

Laughter Therapy

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Abstract

Laughter is a normal and natural physiologic response to certain stimuli with widely acknowledged psychological benefits. Laughing is an excellent way to reduce stress in our lives, and can help you to cope with and survive a stressful lifestyle. However, current research is beginning to show that laughter may also have serious positive effects for those who engage in it on a regular basis. This article reviews the current understanding of laughter's therapy, its benefits, impact on the health.

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Introduction

Laughter is the biological response to body. Laughter therapy is a practice of laughing for a long time. It is having a belief that it will provide physiological and psychological benefits like spontaneous laughter. It is done in single as well as in groups with eye to eye contact, making jokes and playfulness with others.¹ In the mid-1990s, it was practiced in early mornings in open parks, primarily by groups of older people. In India it is developed by Indian physician Dr. Madan Kataria.⁶

So many health benefits are associated with laughter therapy. It is considered as a good medicine in the world without any side effects and its free of cost. So everyone can practice this as a habit in their day-to-day daily life for good health.²

What is Laughter Therapy?

It is using the humor to improve overall health. The aim of this therapy is to produce laugh naturally to relieve physiological and emotional and psychological stress and discomfort.

It is a therapy that uses a sense of humor to get laugh so that the people can get relief from pain and control their stress and improve a person's sense of well-being. It is used to help people to cope-up with a serious disease like cancer. It includes laughter exercises, comedy movies, games, and puzzles. It is a type of alternative therapy as well as humor therapy.³

Physiology of Laughter

The study of laughter and its effects on body in both physiological and psychological perspective

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is called as Gelatology (from the Greek root gelos means 'to laugh').

Laughter is the physiological response to humor. It consists of a set of gestures and the production of a sound. When we laugh heartily, bodily changes occur in many parts of the body. When we laugh the muscles throughout the body contract and spreads from face through respiratory system and continues to entire body.⁴ When the people are happy they laugh, but laughter has the power to make people happy. And when one laugh it boosts heart rate and strengthens immune system.

Benefits of Laughter Therapy

Physiological benefits

- Laughter is a sign of good will towards others, laughter can reduce anxiety and other negative emotions, it is an immune booster. It acts as a natural anti-depressant, it can relieve pain and it burns calories.
- Laughter lowers the blood pressure. It will reduce the risk of stroke and heart attack. It reduces production of stress hormone levels. It improves cardiac health; Boosts T-cells. It improves the release of endorphins. It promotes a sense of well-being.
- This therapy aims to get people laughing as individual as well as in group and it will reduce stress levels and it makes everyone to feel happy.
- If you measures after 15–20 minutes of laughter therapy many changes occurs in bodily like blood pressure, pulse rate, muscular tension reduce below baseline values. It promotes the body's natural fight or flight response to overcome stress. It provides a sense of relaxation physically, psychologically and emotionally.⁵
- In brain the frontal lobe parietal occipital lobe and hemispheres were utilized this and seems to increased production in catecholamine's which is useful for brain functions like memory, recapturization, alertness.
- Laughter can decrease the secretion of cortisol hormones and stress hormones.
- At present studies are stating that laughter stimulates the release of endorphins which is useful to reduce pain levels and produce a feeling of euphoria.

- Laughter also has a useful effect on immune system power. Studies state that a relationship between laughter and production of T-lymphocytes and K-cells, which is useful for immune functioning effectively in the body and provides a booster energy to body.

Psychological benefits

- When we laugh, our bodies produce endorphins, which are considered to be the "happiness hormone".
- Laughter also combats hormones such as cortisol and epinephrine. These hormones are released as a response to stress.
- Laughter improves cognition, emotions, learning and memory functions.
- Laughter not only provides us with good times, but also creates tons of positive effects on both our minds and bodies.⁷

Social benefits

- It can improve cooperation and empathy between people of different cultural backgrounds and fosters better communication.
- It usually an indicator of family vitality. It is very attractive at the interpersonal level, especially for women.
- It provides a positive way of dealing the stressful things in life.
- It provides enthusiasm in working environment.
- It facilitates the relationships and cooperation and coordination between employees.⁸

Types of Laugh

- *Bray*: laugh loudly and harshly
- *Break up*: laugh unrestrainedly
- *Cachinnation*: loud convulsive laughter
- *Cackle*: It is a loud laugh
- *Chortle*: It is a soft partly suppressed laugh
- *Giggle*: It is a foolish or nervous laugh
- *Guffaw*: It is burst of loud and hearty laughter
- *Haw-haw*: It is a loud laugh that sounds like a horse neighing
- *Snicker*: It is a disrespectful laugh
- *Titter*: It is a nervous restrained laugh.⁹

Opportunities to Laugh

- Watch a comedy movie with friends.
- Watch comedy television show.
- Read the funny pages in magazines or news papers.
- Share a good joke or a funny story to others
- Host a game with friends and family members.
- Play with a pet animal.
- Play with children.

Laughter Therapy Exercises

Phase-I: In this phase starts with clapping of both the hands in a rhythmic way to activate acupuncture points.

Phase-II: In this deep-breathing exercises is done to improve mood levels.

Phase-III: In this we have to laugh like a child.

Types of Laughter Therapy

Hearty laughter: In this type the person can laugh by openly and heartfully.

Imitation laughter: Here you have to imitate someone else's voice to laugh.

Embarrassing scenario: Here you have to recalling an embarrassing incident and laugh.

Celebration laughter: In this type share any tiny incident, that is worth celebrating, with the group and start laughing.

Silly laughter: Here you have to act like a child and laugh.

Swinging laughter: In this type the people form a big circle and by making a sound they will laugh.¹⁰

Contraindications

- Heart disease
- Epilepsy
- Recent surgery
- Severe backache
- Major psychiatric disorders

World laughter day

Since 1998, it is celebrating to raise awareness about laughter and its benefits among people. In 1998, World Laughter Day was created by Dr. Madan Kataria.⁶

Conclusion

Laugh is a powerful weapon to control stress, pain, and conflict. Good laugh can work faster to bring your mood back into balance than anything. A good laugh relieves physical tension, stress and leaving your muscles relaxed. It increases blood flow, which can help protect you against heart attack and other cardiovascular diseases.¹¹ Laughter makes you feel happy. The good feeling, that you get when you laugh, remains with you even after you stop laughing. It helps you keep a positive worldview in difficult times.

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