

Self-Empowerment

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The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

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BENEFICIAL LAUGHTER

When was the last time you enjoyed a good belly laugh – not just a smile, a giggle, or a chuckle – but a deep full-bodied hearty laugh? If it has been a while, maybe it's time to prime the pump, so to speak, and get those ha-ha's flowing.

This issue of Self-Empowerment focuses on laughter and tosses in a dose of humor, just for laughs. By the way, I have a question – Do those of you who type “LOL” or “ROTFL” in emails *really* laugh out loud or roll on the floor laughing? :-D

I smile a lot and giggle quite a bit, especially at my own thoughts, which I find hilarious. So when I became aware of the “World Laughter Tour” I was curious. I took a look at WorldLaughterTour.com and saw that it is a two-day training to become a Certified Laughter Leader (CLL). It sounded like fun, so when the training was available in my city I spent two days with a dozen brave and fun-loving souls learning the joys and benefits of laughter. We learned therapeutic laughter exercises, and also many suggestions for good-hearted living. (See page 4 for info about some *serious* laughter therapies.)

Benefits of Laughter

It may surprise you to see an incredibly long list of benefits of laughter. Once you see how good it is for you, you may want to do it more. In fact, there are some who practice Laughter Yoga! That's right – now you can enjoy many benefits of laughter for the healing of the body, mind, and spirit.

Laughter improves blood pressure, oxygenates the blood, increases endorphins, boosts the immune system, burns calories, reduces pain, rests the brain, stabilizes moods, decreases anxiety, inspires creativity, enhances communication, cultivates optimism and joy, combats fear, comforts, reduces anger, cultivates enthusiasm, improves morale, reduces loneliness, increases self-confidence, lifts spirits, is a gentle cardiovascular workout and gives one an internal massage.

And you can do it (almost) any time for free!!

How to Laugh

Many of us wait until something is funny, then we'll laugh. But, guess what – it can work the other way around. You can laugh first, and then find the humor or joy that is there to be found.

Give this a try – Mindfully breathe in and breathe out. Breathe in again, and on the next outbreath add the sound of “Ha!” to your exhalation. Do that again, “Ha!” Now try saying “Aloha-ha-ha-ha-ha!” Notice if laughter bubbles up within you. Look in the mirror and try it. Look into someone else's eyes and try it. Making eye contact with another person may trigger peals of laughter and may become rather contagious. You may both reap many health benefits and have some fun doing it!

I Love to Laugh

What could be better? There is a free and easy way to feel better: Laugh your way to health. Maybe laughter *is* the best medicine. It's playful and fun. It brings a childlike quality to the moment. It allows the absurd to be handled in a non-toxic way.

Jokes and riddles may be fun for some, but they are a matter of taste, and can run the risk of being offensive or hurtful. Laughter, however, can be enjoyed in a joke-free way, by playfully and creatively acting out imagined scenarios, imitating animal movements, or using silly props like clown noses or funny hats.

Therapeutic laughter has been successfully and joyfully used in medical settings, nursing homes, business meetings, in the classroom, and in laughter club gatherings.

There is a laughter chant that we use to bring each exercise to a close – repeating “Ho, Ho, ha-ha-ha” three times, clapping with each ho & ha, then raising our hands in the air and shouting “Yay!” Let's do it together: “Ho, Ho, ha-ha-ha. Ho, Ho, ha-ha-ha. Ho, Ho, ha-ha-ha. YAYYYYY!”

May you feel the joy of laughter! :-D
Blessings to you and your loved ones.

Your fellow traveler, *Rev Jiller*©ni

Laugh 'til it helps!

LAUGHTER vs. HUMOR

You may be wondering, “What is the difference between laughter and humor?”

Humor is a psychological phenomenon. It is personal and subjective. It is subject to a person’s culture, language, intelligence, tastes, preferences, values, and the mood of the moment. The bottom line is – we don’t necessarily find the same things funny.

Laughter is a physical act. It is universal. Laughter is air expelled through the glottis in staccato bursts at 1/5 second intervals. The physiological effects and benefits are measurable. It is a natural way to discharge emotional tension. Only 10% of human laughter is in response to jokes. We may laugh from feelings of joy, at the absurd, out of nervousness, in appreciation, to connect with others, or as a result of other internal or external triggers.

Ha!

WORLD LAUGHTER TOUR FOUNDER STEVE WILSON

Ohio Psychologist Steve Wilson, known as The Joyologist, has been studying the effects of humor, laughter and mirth for 25 years and came to the conclusion that only 2-5% of people are getting their full daily quota of laughter, about 15 minutes worth. Laughing is not a denial of tough times, he says, it puts balance into our perspectives. It is something too important to be left to chance.

“One of the most powerful effects of mirthful laughter is how it works to reduce stress by discharging tension. When you are too stressed you cannot absorb information readily or retain it for very long.” Wilson served for eight years as Department Chairman of the Mental Health Technology at Columbus State Community College (Columbus, Ohio), where he applied strategic laughter in the classroom to improve student performance by reducing anxiety, boosting participation and increasing students’ motivation to focus on the material. “The Dalai Lama,” he points out, “has observed that when people laugh, it is easier for them to admit new ideas to their minds. Many people report that their best teachers were the ones who made them laugh.”

And, he realized, there is another important message for teachers: “Students tend to rate professors who make learning fun significantly higher than others.” “Most folks are too stressed, too hurried, too glum, or

just don’t understand laughter enough to take time for it,” says Wilson, “which is too bad, because laughter is so beneficial that everyone needs to make their daily quota. People only laugh for about 3 seconds when they hear a joke, so if you are waiting for jokes to make your quota, you will need about 300 new jokes every day, which is impossible. Fortunately, there are other good options for generating mirthful laughter. That is what I teach.”

Wilson is the founder of the World Laughter Tour, promoting laughter, humor, and mirth for health, for enjoying life more, and as alternatives to violence. “Translating laughter practices into multi-generational, multi-cultural health related programs,” he says, “helps people make better health choices.” His program consists of methods that are uplifting, fun, simple, and powerful tools for individuals, organizations, and service to the community. He has already trained more than 5,000 Certified Laugh Leaders. He says, “We show people how to prevent hardening of the attitudes.”

More than ever the medical community is tapping into the importance of attitudes and emotions. With so many health problems facing the population, and the high cost of medicines, scientific evidence supports the idea that laughter helps keep us healthy. Laughter and humor are not primary treatments, but they can actually help other treatments work better.

According to studies, laughter is credited with boosting the immune system, improving circulation, helping balance blood sugar, relaxing muscles, aiding digestion, and even improving the quality of breast milk in nursing mothers. And, laughter burns calories!

“A life without laughter is too grim to even think about,” Wilson says. His happily emphatic rallying cry: “Laughter is contagious, let’s start an epidemic!”

Steve Wilson is a psychologist, author, speaker, workshop leader and consultant who helps people and organizations get the absolute most out of themselves while they love every minute of it. He is Cheerman of The Bored of World Laughter Tour, Inc. and USA Laughter Clubs.

www.WorldLaughterTour.com www.SteveWilson.com
1-800-NOW-LAFF

**Think Globally,
Laugh Locally.**

Get Absurdified by The Swami

by Swami Beyondananda

For years people have been asking the Swami if he has any “disciples” and for years the Swami has insisted that he has no followers because he gets paranoid when he thinks he is being followed. Nonetheless, he has been looking for ways to encourage and empower others to practice the ancient art of Foo Ling – using laughter as a tool to enlighten up their own lives, and the lives of those around them. And one of the best ways to multiply healing laughter is to celebrate those moments when laughter leads to breakthrough – what the Swami calls moments of Fool-Realization.

You know, the times we find ourselves laughing at our situation in spite of it all, those embarrassing moments where we realize God is laughing so hard we would be fools not to join in. Sometimes the Universe will create a farce-field just for our benefit, and we remember that life is a situation comedy and we are just having an episode.

Says the Swami: “You know, for years I taught Absurdiveness Training, and at the end everyone received Absurdification from the Swami. Well, I have decided to reinstitute that policy. If you’ve ever been struck by enlightening and became fooly-aware, committed a random act of comedy that contributed to someone else’s fool-realization, or otherwise added to the laugh force on the planet – you are absurdifiable!”

Now you can tell the whole world – and remind yourself with a playful certificate suitable for framing that indicates you have been officially Absurdified by the Swami. Put this in a prominent place. Then, whenever irregular hilarity strikes, use it as a reminder that you have had a moment of fool-realization. And you know what? You are still the same fool you were then. All you have to do is realize it, and you are fooly-realized once again.”

Even if you can’t recall a moment of fool-realization or haven’t committed a memorable random act of comedy doesn’t mean you aren’t qualified as a fool. You are, and we can prove it!

To get your absurdification as a bona fide fool from the Swami, all you need to do is send \$10 to Wake Up Laughing, 400 W. Third St., D-144, Santa Rosa, CA 95401, or through the website WakeUpLaughing.com, and we’ll send you an attractive certificate – including Swami’s Seal of Approval – suitable for framing. You are pre-qualified. Anybody who would pay money for this certificate is already foolish. So you’ve earned it, you deserve it, so act now!

Remember, any money spent on foolishness can’t

be spent on anything serious, and as you already know seriousness is one of the major causes of truth decay on the planet.

Steve Bhaerman, aka Swami Beyondananda, is an internationally known author, humorist, and workshop leader. Visit WakeUpLaughing.com

He who laughs lasts.

A DOSE OF HUMOR

A man rushed into a busy doctor’s office and shouted, “Doctor! I think I’m shrinking!” The doctor calmly responded, “Now settle down. You’ll just have to be a little patient.”



- If you jump off a Paris bridge you are in Seine.
- The dead batteries were given out free of charge.
- A bicycle cannot stand alone; it is two tired.
- A will is a dead giveaway.
- Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana.
- You are stuck with your debt if you can’t budge it.
- A boiled egg is hard to beat.
- When fish are in schools they sometimes take debate.
- The short fortune teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.
- Did you hear about the thief who stole a calendar and got twelve months?
- I wondered why the baseball was getting bigger; then it hit me.



A thief broke into the local police station and stole all the toilets and urinals, leaving no clues. A spokesperson was quoted as saying, “We have absolutely nothing to go on.”



After careful research it has been discovered that Vincent Van Gogh had many humorous relatives:

- Mexican cousin: Amee Gogh
- Stagecoach-driver nephew: Wellsfar Gogh
- Sister who loved disco: Go Gogh
- Van-driving niece: Winnie Bay Gogh
- Magician uncle: Wherediddy Gogh
- Psychoanalyst nephew: E. Gogh
- Constipated brother: Cant Gogh
- Aunt who taught positive thinking: Wayto Gogh



GELOTOLOGY – a serious study...

Gelotology is the study of laughing and laughter, its effects on the human body, and of medical abnormalities of laughing. It is also the psychological and physiological study of laughter. The word is from the Greek *gelos*, *geloto* meaning laugh, laughter, laughing .

Laughter Therapy

There is well documented and ongoing research in this field of study leading to new and beneficial therapies practiced by doctors, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals using humor and laughter to help patients cope or treat a variety of physical and psychological issues. The various therapies are not specific to health care professionals or clinicians. Some of the therapies can be practiced individually or in a group setting to aid in a person's well-being. There seems to be something to the old saying "laughter is the best medicine". Or perhaps, as stated by Voltaire, "The art of medicine consists of keeping the patient amused while nature heals the disease."

Humor Therapy: Also known as therapeutic humor, humor therapy uses humorous materials such as books, shows, movies, or stories to encourage spontaneous discussion of the patients' own humorous experiences. This can be provided individually or in a group setting, facilitated by a clinician.

Clown Therapy: In some hospitals "clown rounds" are made by trained clowns. For hospitalized children, clown therapy can increase patient cooperation and decrease parental & patient anxiety. In some children the need for sedation is reduced. Other benefits include pain reduction and the increased stimulation of immune function in children. This use of clown therapy is not limited to hospitals. They can transform other places where needed, such as nursing homes, orphanages, refugee camps, war zones, and even prisons. The presence of clowns tends to have a positive effect.

Laughter Therapy: Clients' laughter triggers are identified, such as people in their lives, things from childhood, situations, movies, jokes, and comedians that make them laugh. Based on the information provided by the client, the clinician creates a personal humor profile to aid in the laughter therapy. The client is taught basic exercises that can be practiced. The intent of the exercises is to remind the client of the importance of relationships and social support. It is

important that the clinician is sensitive to what the client perceives as humorous.

Laughter Meditation: In laughter meditation there are some similarities to traditional meditation. However, it is the laughter that focuses the person to concentrate on the moment. It is a three-stage process of stretching, laughing and/or crying, and a period of meditative silence. In the first stage, the person places all energy into stretching without laughter. In the second stage, the person starts with a gradual smile, and then slowly begins to purposely belly laugh or cry, whichever occurs. In the final stage, the person abruptly stops laughing or crying, then with their eyes closed they breathe without a sound and focus their concentration on the moment. The process is approximately a 15 minute exercise.

Laughter Yoga & Laughter Clubs: Laughter yoga incorporates breathing, yoga, and stretching techniques along with laughter. The structured format includes several laughter exercises for a period of 30 to 45 minutes facilitated by a trained individual. Practiced, it can be used as supplemental or preventative therapy. Laughter yoga can be performed in a group or a club. Therapeutic laughter clubs are extension of Laughter Yoga, but in a formalized club format. The need for humorous materials is not necessarily required.

Source: en/wikipedia.org/wiki/Gelotology

Special Event:

JILLERONI'S HAPPY HOUR LAUGHTER CLUB GATHERINGS

Share some mirthful warmth on a cold winter's night

Join us for an hour of laughter exercises designed to
reduce stress, prevent hardening of the attitudes,
and contribute to world peace!
What could be better?!

Sunday, January 17, 2010 and February 21, 2010
6:00 - 7:00 pm in Northeast Philadelphia
Suggested Donation: \$5

** Save the date * Mark your calendar * Register today**

Register for one or both evenings
Contact: 215-742-0552 or Jilleroni@juno.com

I hope you can join us for a gentle laughter workout!

Song Lyrics to "I Love to Laugh" from Mary Poppins

Uncle Albert:
I love to laugh
Loud and long and clear
I love to laugh
It's getting worse ev'ry year

The more I laugh
The more I fill with glee
And the more the glee
The more I'm a merrier me
It's embarrassing!
The more I'm a merrier me!

Mary Poppins:
Some people laugh through their noses
Sounding something like this "Mmm..."
Some people laugh through their teeth goodness
sake
Hissing and fizzing like snakes

Bert:
Some laugh too fast
Some only blast - ha!
Others, they twitter like birds
Then there's the kind
What can't make up their mind

Uncle Albert:
When things strike me as funny
I can't hide it inside
And squeak - as the squeakelers do
I've got to let go with a ho-ho-ho...
And a ha-ha-ha...too!

All:
We love to laugh
Loud and long and clear
We love to laugh
So ev'rybody can hear
The more you laugh
The more you fill with glee
And the more the glee
The more we're a merrier we!



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302 N. Washington Avenue, #101

For info call Rev. Jill Sabin Carel 215-742-0552.

Whatever else you do or forbear,
Impose upon yourself the task of happiness;
And now and then abandon yourself
to the joy of laughter.

And however much you condemn the evil in the world,
Remember that the world is not all evil;
that somewhere children are at play,
as you yourself in the old days;
that women still find joy in the stalwart hearts of men;

And that men, treading with restless feet their many paths,
May yet find refuge from the storms of the world
in the cheerful house of love.

Max Ehrmann, 1872-1945

American Lawyer, Philosopher, Poet

*When you laugh at your problems,
you will always have something to
laugh about.*

Daily Word

I release the gladness of my soul into the environment.

It's been said that, on average, children laugh up to 300 times a day while adults laugh only 15 times a day. In reality, however, there is no age limitation on laughter.

If I want to feel younger and look younger, then it's only natural that part of my daily routine is to laugh more. Laughing gives the muscles of my face, chest, and abdomen a workout. A hearty laugh stimulates my heart rate, causes me to breathe deeply, and releases happiness hormones, my endorphins.

Laughter is one of the ways I express my gratitude to God. As I laugh, I release the gladness of my soul into the environment – creating something that's good for me and good for all those around me.

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Blessings to you!

The mission of Agape Interfaith Ministries is to encourage, support and inspire a deepening conscious relationship with Divinity for the greater experience of wholeness, abundance, love and peace. We serve to elevate consciousness through individual and group educational activities, and community service.