

Laughing Yourself Healthy (550 words)

Laughter Yoga is spreading across the globe in public parks, yoga studios, community centers, fitness clubs, schools, companies, hospitals, and many other venues. Developed in 1995 by Indian physician Dr. Madan Kataria, there are now hundreds of thousands of people laughing in more than 100 countries. So, what keeps them coming back for more?

People who practice Laughter Yoga report feelings of happiness and joy, and they say they leave sessions full of positive energy, which helps them cope with stress and makes it almost impossible to feel depressed. Participants often mention that it puts them in a positive state of mind and boosts their self-confidence. Many claim they no longer need antidepressant prescriptions. It's these uplifting effects that keep people returning for more.

Health Benefits

Scientific research has shown that laughter is good for the heart and cardiovascular system. Hearty laughter boosts the immune system and helps protect you from colds, flu, and even more serious diseases, including cancer. A 30-minute laughter session provides your body with a good workout and leaves you feeling energized. Laughter is a proven stress-buster, and it reduces stress chemicals in the body more quickly and efficiently than prescription medications.

Laughter Yoga is very different from traditional yoga meditation and postures. There are no complicated poses, and it requires no special clothing or training. You don't even need to be in a good mood—just be prepared to laugh. The benefits are instant—you will feel them right from your first Laughter Yoga session.

How Much to Laugh?

How much laughter is enough? “The more you laugh, the better you will feel, and the healthier you'll be,” says Dr. Kataria. “In India, people laugh for an hour every morning. In Western countries, laughter sessions are more often held weekly, but daily sessions are becoming more common as people who start want to laugh every day.” To receive the full health benefits, you need to laugh for at least 15-20 minutes. This can easily be achieved in a 30-minute Laughter Yoga session.

Laughter sessions typically involve 20-30 people, although in some countries, groups may consist of 50 or even 80 participants. They are led by a Laughter Yoga leader, trained by Dr. Kataria's organization, who guides the group through simple breathing and laughter exercises to get the laughter flowing. No jokes or humor are used—just physical exercises designed to make it easy to laugh.

Laughter exercises are sometimes described as “fake laughter,” but in most sessions, the laughter soon becomes real. In fact, the body can't tell the difference between fake laughter and genuine laughter, so you receive the health and well-being benefits either way.

Some Laughter Yoga sessions are followed by laughter meditation, an unforgettable experience that is easier to do than describe. In laughter meditation, the laughter flows out of you like a fountain, leaving you filled with joy and happiness.

Laughter Yoga clubs and studios are popping up around the world. To find Laughter Yoga in your area, visit the Laughter Yoga website at www.laughteryoga.org.

If there isn't one nearby, you can train to become a Laughter Yoga leader and start your own club or studio. The training takes just two days, and courses are available from certified teachers worldwide.

You can also see Laughter Yoga in action on the Laughter Guru YouTube channel—click here!

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