



All About Laughter Yoga -By Cassandra Van Dyck

“Laughter takes you from moping to coping to hoping.” - Dr. Joel Goodman

“Very good, very good, yeah!” is just one of the things you might find yourself exclaiming in unison with your fellow classmates in a laughter yoga class. At first, it might feel a little uncomfortable and may-be a little silly. You might feel this way, but find your-self smiling uncontrollably at the same time. While a different yoga class might leave you with sore limbs, this practice could you have you rubbing your cheeks.

Laughter yoga was created in India in 1995 by Dr. Madan Kataria, a family physician who was looking for an alternative way to treat patients that were suffering from stress-related illnesses. It is based on the belief that voluntary laughter is as psychologically and physiologically beneficial as spontaneous laughter. This is great news, considering the incredible benefits of laughing. Laughter relaxes the entire body, relieving tension and stress, and has been shown to leave muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes. It boosts your immune system by decreasing stress hormones and increasing immune cells, triggers the release of endorphins, and protects the heart by increasing blood flow. And it’s a natural, easy thing to do, right? Not always.

When experiencing prolonged stress and pressures, it might be hard to remember the last time you laughed. Sadness, anger, frustration, and exhaustion might feel more familiar than silliness. If you’re having a hard time, jokes that used to be funny might not make you smile in the same way, and humorous movies or television shows that used to have you in stitches might leave you feeling flat. This is why laughter yoga can be so effective. The basis of laughter yoga is that your body knows how to laugh in spite of what your mind might have to say. You do not have to know jokes, have a sense of humour, or even feel happy to participate in a class. It invites you to laugh for no reason until that laughter starts to feel real.

Laughter yoga asks attendees to participate with their whole bodies. Laughter is initiated in a group through eye contact and playfulness that might feel child-like, but it soon turns in to real and contagious laughter. Some people call laughter yoga “internal jogging” be-cause its effects are akin to physical exercise. “On a social level, laughter helps dispel loneliness and alienation. It breaks the ice, makes people feel at ease with each other, and improves communication,” says Laughter Yoga Metro Vancouver.

Laughter Yoga classes can take many unexpected turns and twists, but if you’re still wondering what sorts of things the leader might ask you to do, or if you’d like to try laughing on your own or with a loved one at home, here’s a sneak peek at some laughter yoga activities!

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 with the tip of the thumb, making a small circle. The hand is moved

forward and backwards in jerks while looking at different members and laughing in a very gentle manner, appreciating your fellow beings.

Basketball Throw: someone throws an air basketball and everyone either cheers or groans, depending on whether the shot sunk or missed.

Cell Phone Laughter: Hold imaginary cell phones; move around to meet different people and interact while laughing; point to cellphone as if pointing to the person you're talking to.

Swinging Laughter: This has a lot of playfulness. All the members move outwards by two meters to widen the circle. On instruction from the anchor person people move forward by making a prolonged sound of Ae-Ae-Ae, simultaneously raising the hands and they all burst into laughter while meeting in the center and waving their hands. After the bout of laughter, they move back to their original position. The second time they move forward by saying Oh-Oooooo and burst into laughter.

Serious Laughter, or Try To Be Serious Laughter: Talk with a straight face while trying to not smile or laugh.

Laughter Yoga has gained attention in the last two decades around the world, and for good reason.

In some senior's homes, Laughter Yoga is practiced daily. Even if we're feeling well, a good laugh can only improve our moods and uplift us.

Are you interested in giving Laughter Yoga a try? Visit the following websites for more information on classes near you!

Laughter Yoga North Vancouver

North Shore: John Wallstrom

Email: john@wallstroms.com

Phone or text: (604) 619-9535

www.laughteryogacanada.org

The Smiling Yogi

www.thesmilingyogi.com/laughter-clubs/

Postures and Prompts with Andrea Winterbottom

<http://www.nvdpl.ca/event/postures-and-prompts-1>

"Laughter is the language of the soul." - Pablo Neruda