

Laughter Yoga

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~ By Kirsten Antony R.N. ~

How long has it been since you had a good laugh- a big, hearty belly laugh that made you feel great the rest of the day? If you are like many Americans, it has been too long. We all know laughing makes us feel better. Seriously, why don't we laugh more?

Stress. Pain. Anxiety. Trauma. All these factors can cause us to lose the joy, mirth and laughter in our lives. But, it is laughter that conversely can reduce stress, pain, anxiety and trauma. If you've lost your laugh, a local Laughter Yoga group might be able to help bring laughter back into your life.

Laughter Yoga is a concept founded by Dr. Madan Kataria with the first Laughter Yoga club in India in 1995. Now Laughter Yoga is worldwide. Laughter Yoga gives people a way to bring laughter and healing into their lives. The techniques include playfulness, breathing exercises, eye contact, body movement and of course laughter.

In 2007, I was introduced to Laughter Yoga and became a Certified Laugh Leader. Here are a few things I have learned from Laughter Yoga:

- By having a playful attitude and a lightness of heart, it is easier to be in the present moment, let go and laugh. Children live in the present moment and laugh much more than adults do. We can remember to have fun and laugh if we have a playful attitude and outlook on life.
- In Laughter Yoga, pretend laughter leads to real laughter. By trying different laughter techniques, we, as a group, start laughing. Pretend laughter soon becomes giggles and eventually turns into real laughter. Laughter is contagious!
- Laughter Yoga is also an exercise in breathing. Breathing exercises help reduce stress by stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system. Deep, diaphragmatic breathing exercises help calm the mind and bring awareness to the body.
- It is performed in a group setting. This may be intimidating at first. You may be afraid to let go and play. You may feel foolish. But, everyone reveals a silly side and most likely feels the same way. Eventually, a level of trust comes and it is easier to let go of any inhibitions.
- Laughter Yoga is considered an exercise and should be treated as such. There is a good amount of body movement and laughter itself can be a real workout. It happened to me more than once – belly laughs can cause muscle aches in the abs from laughing so hard!

Interested in learning more about Laughter Yoga? Visit <http://laughteryoga.org/>

Recommended DVD documentary on laughter: **Laughology** by Albert Nerenberg.

Looking for a local Laughter Yoga group to join? Visit [Denverlaughs.com](http://denverlaughs.com) or call Meredee at 303-877-9086. Denver Laughter Club meets in Denver on Mondays at 12 noon. It is FREE and everyone is welcome to join in the fun!