed and timing, especially with new participants.
- Generally, members are not instructed or corrected during sessions. This is not a martial art and people will not have negative side effects from finding their own style.
- Avoid straight lines. They inhibit freedom of movement. A crowd format with people standing at random is preferred.
- Encourage eye contact. Keep people close to each other. Eye contact with many is a major factor in developing group dynamic. Try for an inter-person distance of 2-3 feet -- - roughly the stretch of ones arms.
- Keep them moving. People will follow your example, so keep moving. Clap dynamically (motion creates emotion). Swing from side to side, introduce easy dance movements and keep smiling. Stir them around to avoid people sticking with friends or in one area throughout a session.
- Sometimes, good sustained eye contact can be promoted by dividing into two groups facing each other. This format is interactive and playful and works well for certain types of exercises.
- Pay compliments. Keep telling them how great they are --- I LIKE IT, YOU ARE GREAT, VERY GOOD...

Be Creative

- Vary the exercises to control the pace: start slow, build up, slow down, build up, slow down, build up...
- Having a theme ('at the airport', 'in a kitchen', 'in a hospital'...) helps some people to visualize more easily and become caught up in the playfulness.
- Keep it fresh --- change exercises every session. Challenge participants to develop their own exercises but try them before class to decide whether to use them.
- It can be fun to hand the group over to participants sometimes. Be careful --- some people may get out of hand or behave inappropriately. Ask ahead before the session what they plan to do. Interrupt and take over if you feel things going off course.
- Introduce dancing or singing. Laughter Yoga is about joy and dance and music can help build the joy.

Other Factors

- Mind the time --- a laughter session should start and end on time. Excessive laughter may create distress in some.
- Be mindful. If your group responds well to an exercise let it continue. When you believe it is time, stop it.
- Keep religion and politics away and do not use them in any exercises or explanations. We are non-political, non-religious, non-parochial, and non-judgmental. We love everyone equally.

Conclusion

Involve your members. Ask for feedback. What did they like best? What don't they like?

Invite active participation. You must actively work to develop a 'core group' of people who are willing to lead exercises and in the course of time, lead sessions so that you can take time off occasionally without canceling sessions. These people will also help and support you in special events.

Successful leaders develop their core members to take over a club or session, then start another. Some leaders in India have started dozens of clubs in this way.

Keep the interest of the group in mind. If your group wants more exercises, longer or shorter sessions, sessions at another time, listen to them and discuss it with the group before making a decision.

Waiting Games & Icebreakers

Sometimes when many participants are late due to a traffic snarl or accident, a game can be useful to keep those who have arrived occupied and to build a happy mood. The best games are those that people can join in as they arrive. This serves to avoid waiting boredom and to get a positive playful mood going right away.

Games can also be useful to get newbies to shake off their inhibitions and relax into laughter. If you have new participants joining ask them to arrive early and play a game with them to get them playful and ready for your session.

(Examples of some of our most popular Waiting games and Icebreakers are in Appendix 6, page 45-46).

Chapter 12. The Laughter Leader

Roles of the Leader

- **Lead:** A successful laughter session requires a skilled leader. Their main function is to explain, start and stop different exercises, and to control and adjust the 'pace' of the session varying stretching and breathing with hearty laughter. The leader is an example to all and laughs more easily and infectiously than others.
- **Motivate:** The leader motivates others to drop their inhibitions and be more playful so that simulated laughter can change into genuine peals of hilarity using techniques including 'motion creates emotion'. Be careful to interact with each person through eye contact and even physical proximity, especially those that require help getting into laughter.
- **Promote punctuality:** Try to start on time and encourage your participants to be there. Punctuality is a sign of respect and getting to a session on time will reinforce their self-esteem. However, if most people are unusually late one day due to a traffic jam, accident, sports event, etc., then ask the others if they mind waiting ten minutes to start (you will end late) and play a game to occupy and amuse those who have arrived.
- **Maintain discipline:** Try to keep control through a loving attitude rather than through forceful behavior. Avoid confrontation during a session. If a member gets out of hand talk to them privately after the session and ask them to modify their behavior as a mark of respect towards the group.
- **Stay current and tune in:** Laughter Yoga is evolving continuously worldwide. Try to keep up to date with improved techniques so you can deliver maximum benefit to your participants. Laughter Yoga International is building ways to capture the latest developments and deliver these to all Laughter Yoga leaders and professionals through a new website that promotes networking and sharing. We will also soon develop a continuing educational program. Please visit www.laughteryoga.org regularly and be sure to add your insights and experience so that all can benefit.

How to Become a Better Leader

- The joy and benefits you receive through laughter are passed to others. Try to laugh often -- in laughter sessions, when socializing, with your family, or by yourself. Dr. Kataria is developing a system to make it easier and more effective to laugh alone.
- Trust and do the best you can. You will not always succeed; you will not always achieve your objectives. If things don't go your way, don't become disappointed or gloomy. Be thankful for what you achieved and look at the positive side.

- Actively listen. Develop your empathy. When you listen to people, try to imagine how they feel, try to stand in their shoes. Take the time to hear people out.
- Devote thirty minutes a day to introspection/meditation/laughter/time spent in contemplative stillness/writing a journal/walking in creative silence/doing one thing perfectly and with full attention. Any of these activities will positively impact your life. Spend some time each week thinking about Laughter Yoga and your role, achievements and plans.
- Work smart. Learn to tap into the creative powers that are manifest in your group. Involve your members and be open/willing to change.
- Develop a core group of committed members and develop their skills in leading parts of the session until they can lead occasional sessions. Lead by inspiring them to do this good work. Make your club a team effort rather than a one-man show. Develop common or shared goals. Find people who are retired or have lifestyles that allow them to volunteer and devote time.
- Acknowledge people with good ideas. Good leaders recognize and praise others for their contribution.
- Practice lion laughter on a regular basis to develop your voice, and try to improve your skills in leading exercises.
- Open wide. A very open mouth brings laughter from deeper in the abdomen. Laugh from your belly (not your throat).
- Be aware of your body language. Try to use full-arm movements and use your body to express yourself.
- Make eye contact with as many different participants as possible. This promotes laughter and tells you who may need more help.
- Be dynamic in your exercises with almost exaggerated movement. You are the role model -- swing your arms and upper body and move around. Bend your knees in rhythm and encourage group rhythm.
- Don't talk too much. Laughter Yoga is about doing and experiencing.
- Walk the talk. Laughter Yoga is about developing joy, becoming more emotionally sensitive, developing feelings of caring and sharing, and improving your mental attitude. Develop these qualities in all aspects of your life.

Chapter 13. Social Laughter Clubs

Modern science has recently 'discovered' that a rich network of emotional connections is the number-one reason for people to be happy and that the most powerful factor in our happiness is good relationships. This is more important than money, job satisfaction or marital status.

The simple fact is that, for humans to be happy, we need a network of healthy emotional relationships with a group of people who care about us and about whom we care. To achieve this goal, Social Laughter Clubs have proved very valuable since they provide important social networking benefits that have changed tens of thousands of lives.

Laughter Yoga is provided free in thousands of Laughter Yoga clubs that meet daily in public parks across India and in many venues around the world. Laughter leaders provide their services free of charge and members join together to pay for birthday celebrations for members, picnics and other celebrations.

Healing through Laughter Clubs

Members of laughter clubs laugh together daily, or weekly. The healing effects of laughter are different for each person according to their physical, mental, emotional problems and needs. A few examples:

- Many members with chronic pain, migraines, headaches and asthma have found attacks to become less frequent, and in some cases, to disappear completely.
- Many members with high blood pressure, severe spinal, neck or shoulder problems and even diabetes have found their life normalizing eventually requiring no medication.
- Many members with depression, anxiety and chronic stress related diseases have reported moving from debilitating fear and anxiety to a more positive state of mind, transforming their quality of life.
- Many members who have harbored bitterness, hatred and other long-term emotional problems that poisoned their bodily systems and their lives have found their problems released through the cathartic effects of laughter, leaving them joyful and free.
- Even members with cancer have managed to shrug their fear and pain after a period of laughter.
- Many students with emotional problems that have left them incapable of learning have reported that after a period of laughter they have been able to continue their education and succeed.

A Network of Caring-Sharing Relationships

Social laughter clubs have the power to reach beyond the healing of laughter. The effective network of caring-sharing relationships is the key to a happy and healthy life. Relationships with people with whom we laugh regularly can become very strong. Read these examples that prove the strong bonding power of these clubs:

- A laughter club member was devastated when his uninsured shop burned down. He was ruined; the fruit of twenty-five years of hard work vanished, leaving him in debt with no means of supporting himself and his family. Members of his laughter club pooled together and raised money to rebuild his shop and provide new stock, rebuilding the life of someone they held dear to themselves.
- Similarly an elderly laughter club member was shattered when her husband of more than forty years passed away leaving her alone in the world. She had married early and never worked. Feeling her life was over she went into a black depression, refusing food and not leaving her bed. Fellow laughter club members arranged medical care and medication, and took turns staying with her throughout the day, bringing her treats and cajoling her to eat, but most importantly being there for her and providing emotional support.

After three months she recovered. Convinced that her life would have ended without laughter club, she started a new laughter club in a nearby school where she runs daily laughter sessions for students to this day.

Happiness through Emotional Networking

Sadly, for many people modern life does not include a network of caring and sharing relationships --- the age-old extended family culture and its group bonding is breaking down. The lack of two-way emotional dialogue and relationship leaves us without emotional grounding, often resulting in feelings of isolation and loneliness.

The amount of time spent with others is not what matters; it is the quality of interaction that is important. If there is lack of warmth and friendliness amongst people it leads to anxiety and stress. This type of interaction is important to our physical and emotional well being and is central to human happiness.

Laughter clubs provide a rich social network of people who care about one another, and perhaps even more importantly, a way of getting to know new people who we care about. This provides a sense of emotional security which resists stress and promotes excellence in all other areas of life.

Spiritual benefits of laughter clubs

In addition to providing a positive and secure emotional environment, laughter clubs promote personal happiness in many ways. The positive and happy attitude from laughter clubs is spread through the mechanism of emotional contagion to others that we have contact with. This is not limited to just friends, family and co-workers but also includes social contacts and even people they sit next to in a bus or in a restaurant, taxi drivers and many others.

Their caring, empathetic manner touches all the people they interact with and thus the benefits just continue to grow. The emotional problems and selfish interests fall away through laughter and caring and there is a kind of inner joy that fills the heart.

This 'inner spirit of laughter' becomes apparent to some as they develop a state of emotional fluidity where the worries and intense goals that have driven their lives become less important to them. These people become aware that true happiness comes from giving unconditional love, caring and sharing, and working to make the world a better place not only for themselves but for all others.

Chapter 14. Starting a Laughter Club

There are a number of issues to be considered and decisions to be made before you start. Consider how often you will meet. This depends on your availability, venue issues and your target audience.

Core group:

As the leader you will be crucial to the operation of the club until you can develop a core group who begin to take over responsibility, something that often takes a year or more. During startup there will be a great deal of extra work including venue hunting, promotion, seminars and more. Make sure you have adequate time and energy to undertake these tasks without becoming stressed.

Frequency & timing

Daily meetings are best in terms of benefits for yourself and participants, but for many this will not be practical. Consider meeting once or twice a week, or even less frequently. The days of the week are also important. Weekends may be easier for many people (and for you if you work also).

Consider meeting times. Early morning is excellent in terms of benefits and our body. Evenings may be practical, but some people may have difficulty sleeping on the laughter energy high, although this can be countered by incorporating relaxation techniques at the session's end. What times are practical for your target audience? When is your venue available?

Ask potential members what times they would prefer.

Venue:

Finding a free or very cheap venue to meet can be a challenge. During some seasons you may be able to meet outdoors in a park, but what about rainy or cold winter seasons? Even in a park you may require permits, do your research.

Church halls, community centers, scout halls, public libraries, museums, hospitals or clinics may provide free venues if you do not charge. Another option is to meet at someone's home. If there are companies or organizations with an ideal space, ask them to donate

the space in exchange for sponsorship promotion. They will generate goodwill among members.

Make sure the venue matches your group size, that it has adequate ventilation, toilet facilities and heating if you have cold winters. Be careful that you will not disturb neighbors as laughter clubs can get very noisy. Is the floor suitable for sitting or lying down? Also, beware of very high ceilings as laughter energy could be dissipated and echo may be a problem.

Try at all times to avoid costs or keep costs very low. Laughter clubs need to be provided as a free service. If there are costs for venues and other necessities, these can be defrayed by making a small charge or asking for donations. You can also look for sponsor who will gain considerable goodwill from members of the club by helping to keep it free.

Chapter 15. Promotional Seminars

To run a successful social laughter club one needs to bring an awareness about the new concept of Laughter Yoga and the benefits that it offers to the people for their physical, mental and social well-being. Organizing public awareness seminars are the best way to achieve this goal.

The Right Venue

You need to find a venue that has the capacity to hold the number of people you are targeting. Don't go for too large a venue, as it is difficult to build enthusiasm in a large venue with a small group. Assume you will get few people, if you get more, then crowd them in or schedule a second seminar a few days or a week later.

Check if you need a sound system to be heard in the venue, and try to arrange a video projector for the AV portion of your presentation. More and more people own these so you may be able to borrow one to reduce costs.

Publicity & Promotion

Promote your seminar with some low-cost fliers that you can put up in public places and possibly distribute to homes in the area. Try to put up notices in cafes, supermarkets, take-aways, pubs and other local places that many people visit. Check your local papers; many run free notices for community events if you place them in good time.

Prepare a press release with basic details (contact us for free example templates) and send them to your local radio and TV stations, magazines and newspapers. Free publicity is a great way to get a crowd. Don't neglect radio. Radio is generally an easy medium to get featured on. They might ask you to come in for an interview and also feature your seminar in repeated community announcements.

One secret of getting press coverage is to approach them early enough. Study the media and decide which section you want to be featured in, then phone and try to make personal contact with a journalist, editor or presenter for that section. Personal contact will increase the chances of your article being used. Invite them to come to your seminar for a follow-up article. If they agree to come, you may want to schedule a second seminar up to a week later that can be mentioned in their first report.

Cost of Public Seminar

If you can get a free venue, audio visual equipment and printing for your fliers, then have a free seminar. Otherwise keep your costs as low as possible, calculate your costs carefully and make a small attendance charge. Most people will be happy to pay a reasonable fee to find out about Laughter Yoga if they are interested. Another option is to find a suitable sponsor to pay your costs in exchange for promoting their business on your

promotional materials. They will be rendering a good service to the community in helping you to spread the laughter. Also, try for ongoing sponsorship for your club.

Planning

In addition to planning and scheduling your event, prepare and practice your presentation carefully. Keep it short. Get friends and family to listen. If you lose their attention, then go back and cut it shorter. Make sure you answer these questions: How did you become involved in Laughter Yoga? What is your story? What is Laughter Yoga? How does it work? Why is it 'Yoga'? How did it start? What are the benefits? Who is this for? Are there contra-indications? Will it change my life?

Try to get a few experienced Laughter Yoga professionals or participants to help you out at the event. They can help with tickets, seating and welcoming people. Keep them close during your presentation and session as they will help you spread the laughter. If you are lucky, they will include one or more 'laughter blasters'.

To boost your spirits and get over the anxiety of the presentation you may want to do a short laughter boosting session before showtime.

The Presentation

Welcome people, introduce yourself and quickly outline the planned sequence of what will happen during the event. Ask them to take a moment to survey their body and mind as to how they feel right now, or use a short form for this. Call attention to their breathing, energy level, aches and pains, state of mind, enthusiasm for life and stress level.

Try to show a few video clips about Laughter Yoga as this increases credibility. Talk about your personal experience, why and how you were drawn to laughter and what has been done for you. Quickly outline the history and benefits, and then talk about your new club. Keep it short. If your audience is not actively engaged, try to incorporate a few simple laughter exercises to get their attention focused.

Don't sell. Inspire with your personal story and emotions. Speak from your heart. Allow your vulnerability to show, but be positive. Emotions are infectious, and if yours (and those of your team) are positive and demonstrate that you believe absolutely what you are saying, you will get a positive response.

Start your Laughter Yoga session and build a strong energy, if possible moving into laughter meditation.

After the laughter, have a quick question and answer session. Don't let people become bored and start to leave. If there are complicated questions, reschedule them for personal discussion after the event.

Now, tell them you have a question for them. Can they please take a moment to scan their body and mind to see how they are feeling, and compare these feelings with those before the laughter session. You will get some wonderful responses from the floor!

Thank people for attending and invite them to follow through by coming to the club meetings and trying Laughter Yoga themselves.

Seminar Timetable

Your seminar timetable may be something like this:

- Introduction, welcome and event schedule, personal body-mind scan - 5 minutes.
- Video presentation - 10 minutes.
- Your story, Laughter Yoga history, concept and benefits - 15 minutes.
- Laughter exercises - 20 minutes.
- Laughter meditation – 10 minutes.
- Q&A – 3-5 minutes.

- Close with a second body-mind scan and feedback, then thanks for attending and an appeal to come and try out the new laughter club – 5 minutes.

After the event have your team hand out fliers with club meeting place, times and contact numbers. Also mention that you are available for sessions at old-age homes, companies and other places.

Chapter 16. Laughter Yoga as a Career Choice

Laughter Yoga is quickly spreading naturally into many different areas as people come to realize how the benefits can improve their lives.

Services provided by Laughter Yoga professionals outside the social laughter club are provided on a normal commercial basis, with fees set according to the client, venue, situation, reputation, skill and experience of the Laughter Yoga professional and other market factors.

A few Laughter Yoga leaders and teachers have developed substantial incomes over the past few years by providing Laughter Yoga services, but these have been the exception rather than the rule. We see an increase in earning capacity occurring, mainly as our professionals learn how to package and market Laughter Yoga according to the needs of different groups.

Many professionals have become successful by providing seminars and training programs to businesses. Others have specialized in areas like providing Laughter Yoga to the elderly. Some are being employed as salaried Laughter Yoga teachers in schools. Other professionals from diverse fields have added Laughter Yoga to the services they offer to augment their existing income.

Laughter Yoga International has started to develop programs for different groups and provide these to Laughter Yoga professionals as packages, complete with marketing materials, training, documentation and support. We hope this will make it easier to deliver professional Laughter Yoga services.

Let us review some of the ways that Laughter Yoga is spreading:

- **Yoga and Fitness Studios:** Yoga and fitness studios are adding Laughter Yoga to their range of services. These are ideal places for clients to drop in at convenient times and venues for their 'dose' of healing laughter. It brings new clients into the business and expands the range of services they offer. It allows valuable press coverage and word of mouth promotion to provide a new income stream. Fees in these venues are normally in line with other Yoga and fitness classes.
- **Old age Homes:** There is a fast-growing demand for Laughter Yoga for the elderly at senior care facilities and old-age homes. This age group derives a very powerful range of benefits from Laughter Yoga, so we are working to develop standardized programs that efficiently maximize benefits while being time efficient. Some such facilities have budgets that can cover Laughter Yoga sessions, or can cover sending their staff for training in Laughter Yoga.

We hope to develop funding avenues so Laughter Yoga can be provided to this group on a larger scale, even where venues do not have sufficient funding to pay for it.

- **Business World:** Laughter Yoga for corporates is growing fast. Laughter Yoga provides a large number of important benefits to employers, and businesses are ready to pay for these benefits. Many certified Laughter Yoga professionals are doing well providing services to corporates.

Laughter Yoga International is developing and testing programs with a view to providing standard Laughter Yoga business programs for our professionals to offer, including promotional materials, training and certification, and ongoing support

and development. Programs will include specialized sessions such as 'team building', 'stress release', 'stress management' and more.

- **Speakers & Trainers:** Laughter Yoga is an especially useful tool for business trainers, lecturers, public speakers, HR professionals and others who speak to groups. We are working with trainers to develop a special training for this group in Laughter Yoga techniques.
- **School Children:** There is a great deal of interest in schools for Laughter Yoga. Some schools have introduced it on a regular basis and even appointed dedicated Laughter Yoga teachers.

This is a very interesting and important field of development. Modern life has robbed children of much of their natural playtime with its inherent development of emotional and social skills, and resulting joyfulness. New social and health problems resulting from this are already apparent. We hope the introduction of Laughter Yoga into schools can help to provide a better balance in children's development and education.

Laughter Yoga also provides important ways of reducing stress, teaches new techniques to deal with stress, and provides ways to prepare for known stressful situations that can lead to improved performance in examinations, competitive sporting events, public speaking and more.

- **Hospitals:** In hospitals, laughter for patients is widely accepted for speeding healing as well as for countering depression and alleviating illness-related stress. Laughter Yoga is seen by some as being faster and more cost-effective than hospital clowning as a way to deliver the benefits of laughter to many patients.

It is also in high demand by doctors and medical staff who work under great emotional and physical stress and are prone to suffer mental and emotional burn-out.

- **Cancer Self Help Groups:** Laughter Yoga is in growing demand by support groups for cancer and other stress-related and immune-system diseases. It helps counter depression in patients and their families, improves the mental state of mind, and in many cases, offers healing benefits by boosting the immune system and improving quality of life.
- We are seeing a growing demand for Laughter Yoga retreats. This is an area of intense development and we are working towards developing standard retreat programs that can be offered worldwide.
- **Prisons:** Laughter Yoga helps prisoners to overcome depression, loneliness and many other emotional problems. It improves the atmosphere of the institution and reduces disciplinary problems. It is also very helpful to staff who are prone to great emotional stress.
- **Special Needs:** There are groups with special needs have been benefited with Laughter Yoga like deaf and mute children, physically and mentally challenged children and adults, multiple sclerosis groups.

CHAPTER 17. Laughter Yoga for Seniors

There is a distinct rise in life expectancy due to advances in medical science, creating a much larger population of senior citizens who long to find emotional comfort and solace.

As the joint family structure crumbles and youngsters steer away from parents, the seniors particularly in the west find themselves alone either in aged care facilities or old-age homes. They are prone to frequent bouts of depression that often leads to a debilitating condition.

Faced with age and age related troubles, seniors find that their physical and mental faculties decrease. As far as laughter goes one finds that as we grow older our capacity to understand humor decreases because of senile dementia, Alzheimer's and other diseases. The degeneration of the brain cells makes it difficult for many seniors to understand and organize facts, let alone humor. Simple tasks become difficult and frustration levels rise.

Under such conditions Laughter Yoga is ideal for seniors to reap the scientifically proved benefits of laughter to improve their health and well-being. It helps to provide an emotional bonding and is one of the most powerful tools against depression.

Since humor is an intellectual phenomenon, seniors find it difficult to laugh without a reason. This is where Laughter Yoga helps them to be able to laugh and start living a life full of joy once again. Being physically oriented process Laughter Yoga does not require any mental abilities thus helping the older people to comprehend humor without using their mental faculties.

Benefits for Seniors

Scientific studies have proven that Laughter Yoga increases the net supply of oxygen to our body cells giving a sense of well-being. According to Dr. Otto Warburg a Noble Laureate, his findings about the importance of oxygen confirms that the reason we fall sick frequently is because there is a lack of oxygen in the body cells. Laughter exercises and Yoga breathing help to attain good health by increasing the supply of oxygen. It also helps to release special hormones from all brain cells called endorphins also known as feel good hormones.

Guidelines for Laughter Yoga Session with Seniors

Most seniors are not aware of the fact that you can laugh without a reason. Sometimes they find it silly and can be put off. Hence, there is a need to explain to them that the session is not about real laughter, jokes, humor or comedies. It is not an entertainment session but exercises of laughter which are based on scientific facts.

The session with seniors is not just about laughter. It entails creating a connection with them, building a rapport by talking, listening and physical touch. Since they are lonesome they will appreciate your connection with them and will be more willing to participate and co-operate in the Laughter Yoga session. To achieve this it is advised that the trainer reaches the session half an hour before the actual exercises begin.

Older people are much more fragile and melancholic because of health reasons. Therefore you must find out about their health status or any medical conditions they are suffering from that might be contraindicated to take any physical exertion.

CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT:

We normally don't use tools or humor in Laughter Yoga sessions but for seniors it is important to create a lively atmosphere with color, sight and humor props. This helps them to lighten up. Leaders should wear bright colors and avoid black, grey drab colors. Props like balloons and familiar music from yesteryears can create a happy environment.

Normally in Laughter Yoga sessions we encourage people to move around and have eye contact with others. With seniors we often conduct sessions sitting in chairs. Position chairs in a tight circle so that people can see each other and connect with each other. This also prevents them falling and hurting themselves.

INTRODUCTION: MEET & GREET

Allow plenty of time to go from person to person and introduce yourself getting to know their names and something about them. Seniors are generally hungry for company and will respond more easily if you make an effort to get to know them.

WARMING UP AND CLAPPING:

Laughter Yoga sessions for seniors start with group singing as a form of exercise. Let them join hands and sway together while singing in a chorus. This warms up their lungs and helps build a loving and connecting atmosphere.

CHANTING

Since most seniors are slow with age we deviate from our regular ho ho ha ha ha ha chant to a much slower ho ho ha ha. Instead of 12-123 chant ho ho twice followed by ha ha or 'ho ho way to go'.

Chant 'very good, very good, yeah' in between different laughter exercises. Do this as an exercise several times in the beginning to raise their energy levels. Clap as you say 'very good very good' and then raise your arms up in the sky with your thumbs up to say 'yeah'.

Another affirmation we use with seniors is the positive chant of 'I am incredible' 'You are incredible'.

EXERCISES

Any laughter exercise from our standard format can be used, but for seniors they must be modified to a much slower and gentle pace.

Here are some examples of exercises for seniors:

- Greeting laughter: shake hands and laugh with people sitting on the chairs on either side. The leader goes round the circle shaking hands and laughing with each and every person in the group. Make sure not to leave anybody in the circle while doing this.
- Argument laughter: This is a very playful laughter exercise as people love pointing fingers at each other while having fun.
- Cell phone laughter or mobile phone laughter works well.
- Rollercoaster laughter: Group members join hands and go up and down with the sounds of Aee... aeee.. and then laugh together while raising their hands together.
- Bicycle laughter: An excellent way to exercise lower limbs. Imagine holding the handle of a bicycle with both hands and move your legs as if you're peddling and laughing.
- Laugh away your aches and pains: Since seniors usually suffer from aches and pains, this is a good whimsical exercise that gives a positive perspective.
- Deep breathing: In between laughter exercises do some deep breathing. One of the creative ways of making the seniors do it is to pick up a flower, take a long inhaling smell and a long 'haaaa' exhale.

As the session progresses you will see positive feelings develop and happiness and joy a spread among group members. Their will to live and love is aroused. Their emotional and physical well being improves noticeably with regular Laughter Yoga sessions.

CHAPTER 18. Laughter Yoga for Children

From time immemorial childhood has been a time for children to lead low-stress lives full of personal exploration and group play. It is a time of joy and unconditional laughter, with many children laughing more than 300 times a day.

Modern studies show us that through this period of play we develop emotional intelligence, now recognized as being the single major factor in our long-term life and career success.

Growing bodies require the intense physical exercise of play to learn motor skills, develop and cope with rapid growth. In play we develop emotional and social skills and learn how to cope with different situations – skills that determine and influence much of our future life.

Children today are increasingly subjected to new and very different childhood realities --- play and physical activity is restricted, new stresses are imposed, adult behavior is demanded at very early ages, group play and child-to-child interaction is being replaced with electronic games & remote communication devices.

Stresses faced by children

- Children whose natural energy is traditionally expressed in movement, laughter and play are being forced to sit still and concentrate for extended periods from an early age.
- 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.
- Children faced with a competitive academic environment from early age are being pressured by their parents and teachers to attain excellent grades.
- Schoolwork results in many symptoms of stress and high social anxiety.
- The increase in broken homes and the consequent lack of emotional bonding and long-term relationships with parents or responsible adults combine to cause a host of emotional problems.
- Working parents and the reduction in family size leaves children alone for long stretches of time, rather than in healthy group play.
- A general decrease in parenting skills means that leave children deprived of strong moral and emotional guidance and role models.
- Video games, television and the internet have taken over the free and interactive play. High tech communication skills have eroded the fun of laughing at simple things.
- Teenagers in particular are faced with demands of college and parents to perform and achieve goals that may be unrealistic. Not meeting these goals often leads to anxiety that is detrimental to physical and mental health, in some cases even resulting in suicidal tendencies.

The Need for Laughter

A desperate and increasing need for laughter and playfulness exists in children of all ages today.

Laughter can help children to 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.

Laughter Yoga can introduce more laughter into children's lives. It must urgently be promoted and integrated into educational systems.

Laughter Yoga in schools

Laughter Yoga was first introduced into schools in India in 1998 and has spread informally to schools in Mumbai, Bangalore, Surat and across India.

Feedback from schools has been positive. According to reports students are energized, mental attitude improves, communication between students and staff improves, willingness to learn, innovation and creativity increase, disciplinary problems are reduced, and a gradual decrease in sickness and absenteeism is noted.

According to teachers there is a wonderful change in the atmosphere of the school. Students become upbeat, playful and smiling and many teachers say that it has made a

meaningful change in their attitude, and re-energized and re-motivated them in their profession.

In a milestone development, a dedicated Laughter Yoga teacher, or in Indian parlance a 'Laughter Master', was appointed by Sanskar Bharati Vidyalaya, a high school in Surat, India. Laughter Yoga leader Kamlesh Masalawala's sole duties are to teach Laughter Yoga 3 times a week to the school's 1,000 students. Mr. Paresh Patel, the principal of the school is very pleased with the outcome and is lobbying to have laughter masters appointed at other schools.

A prestigious international school in Hawaii has introduced Laughter Yoga specifically to help students from many different countries to overcome their cultural differences and bond. The team-building program has been highly successful and was recently featured on American television.

We have also heard about the introduction of Laughter Yoga in Harvard University and also a university in China. A school in the Middle East has asked us to work with them in a research project to study the effects of Laughter Yoga training on students under examination stress.

A project is under development in Africa to introduce Laughter Yoga into schools to give children some laughter and joy in a nation with high stress and depression levels.

In schools where budgetary restrictions are closing down school sports and physical training, Laughter Yoga can provide a fun and low cost alternative way to keep kids in shape.

Laughter Yoga is Fun, Easy and Economical

Laughter Yoga is a very economical addition to any school or educational institution. Training costs are low and the major investment is time.

Because Laughter Yoga is fun, it is normally welcomed and enjoyed by students and staff. No known downsides or negative side effects have been reported.

We recommend that any school interested in trying Laughter Yoga go ahead with a trial program. We will be happy to cooperate and support these efforts by providing advice and guidance. Laughter Yoga practitioners around the world have developed special techniques that work especially well with children.

A new leading-edge website is being developed to allow practitioners in education and other fields to communicate and pool their ideas and experiences.

Techniques for Laughter Yoga session with children

It is much easier to make young children laugh.

FOR YOUNG CHILDREN (below 15)

The best technique to laugh with young children is to play 'follow the leader'. Children are very good imitators and love copying. Use this technique to make laughter a game.

Ask kids to mimic your actions then create a one minute sequence of laughter, funny gestures, funny faces and funny sounds. Try to use laughter sounds for 60 to 70% of the sounds. Give them time to finish then immediately start a new sequence.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN (above 15)

For older children we normally use standard Laughter Yoga exercises, but be warned it can be hard work.

As children reach adolescence, it becomes harder for them to simulate laughter. They are very self-conscious and less open to laugh without reason.

Making teenagers laugh can be daunting and unnerving. It's a challenge to cut them loose from their inhibitions and shyness, but it can be done. Remember that they're just kids trying to set foot in the adult world --- be patient and work hard to establish a bond --- an understanding which will bring them closer and help them express more freely.

The teens are a period of transition and change from childhood to adulthood. New inhibitory factors related to 'adult' behavior play a major role in the expression of emotions. Teenagers become more self-conscious and start using their mental faculty to rationalize their laughter and other behavior.

Chapter 19. Laughter Yoga Professionals

Laughter Yoga International currently provides and recognizes two levels of professional certification:

CLYL = CERTIFIED LAUGHTER YOGA LEADERS successfully complete a 2-day intensive training course and are certified to offer and run Laughter Yoga sessions.

CLYT = CERTIFIED LAUGHTER YOGA TEACHERS successfully complete a 5-day intensive training course and are able to offer CLY Leader training courses.

REQUIREMENTS

Professionals must be at least 18 years of age, be physically and mentally competent to run Laughter Yoga sessions, and complete the training course to their teacher's satisfaction.

CLYL TRAINING

Certified Laughter Yoga Leader training can only be provided by a Certified Laughter Yoga Teacher. Certification can easily be confirmed on www.laughteryoga.org.

This E-manual is provided for detailed self study before the training course which comprises a minimum of 14 hours of intensive training, normally offered over two days, although it can also be spread over more and shorter sessions.

In some cases teachers may require trainees to complete oral or written examinations on the contents of this training manual, and to complete further practical training before issuing certification.

You are advised to thoroughly study this manual and become well versed in all material contained herein before your training course.

Please be sure to register on our website before you start your training. This will simplify your upgrade to professional status.

CERTIFICATION

Once you have successfully completed your training your teacher will issue you with a professional certificate confirming your new status. Your teacher will then register you for professional status on the official Laughter Yoga website (this process is normally completed within a week of your certification).

Once certified you will be prompted to complete your professional profile and upload a photo which will appear on your Profile page.

PRIVILEGES

As a certified LY professional you will enjoy access to the PROZONE area of our website where you can access special content, Dr. Kataria's PROZONE blog, the Laughter Exercises Bank and more.

You receive a free Profile page and will be included in the Laughter Yoga Finder results. You are also entitled to post details of your Laughter Yoga clubs online free of charge.

In PROZONE you can also order books, DVD's and more from our shop at wholesale prices.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

A new continuing education section of the website will be opened early 2008 to enable Laughter Yoga professionals to stay current with the latest developments.

Professionals may wish to periodically repeat their training course as a refresher. This option is often made available by teachers at a reduced rate on a space-permitting basis.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Laughter Yoga professionals are required to carry out their activities according to the Laughter Yoga Best Practices (Appendix 1) and also to comply with Laughter Yoga Trademark requirements as set out on our website.

TRADEMARK

Laughter Yoga professionals are licensed to use the term 'Laughter Yoga' to describe and promote their services, always acknowledging the trademark is owned by Dr. Madan Kataria and Laughter Yoga International.

'Laughter Yoga' may not be used in a business or domain name, or to describe training courses or conferences without the express written permission of Dr. Madan Kataria. Please write to trademark@laughteryoga.org for permission or with any enquiries in this regard.

CLYT TRAINING

Certified Laughter Yoga Leaders wishing to upgrade their skills and also to provide CLYT Leader training for others may register for CLYT training courses. These are run by Dr. Madan Kataria, normally twice a year in North America and Europe, and once a year in other countries or regions.

Please check our website for the next courses in your area. We strongly suggest early booking as space is limited.

Appendix 1. Laughter Yoga Best Practices

Certified Laughter Yoga professionals agree that they shall:

1. Promote and practice Laughter Yoga according to the principles and practices currently set out by Laughter Yoga International and the Dr. Kataria School of Laughter Yoga.
2. Have a sincere commitment to provide Laughter Yoga services of the highest quality to those who seek their service.
3. Acknowledge the confidential nature of all professional relationships and respect them accordingly.
4. Strive for professional excellence through regular assessment of personal strengths, limitations and effectiveness.
5. Refer people with medical conditions to a healthcare professional for evaluation prior to providing service.
6. Not misrepresent themselves or their work to the public.
7. Always develop their relationship with clients and participants in the best interest of the client or participant.
8. Ensure that all persons' basic rights are upheld at all times.
9. Conduct themselves in their professional lives in a manner that will enhance the image of Laughter Yoga and Laughter Yoga professionals as a group.
10. Ensure that their details and those of any laughter clubs and Laughter Yoga services and activities they are involved in are posted on www.laughteryoga.org and remain up to date at all times.
11. Maintain the laughter club format as a free community service.
12. Refrain from incorporating non-Laughter Yoga ideas and practices into a service that is described as Laughter Yoga, except where such ideas and practices are clearly described as being different from and not part of Laughter Yoga.
13. Maintain Laughter Yoga as a non-political and non-religious practice.
14. Work to achieve the goals of Laughter Yoga as a means to world peace.
15. Ensure that any person practicing Laughter Yoga for the first time completes and signs an approved liability release form before their first session, properly store completed forms, and forward them annually by post to a Laughter Yoga International office.
16. Agree that the copyright, trademark and service mark for the term 'Laughter Yoga' in English and in translation is the property of Laughter Yoga International and Dr. Madan Kataria and further agrees not to use this term in the name of a business or internet domain without first receiving permission in writing to do so.

Appendix 2. The Importance of Oxygen

Two-thirds of our lung capacity requires abdominal breathing to activate. This means most of us carry stale air in two-thirds of our lungs. This makes us listless and reduces our ability to fend off illnesses, including cancer. To increase the exchange of stale air for fresh air we need to learn and practice exhaling more forcefully. The more stale air we expel, the more fresh oxygen we can inhale. Think about the act of laughing – HO, HO, HA HA HA. It is all about expelling air from our lungs.

Laughter repeatedly flushes our lungs to their full capacity, bringing lots more oxygen into our blood stream. Oxygen is a major source of energy for our body. The more we have the better and more energized we feel, and the more efficiently all our bodily systems operate.

Extracts from Scholars on the Importance of Oxygen

1. **"Deep breathing techniques increase oxygen to the cells and are the most important factors in living a disease-free and energetic life. When cells get enough oxygen, cancer will not and cannot occur."** – Dr. Otto Warburg, President, Institute of Cell Physiology, Nobel Prize Winner (Dr. Warburg is the only person to ever win the Nobel Prize for Medicine twice and was nominated for a third).
2. **"Breathing correctly is the key to better fitness, muscle strength, stamina and athletic endurance."** - Dr. Michael Yessis, Ph. D. President Sports Training Institute, Fitness Writer – Muscle and Fitness Magazine.
3. **"Oxygenation through deep breathing boosts the immune system and can rid the body of chronic illnesses."** - Dr. Sheldon Hendler, MD, Medical Researcher Cell Oxygenation, author 'The Oxygen Breakthrough'.
4. **"All body functions are breathing-related. Proper oxygen delivery to all parts of your body is crucial to health and wellbeing. Aerobic exercise increases the body's available oxygen and therefore promotes wellness. Delivering oxygen to the body is the responsibility of the respiratory system. Breathing is the process by which air enters the bloodstream via the lungs. Thus proper breathing and correcting common breathing disorders is the ultimate form of aerobics."** - Dr. Robert Fried, Breath Connection, Insight Books, 1990, p. 52.
5. **"Oxygen tension in tissues enhances the action of some antibiotics — notably aminoglycosides — and the immune system and stimulates cellular metabolism."** --Linda Collison, Hyperbarics: When Pressuring Patients Helps, Health Index.
6. **"Deep diaphragmatic breathing stimulates the cleansing of the lymph system by creating a vacuum effect which pulls the lymph through the bloodstream. This increases the rate of toxic elimination by as much as 15 times the normal rate."** – Dr. J.W. Shields, MD, Lymph, Lymph Glands, and Homeostasis. Lymphology, v25, n4, Dec. 1992, p. 147.
7. **"Oxygen plays a pivotal role in the proper functioning of the immune system. We can look at oxygen deficiency as the single greatest cause of all diseases."** -- Stephen Levine, a respected molecular biologist and geneticist, and Dr. Paris M. Kidd, Ph.D., Antioxidant Adaptation.

Appendix 3. Forty Foundation Exercises

Laughter leaders must learn 40 foundation Laughter Yoga exercises through practice and repetition during training. This will enable them to start a Laughter Yoga club or run Laughter Yoga sessions with confidence.

Most of these exercises can be seen on the PROZONE section of our website

1. **Greeting laughter:**
 - a. Indian Greeting, or Namaste Laughter
 - b. Western Greeting, or Handshake Laughter
 - c. Double Handshake Laughter
 - d. Electric Shock Laughter
 - e. Combinations of 2 or 3 of the above
2. **Milkshake Laughter**
3. **Cellphone Laughter**
4. **One Meter Laughter (+ 1 cm laughter variation)**
5. **Lion Laughter**
6. **Argument Laughter**
7. **Forgiveness Laughter**
8. **Appreciation Laughter**
9. **Hot Soup Laughter**
10. **Just Laugh**
11. **Visa Bill Laughter**
12. **Shy Laughter**
13. **Laugh at Yourself**
14. **Laughter Cream**
15. **Motorbike Laughter & Variations**
16. **Mental floss laughter**
17. **Calcutta Laughter**
18. **Gradient Laughter & Silent Gradient Laughter**
19. **No money laughter**
20. **Jackpot laughter**
21. **Bird laughter**
22. **Crying laughter**
23. **Aloha Laughter**
24. **Hugging Laughter**
25. **Silent Laughter**
26. **Elevator Laughter**
27. **Laughter Center**
28. **Milk Curd Laughter**
29. **American Laughter**
30. **Royal Laughter**
31. **Creative Laughter**
32. **Laughter Orchestra**
33. **Laughter Revival**
- THEMED LAUGHTER
34. **Airport & Flight Laughter**
35. **Household Chores Laughter**
36. **Party Laughter**
- FLOOR LAUGHTER EXERCISES
37. **Rowing Laughter**
38. **Centipede Laughter Variants**
39. **Belly Laughter**
40. **Bull's Eye Laughter**

We strongly recommend that teachers take trainees through 10 exercises during each of the first and second day morning & afternoon sessions, with lots of repetition and practice to make sure trainees become completely familiar with all 40 exercises.

Appendix 4. More Laughter Exercises

This is a selection of Laughter Yoga exercises from around the world. Use them, change them and make up your own!

- **1 meter laugh.**
- **1 cm laugh:** only one short HEE. People usually laugh because this is unexpected.
- **Age laughter:** Imagine how your laugh would sound when you are double your current age; half of your current age; 10/20/30 years older; ten years younger; as a child; as an infant.
- **Airline safety instruction laugh:** 1. Demonstrate seatbelt, laughing. 2. Pull down oxygen mask, laughing. 3. Show emergency exits, laughing.
- **Airplane laughter:** Imagine you are airplanes flying around.
- **Aloha laughter:** Aloha ha ha ha
- **Ants in your pants laughter.**
- **Appreciation laughter:** Look at others as you laugh and appreciate each other. This is a value-based laughter, reminding the participants how important it is to appreciate others. The tip of the index finger is joined to the tip of the thumb to make a small circle, or use a thumbs-up. The hand is moved forward and backward while looking at different members and laughing to show your appreciation of them.
- **Argument laughter:** Argue by pointing and wagging index fingers at each other.
- **Balloon-popping laughter:** Try to pop each other's imaginary balloons.
- **Belly laughs:** lie down at right angles with your head on another's belly and laugh.
- **Bird Laughter:** Take off, drift and fly.
- **Bored laughter:** Fake it until you make it.
- **Boss quit today:** Cheering is allowed.
- **Bus Stop:** One person resists laughing or smiling while others try to make them laugh.
- **Calcutta Laughter:** with hands in front, two short sharp repetitions of "Ho, Ho" with hands facing down and pushing sharply downwards on each exhalation, followed by two short sharp repetitions of "Ha, Ha" with hands facing forward and pushing sharply forward on each exhalation. The object is to exhale from the diaphragm. Calcutta laughter is useful to prepare the body and diaphragm for laughter meditation, and can also be used in laughter boosting to help prepare for stressful situations.
- **Car won't start:** Ha ha ha ha ha ha haaaaa...
- **Cell phone laughter:** Hold imaginary cell phones; move around & interact while laughing.
- **Charlie Chaplin Walk**
- **Cheesecake laughter:** throw imaginary cheesecakes at others.
- **Chicken Laughter:** Fold arms into wings, flap & squawk your laughter.
- **Christmas Laughter:** Deck the halls with boughs of holly, HA HA HA HA HA, HA HA HA HA.
- **Cocktail party laughter:** Make groups of 2's and 3s and laugh with each other over imaginary drinks.
- **Constipation laughter:** Squat on an imaginary throne and let go with laughter.
- **Crying laughter:** Crying laughter while sliding down to a crouch, then laugh your way up.
- **Donkey laugh:** EE-HAW, EE-HAW.
- **Driving laughter:** Drive laughter powered cars or motorbikes.
- **Elephant Trunk laughter:** Swing your trunk gently from side to side as you walk with the other arm behind you as a tail. Make chains or not.
- **Electric Shock:** Shake hands -- imagine an electric shock from other person's hand.

- **Elevator Laughter:** stand close together in a crowded elevator & laugh.
- **Evil Laughter:** Rub your hands in a mischievous way and snicker.
- **Eyes closed laughter** (when group trusts each other)
- **Feel the laughter:** Put your hand on your throat, laugh and feel the vibrations. Put your hands on different body parts and feel how they vibrate differently or not at all.
- **Forgiveness laughter:** Greet people one-by-one and both apologize to each other by offering forgiveness to each other.
- **Freezing laughter:** It's cold outside and I'm shivering with laughter!
- **Golf laughter:** Swing an imaginary club.
- **Gradient laughter:** From smile to giggle and then build laughter slowly.
- **Greek restaurant laughter:** Raise imaginary plates and smash them while laughing.
- **Greeting laughter:** Greet one another in different cultural styles.
- **Guru laughter:** Put one hand on your head and say: I learn from my mistakes, ha, ha, ha. Put the other hand on your head and say: I learn from others' mistakes, ha, ha, ha.
- **Hearty laughter:** Spread your arms up to the sky tilt your head back and laugh.
- **Hot sand laughter:** walking on very hot sand laughter.
- **Hot soup laughter:** Move your hands up and down as if you have had very hot and spicy soup and say: Hee .. Hee .. Hee.
- **Hugging laughter:** feel the laughter
- **Hug yourself laughter:** Love yourself.
- **Ice cube down the back laugh.**
- **Jackpot Laughter:** Jump for joy --- you won the Jackpot!
- **Laughter Cream:** Squeeze tube into hand, then apply and laugh.
- **Laughter Orchestra:** Group people into (laughter) instrument sections, conductor directs.
- **Lawn mower laughter:** Start the engine in 3 laughs then steer your laugh-powered mower.
- **Lion laughter:** Stick tongue way out, hands like lion's paws, roar laughter from belly.
- **Long Lost Friend laughter:** Bump into a friend you haven't seen for 15 years – hug & laugh.
- **Milkshake laughter:** Hold two imaginary glasses of milk and mix them by saying Aee .. Aeeee ... ah .. Ha .. Ha ...
- **Motorcycle starting:** Start the engine in 3 laughs then steer your laugh-powered bike.
- **Pee laugh:** waiting to use the toilet, cross your legs in agitation and laugh.
- **Penguin walk.**
- **Pigeon poop laughter:** Wipe imaginary pigeon poop off your head & clothes.
- **Pocket Laughter:** Wipe your laugh off your face & put it in your pocket, then put it back.
- **Quiet laughter:** As someone is sleeping in the adjoining room, laugh very quietly so as to not wake them up.
- **Roller coaster ride:** Join hands, lean into corners, hands up for drops, laughter.
- **Schools out:** No school tomorrow: you know what to do.
- **Shy laughter:** Hide your face behind your palms look sheepishly.
- **Slow-mo laughter:** Move slowly greeting and shaking hands, laugh with slow-mo sound.
- **Standing ovation:** Declare a 'Standing Ovation' for someone who needs one.
- **Tarzan laughter:** Pound your chest laughter.
- **Touch the Sky:** Wide circle holding hands. Move forward Aeeeeee, raising hands and burst into laughter meeting in the center.
- **Vowel movement:** Laugh with HA, HE, HI, HO, & HU

Appendix 5. Two-Day CLY Leader Training Guideline

Day 1

Time	Workshop Details
8:30	Completion of Registration Forms & Liability Release
9:00 – 9.10	Introduction of CLY Teacher (self) & venue logistics, rest rooms, lunch and tea/coffee places, timings of the breaks and rules for the venue, etc.
9:10 – 9.30	Video clips: International news coverage. Complete 'How do you feel?' form.
9:30 – 10.00	Participant Introductions: Group exercise seated in a tight circle. Members tell their name, where they live, and their job laughing after each statement. Group dialogue – what do we learn from this exercise?
10:00 – 11.00	Laughter Yoga, history, teacher's story, concept, philosophy with warm up exercises spaced between and laughter / playfulness to break the monotony.
11:00 – 11.20	Tea/Coffee Break
11:20 – 12.30	Laughter Yoga session (10 foundation exercises) teacher presents and demonstrates with student participation. Laughter meditation followed by guided relaxation.
12:30 – 1:30	LUNCH
1:30 – 3.00	Laughter Yoga Leader basic facilitation skills: 4 steps of Laughter Yoga. Introduction then practice of 1-3 by each participant. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Clapping – explain acupressure clapping b) Breathing – chanting c) Child-like playfulness – movement & eye contact d) LY Exercises
3:00 – 3.20	Tea/Coffee Break
4:20 – 4.00	Laughter Yoga session (10 more foundation exercises) teacher presents and demonstrates with student participation.
4:00 – 4.30	A quick description : what is Laughter Yoga? (Teacher presentation and demonstration then student practice).
4:30 – 5.00	Laughter meditation basics followed by guided relaxation – led by the teacher. Complete side 2 of 'How do you feel?' form & hand in to teacher.

Day 2

Time	Workshop Details
9:00 – 9.15	Feedback from Day 1 – how did you feel about yesterday?
9:15 – 9.45	Benefits of Laughter Yoga, scientific research and contra-indication.
9:45 – 11.00	Practice session to continue both practical and theory. Participants practice leading exercises.
11:00 – 11.30	Laughter Yoga in companies and corporations.
11:30 – 12.00	Laughter Yoga session (10 more foundation exercises) teacher presents and demonstrates with student participation. Laughter meditation followed by guided relaxation.
12.00 – 12.30	How to laugh alone? Adding more laughter your life, laughing in the face of challenges. Identify your stressors and develop laughter exercises for them.
12:30 – 1:30	LUNCH
1:30 – 2.00	Laughter Yoga with seniors – techniques and practice.
2:00 – 3.00	How to start a laughter club -- basic guidelines for organizing public seminars, promoting and running Laughter Yoga sessions, media and publicity.
3:00 – 3.30	Laughter Yoga with school children.
3:30 – 4.00	Tea Break.
4:00 – 4.30	Laughter Yoga session (10 more foundation exercises) teacher presents and demonstrates with student participation.
4:30 – 5.00	Certification, group photo and networking.

Appendix 6. Laughter Games

Laughter Yoga strives to cultivate childlike playfulness.

These games are useful when a significant number of participants are late due to a traffic jam or other unusual situation. They will keep those who have already arrived occupied and build a good playful atmosphere, and late arrivals can join in as they arrive.

Pizza pasta

This is very popular all over the world. It's also a great game for picnics and parties. It helps people to laugh at themselves graciously and overcome their embarrassment at making mistakes.

How to play

At least eight to 10 people or more are required. Participants stand in a circle. One person calls out 'One', the person next to them (to the left or right --- you decide) calls out 'Two', and so on around the circle, with the person after 10 starting with 1 again.

Once they are comfortable counting ask them to:

- Say pizza instead of number six
- Say pasta instead of number seven
- Then continue counting from eight onwards...

You should hear 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, pizza, pasta, 8, 9, 10, 1, 2, ...

RULES

Call out loud and clear without any pauses.

Anyone who makes a mistake, fumbles or takes too long is out of the game and has to stand in the middle of the circle, point a finger at him/herself and laugh out loud then sit down in the circle to enjoy the rest of the game. Group members clap "Very Good, Very Good, Yay!!" in order to appreciate the gesture.

As the game continues change the passwords to "Cola-Pepsi" "chicken rice" or any other combination of words. Besides food items you can also have bodily expressions and gestures like Kissing, Farting or whatever makes people laugh.

If the group is very skilled try changing directions between 10 and 1.

With gradual exclusion of participants the circle shrinks. The last person standing is the winner and gets a laughing ovation.

Fortune cookies

I learnt this amusing way of reading fortune cookies from Dr. Naras Bhat, a physician in California. During lunch in a Chinese restaurant we were served fortune cookies at the end of the meal. Dr. Bhat asked us to read what was in our slips and add "in the bedroom", or "in the bathroom", or "at the office", which throws a new hilarious context onto the advice.

Collect fortune cookie slips and keep them handy.

Gibberish games

Gibberish talking is a great warming up exercise for Laughter Yoga --- it breaks down inhibitions and shyness and can be presented as a game.

GIBBERISH TRANSLATION

Divide into pairs. One person speaks a few sentences in gibberish, then the other translates spontaneously with humor.

GIBBERISH CHAOS

Ask your group to sit randomly or stand and talk. Begin with a conversation among few people that turns into an argument, or ask them to express anger or disappointment.

Others in the group then take sides and join in the increasingly passionate discussion. Afterwards, ask different members what was discussed.

Vividly expressing emotions during a gibberish conversation, discussion or argument brings out a chaos of many types of emotions. Some people are compassionate while others can become aggressive.

It's a learning process that can help people who become angry, fearful or frustrated. In the end everybody laughs and has fun.

Appendix 7. Laughter Chanting

This fun and energetic style of counterpoint chanting was developed by laughter clubs in India and is spreading quickly. The group chants while dancing & moving at random.

The leader starts a Ho, Ho, Ha, Ha, Ha clapping and chanting session, then replaces the Ho, Ho by calling a chant, which the group answers with Ha, Ha, Ha clapping.

Here are some verses to get you started but develop your own using local characters, events, news or whatever!

The leader's chant is shown **IN BOLD** in this example:

1, 2, Ha, Ha, Ha --- **3, 4**, Ha, Ha, Ha

Oh my dear, Ha, Ha, Ha

Come, come near, Ha, Ha, Ha... and so on

1, 2 Ha, ha, ha 3, 4 Ha, ha, ha	Young or old Laughter is Gold	Even louder Ha, ha, ha Even faster Ha, ha, ha
Oh my dear Come, come near Oh my dear Run, run, run Laughter Yoga My dose of fun	Come and Laugh Come and dance Let us use The golden chance	Ho, ho Ha, ha Come and laugh Come and play Dance and sing Make your day
Come and laugh Come and sing Come and join The magic ring	If you feel Very sad Everything Feels so bad	Laughter rises Deep within Bubbles over Like a spring
Let us bring Hope and cheer To everyone Far and near	Come and laugh Come and sing Come and join The magic ring	Share a laugh Gain a friend Share a laugh Set the trend
Go on faster Everyone faster faster even louder	Feeling happy Feeling better Feeling lighter So much brighter	Even louder Ha ha ha Even faster Ha ha ha
Even louder Ha, ha, ha Even faster Ha, ha, ha Ho, Ho Ha, ha, ha	Come and laugh With some feeling Come and Laugh Very healing	Ho Ho... Ha Ha...
1, 2, 3 Laughter is free East or West Laughter is the Best	Come and laugh Come and play Dance and sing Make your day	[Speed up clapping and dancing]
	If you laugh If you smile Makes your life So Worthwhile	Very good Very good Yaaaay!!!

Appendix 8. Laughter Yoga Liability Release

The forms in the back of this manual are very important. They are designed to protect you and our organization from liability in the unlikely event that anyone claims that they sustained damage or injury as a result of a Laughter Yoga session.

Since 1995 hundreds of thousands of Laughter Yoga sessions have been run in more than 50 countries without a single report of injury or negative consequences.

However we are living in a capricious world where some individuals have made a business of making legal claims to take advantage of others for financial gain or other purposes.

For that reason all Laughter Yoga professionals (CLY Leaders and CLY Teachers) are required to ensure that each person that participates in a Laughter Yoga club or Laughter Yoga session under their control has completed or completes a liability release document. If they are legal minors then the form must be signed by their parent or authorized guardian.

In the event of participants being part of a group (for example company employees or school children), then please ask the booking representative to sign the Group Release form.

Simply photocopy the form in this document, or download a PDF version from the PROZONE section of our website.

What to do with these forms

- If the person completing their form requests a Laughter Yoga newsletter and provides an email address please sign them up on www.laughteryoga.org to receive a newsletter.

Be careful that their email address is kept secure and does not fall into the hands of other parties.

- All forms must be retained. They are extremely valuable in that they could save you, or another laughter professional from an expensive legal battle.

Keep them in a safe place, once or twice a year post them to Laughter Yoga International. We will make electronic copies and enter them into an international database to protect our professionals from possible legal action.

Please post them to

Laughter Yoga International
A1 Denzil - Cross Road 3
Lokhandwala Complex, Andheri West
Mumbai 400053 India

Laughter Yoga Group Information & Liability Release

Laughter Yoga is a fun and healthy exercise regime with beneficial effects for the body, mind and emotions. Like any form of aerobic exercise, it should not be practiced by people with medical problems without first taking advice from their medical practitioner.

Laughter Yoga should not be considered as a substitute for proper medical consultation for physical, mental and psychological illnesses.

It may not be suitable for everyone. Laughing involves some physical strain and a rise in intra-abdominal pressure. It is contraindicated for people suffering from

- Advanced (bleeding) piles
- Any kind of hernia
- Any persistent cough
- Anything with acute symptoms
- Epilepsy
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Incontinence of urine
- Major psychiatric disorders
- Severe backache
- Or having undergone surgery within the last 3 month

This list is for guidance only and is not meant to be exhaustive. If in doubt, first consult a trained medical professional for guidance. Anyone already undergoing physician-prescribed therapy should seek the advice of their doctor before reducing or stopping such treatment.

Please use your common sense. If during a session you feel sudden or new pain please leave the session immediately, or advise the leader if you require assistance.

Liability Release on Behalf of a Group

Name _____

Address _____

Please Read This Carefully:

The group is participating in Laughter Yoga sessions requiring physical exertion that may be strenuous and may cause physical injury. I will ensure that each participant is informed of the risks and hazards involved.

Group members are physically fit and have no medical condition that would prevent their full participation in Laughter Yoga sessions, or if they have medical problems or conditions these will be fully revealed to the Laughter Yoga leader before each session.

I assume full responsibility for any risks, injuries or damages, known or unknown, which might be incurred by all group members as a result of participating in the sessions, and knowingly, voluntarily and expressly waive any claim against the Dr. Kataria School of Laughter Yoga, Laughter Yoga International, their leaders, teachers, employees or assistants for injury or damages that may be sustained as a result of participation. Group members, their heirs or legal representatives forever release waive, discharge and covenant not to sue for any injury or death caused by their negligence or other acts.

I have read the above release and waiver of liability and fully understand its contents. I voluntarily agree to the terms and conditions stated above.

Laughter Yoga News

To receive our e-newsletter please provide your e-mail address:

Signature of adult: _____
authorized to act on behalf of the Group.

Date(Day/Month/Year): ____/____/____

LAUGHTER YOGA INTERNATIONAL

A1 DENZIL - CROSS ROAD 3 LOKHANDWALA COMPLEX, ANDHERI WEST, MUMBAI 400053 INDIA

TEL +91 22 2631 6426, EMAIL INFO@LAUGHTERYOGA.ORG

INDIA USA EUROPE CANADA AUSTRALIA

WWW.LAUGHTERYOGA.ORG

Laughter Yoga Information & Liability Release

Laughter Yoga is a fun and healthy exercise regime with beneficial effects for the body, mind and emotions. Like any form of aerobic exercise, it should not be practiced by people with medical problems without first taking advice from their medical practitioner.

Laughter Yoga should not be considered as a substitute for proper medical consultation for physical, mental and psychological illnesses.

It may not be suitable for everyone. Laughing involves some physical strain and a rise in intra-abdominal pressure. It is contraindicated for people suffering from

- Advanced (bleeding) piles
- Any kind of hernia
- Any persistent cough
- Anything with acute symptoms
- Epilepsy
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Incontinence of urine
- Major psychiatric disorders
- Severe backache
- Or having undergone surgery within the last 3 month

This list is for guidance only and is not meant to be exhaustive. If in doubt, first consult a trained medical professional for guidance. Anyone already undergoing physician-prescribed therapy should seek the advice of their doctor before reducing or stopping such treatment.

Please use your common sense. If during a session you feel sudden or new pain please leave the session immediately, or advise the leader if you require assistance.

Liability Release

Name _____

Address _____

Please Read This Carefully:

I am participating in Laughter Yoga sessions requiring physical exertion that may be strenuous and may cause physical injury. I am fully aware of the risks and hazards involved.

I am physically fit and I have no medical condition that would prevent my full participation in Laughter Yoga sessions, or if I have any medical problems or conditions I have fully revealed these to the Laughter Yoga leader before each session.

I agree to assume full responsibility for any risks, injuries or damages, known or unknown, which I might incur as a result of participating in the sessions, and knowingly, voluntarily and expressly waive any claim I may have against the Dr. Kataria School of Laughter Yoga, Laughter Yoga International, their leaders, teachers, employees or assistants for injury or damages that I may sustain as a result my participation. I agree that I, my heirs or legal representatives forever release waive, discharge and covenant not to sue for any injury or death caused by their negligence or other acts.

I have read the above release and waiver of liability and fully understand its contents. I voluntarily agree to the terms and conditions stated above.

Laughter Yoga News

To receive our e-newsletter please
provide your e-mail address:

Signature of adult: _____
or if minor, of properly authorized
parent or guardian.

Date(Day/Month/Year): ____/____/____

LAUGHTER YOGA INTERNATIONAL

A1 DENZIL - CROSS ROAD 3 LOKHANDWALA COMPLEX, ANDHERI WEST, MUMBAI 400053 INDIA

TEL +91 22 2631 6426, EMAIL INFO@LAUGHTERYOGA.ORG

INDIA USA EUROPE CANADA AUSTRALIA

WWW.LAUGHTERYOGA.ORG

