



Laughter Works®

...pathways to healthful living.

PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF LAUGHTER

- *Laughter is a physical activity and with any exercise, heart rate and blood pressure go up. Studies show that after laughter subsides, these rates go down below base rate.
- *Skeletal muscle tension decreases. In this regard, laughter differs from other forms of exercise. Muscle tension is a major contributor to head and backaches, and can greatly increase other pains. Laughter relaxes muscles, thereby reducing pain.
- *Respiratory rate is stimulated. Deep breathing and coughing stimulated by laughter can help to clear out the lungs and increase blood gas exchange. Oxygen rich blood is carried to the brain. (We get smarter!)
- *Energy expenditure increases, body temperature rises and the digestive track is stimulated. Norman Cousins called laughter "Internal Jogging." (Watch for the Laughter Diet!)
- * Studies have recently shown that laughter bolsters the immune system by increasing lymphocyte proliferation, natural killer cell activity, and immune response in saliva. Laughter decreases epinephrine and cortisol levels, which can suppress the immune system.
- * Laughter has been shown to be effective in "undoing" stress and negative emotions leading to cardiovascular reactivity. Laughter looks like a cardiac elixir!
- * According to Dr. Lee Berk from Loma Linda University, endorphins are released when people laugh, which would explain the good feelings laughter brings us.
- * Dr. Allan Reiss of Stanford University found that laughter activates the same area of the brain that responds to cocaine and methamphetamine, giving us a natural high. Say YES to laughter!

SOCIAL and EMOTIONAL BENEFITS OF LAUGHTER

Laughter can help break the helpless/hopeless cycle. It places stressful situations in perspective and provides a new outlook. It helps lift depression and can act as an antagonist to anger. Laughter is a social activity that brings people together. Studies have shown that only 6% of laughter occurs when people are alone. When we laugh with someone, we feel instantly at ease.

Studies have shown that men laugh less often than women. Sometimes as we age, we laugh less. We begin to believe some of the myths about laughter. We wait to become happy before we laugh. Even our words devalue the importance of laughter. When we enter into a new important relationship, we say that we are getting "serious." Laughter at work implies that we are not serious about our job. Laughter has intellectual, social, physiological, and spiritual health-enhancing benefits.

At the height of laughter the universe is flung into a kaleidoscope of new possibilities.

Jean Houston