



Laughter Yoga – Caregiving and Self Care Programs

Intended Audience

For all members, including people living with cancer, family members and significant caregivers.

Program Description

Laughter Yoga is a unique exercise routine that combines unconditional laughter with pranayama yogic breathing. Perfectly suited for anyone of any physical ability, this program combines tension-releasing laughter with breathing, stretching, chanting and rhythmic clapping. Simultaneously, Laughter Yoga provides research-informed insight into laughter, including how and why it works and the immeasurable benefits it lends to wellness. Once participants learn the practical skills for creating laughter in a group, many find they can laugh anytime anywhere.

Benefits and Impact

Shared laughter unites people. In addition to positive attitudinal effects such as joy and amusement, laughter also triggers healthy physical changes to the body. Research shows laughter can strengthen the immune system, boost energy, diminish pain, and mitigate the effects of depression. It is a powerful antidote to stress, conflict and trauma, with beneficial applications for cardiovascular health and cancer recovery. The ability to laugh easily and frequently is a tremendous resource for surmounting problems, enhancing relationships, and supporting physical, mental and emotional health. Best of all, this priceless medicine is fun, free and easy to use!

What to Expect at a Session

Sessions begin with gentle warm-up techniques that 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 acting and visualization techniques with playfulness. These exercises, when combined with the strong social dynamics of group behaviour, lead to prolong and hearty unconditional laughter. Laughter exercises are interspersed with breathing exercises.

Participant Comments

“When I’m laughing I’m not sad, scared or worried about what lies ahead.”

“I just want to stay in this safe happy room with these people forever!”

“I feel like I’ve had a whole body work-out... from my toes to my attitude.”

What the Research Says:

Laughter can uplift spirits, create a sense of fulfillment, induce relaxation, and temporarily decrease blood pressure, heart rate, and respiratory rate (Strean, 2009). The benefits of laughter therapy (LT) have been noted in numerous clinical populations including oncology, critical care, psychiatry, rehabilitation, palliative care, and hospice care. In a randomized control trial conducted in South Korea by Kim et al., researchers analyzed the effects of LT on patients in a radio-oncology unit. The 60-minute LT sessions for 3 consecutive days consisted of information on the benefits of laughter, humorous activities designed to elicit laughter, sharing and meditation. LT participants reported an increase in self-esteem and a decrease in depression, tension, anger, fatigue, and confusion. (Strean WB. 2009. Laughter prescription. Canadian Family Physician. 55(10), 965-967.) (Kim SH, Kook JR, Kwon M, HaSon M, Ahn SD, Kim YH. 2015. The Effects of Laughter Therapy on Mood State and Self-Esteem in Cancer Patients Undergoing Radiation Therapy: A Randomized Controlled Trial. The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine. 21(4): 217-222.)

Program Frequency:

Monthly

Optimum class size: 20

Related Programs:

Bird Strolls
Visualization and Relaxation
and other meditative programs

