

## **Happy Yoga Sweeping the World (1350 words)**

For centuries, people have known that laughter is the best medicine. Now, science has proved it. But where is laughter these days? It seems people have forgotten how to laugh. Dr. Madan Kataria, a physician from Mumbai, India, discovered a breakthrough technique—Laughter Yoga—which has become a global phenomenon.

In 1995, Indian Doctor Madan Kataria was excited by his research into laughter. It clearly showed that laughter strengthens the immune system, the key to our health. It also reduces stress, today's number one killer, and offers a simple way to treat depression and many other modern problems.

Children laugh 400 times a day during their important growth phase, but adult laughter has decreased significantly during the 20th century. Adults laugh only 10-15 times a day. Dr. Kataria realized that much more laughter is needed for us to maintain optimal mental and physical health, but how could that laughter be delivered? There was no way to send people to a chemist or clinic for a dose of laughter.

He decided to experiment and try to find a simple and reliable way to deliver the benefits of laughter to people. His first attempts were humor-based: a small group got together and told jokes and funny stories to make themselves laugh. This worked for a while, but after just a few weeks, they started running out of fresh jokes.

Dr. Kataria became determined to find a way to laugh without humor, in the same way that children laugh all day without jokes. He worked with his wife, Madhuri, a yoga teacher. Together, they adapted yogic breathing exercises that were very similar to laughter and experimented with ways to laugh without humor.

The breakthrough came when they approached laughter as a body exercise. Dr. Kataria found that his laughter group could reliably induce hearty laughter with laughter exercises that incorporated elements of yogic breathing exercises. Laughter Yoga was born.

### **Spreading the Laughter**

What has been amazing, says Dr. Kataria, is to see how people took to it. "Our group started with just five people, including me and my wife, Madhuri. We laughed in a public park near our home. In the beginning, we had more spectators laughing at us than participants in our group. Passersby were mystified—they stared and asked us, 'Why are you laughing? What is so funny?'"

But members of the laughter group felt powerful benefits. It felt so good that they wanted to laugh every day. They told their friends how good it felt, and the group expanded. After a few months, more groups started around Mumbai. Newspapers wrote articles about us, interviewed group members, and even more people wanted to laugh.

"I was surprised," related Dr. Kataria. "Indians are very subdued about their emotions and seldom laugh in public, but suddenly thousands of people were laughing uproariously in public parks every morning." Participants reported significant health improvements. Almost everyone said they stopped getting many colds and flu, but others reported depression lifting, and chronic medical problems improving or even disappearing. Word of improvements in a wide range of illnesses and medical conditions spread. It became obvious that Laughter Yoga was helping people become healthier.

For some years, Dr. Kataria has traveled the world to train Laughter Yoga teachers and leaders in many countries. He meets doctors and researchers doing scientific studies into the effects of laughter. Through these studies, we are coming to understand the science behind the benefits of laughter. They highlight how important laughter is for mental and physical health in the modern world. There are hundreds of scientific studies conducted in prestigious universities and hospitals around the world.

### **Free Laughter Yoga Clubs**

Laughter Yoga started in free clubs run by volunteers. There are more than 16,000 Laughter Yoga clubs around the world, with new clubs opening every week. Laughter Yoga clubs are especially popular in India and other Asian countries, where people are accustomed to visiting public parks daily. In Europe, America, and other countries, Laughter Yoga is spreading to yoga studios and fitness centers, with participants paying for the convenience of laughing in comfortable places at convenient times.

### **Laughter Yoga for Schools**

Laughter Yoga is also spreading into schools, aged care facilities, hospitals, factories, supermarkets, computer companies—even government offices and hotels. Teachers in schools that include 10 minutes of laughter in the morning assembly report that the mood and atmosphere change for the better. Teachers and students are happier, with a more positive outlook, improved communication, less discipline required, and better attendance. Academic results have shown improvement, especially in subjects that require creative thinking.

### **Laughter Yoga in Hospitals**

Hospitals have been experimenting with laughter for their staff and healthcare workers. It is widely accepted that laughter speeds healing and improves the mental outlook of patients. Some of the strongest positive feedback has come from doctors, nurses, and hospital staff, who are amazed at how Laughter Yoga sessions melt away stress and make it easier for them to cope with their jobs. They say that patients comment on their happy and positive attitude. Many doctors have started recommending that their patients join laughter clubs.

### **For Companies and Corporations**

Employers are finding that Laughter Yoga in the workplace can influence their business in positive ways. By introducing Laughter Yoga sessions, companies in different countries have

reported a happier workplace, increased motivation, better communication, increases in sales and productivity, increased creativity, and better teamwork. They've also reported decreases in illness and absenteeism, and a reduction in employee turnover. Some companies credit Laughter Yoga with increased profits.

### **Get Involved in Laughter Yoga**

You can join a free laughter club on Zoom every day from the comfort of your home. Click here to register.

You can watch hundreds of videos for free on the Laughter Guru YouTube channel. Click here.

You can become a Certified Laughter Yoga Leader and start your own laughter club or teach Laughter Yoga in groups. For an online training course, click here.

Visit [laughteryoga.org](http://laughteryoga.org). Become a part of the global laughter community today!

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