

Laughter as Therapy

Laughter Yoga and Laughter Clubs

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What's it all about? If laughter is the best medicine, then what is the recommended dosage? What are the benefits, and are there any side effects that we should know about? How can we obtain that regular healthy dose?

In 1995 Dr Madan Kataria pondered these questions in Mumbai, India. He felt his patients needed another way to improve their health & well-being apart from medication and life-style advice. Researching information on the internet for his monthly patient magazine Dr Kataria discovered the scientifically proven information about the health benefits of laughter.

After using jokes initially to provoke group laughter, and finding them a limited resource Dr Kataria turned to yoga for ideas. So Laughter Yoga came into being - a combination of yoga breathing exercises, gentle movements to reduce tension in neck and shoulder muscles & laughter exercises. From his research Dr Kataria knew an amazing fact. The brain cannot tell the difference between fake laughter and real laughter, so his motto became "*FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT*"

Dr Kataria devised many playful laughter exercises using fake laughter which in a group often result in real laughter which is also contagious! There are now over 5000 laughter clubs around the world including 11 in Western Australia.

The first Sunday in May was declared World Laughter Day by Dr Madan Kataria several years ago. The members of Laugh WA (Inc) gather in Kings Park each year to share laughter yoga with members of the public who join in very enthusiastically. Check out www.laughwa.org.au for details of Laughter Clubs, Training and World Laughter Day.

Yes laughter does have side effects! Hearty Laughter initially raises your Blood Pressure (but then

it is lowered as you relax afterwards). Laughter also raises the pressure in your abdomen. Dr Kataria mentions certain precautions and suggests you consult your Doctor if you have any of the following:

History of High Blood Pressure, Heart Attack, Bypass or Angina, Hernia, Advanced Piles, Weak Pelvic Floor with risk of Prolapse, Recent Surgery, Glaucoma, and Early Pregnancy. Of course if you have a cold/ flu, please don't bring it, and spread it around!

You can participate in a laughter yoga session seated in a chair or standing depending on your energy levels. All you need is a willingness to raise your L.Q. (Laughter Quotient), to bring some playfulness into your life & enjoy the many health benefits.

So if you feel you're fit enough to come to Laughter Yoga - the **Cottesloe Laughter Club at CSA** will always welcome you every Monday morning (except public holidays) 11.45 -12.45 pm.

Why is it worth coming? To rediscover your ability to laugh, and for the benefits of course!

Laughter:

- *Relieves stress and tension*
- *Lowers Blood Pressure and cortisol levels (stress hormone)*
- *Strengthens the Immune System*
- *Releases endorphins (feel good hormones)*
- *Provides an internal work-out*
- *Enhances relationships*
- *Starting with each individual may eventually contribute to World Peace!*

And the recommended dose - 10 minutes of healthy laughter daily! ❖.