

Powerful Patient 2008 week 48

Host: Joyce Graff, WebTalkRadio.net

Laughing Yoga – Laughing Matters

For years we have heard that Laughter is the Best Medicine. A doctor in India founded a movement of Laughter Yoga which has spread to more than 60 countries. Got nothing to laugh about? You can get the same benefits from faking it. “Fake it until you make it.”



Sandra Boris-Berkowitz, M.Ed., LRC

1) About Our Guest

Sandra Boris-Berkowitz, M.Ed., LRC, is a Laughter Yoga Leader certified by the Dr. Kataria School of Laughter Yoga. She is also a teacher and a licensed rehabilitation counselor.

Sandra taught at Perkins School for the Blind (Watertown, Massachusetts) and was the Education Coordinator for Springwell (Watertown, Massachusetts), an agency serving older adults, people with disabilities and family caregivers.

Sandra earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees in education from Boston College.

She is available for laughing workshops for corporate groups or social groups – anywhere people are under stress.

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2) About Laughter

Over 25 years ago, Dr. Norman Cousins in his book [Anatomy of an Illness](#) described how watching Marx Brother movies helped him recover from a life-threatening tissue disease.

"Is it possible," he wondered, "that love, hope, faith, laughter, and confidence and the will to live have therapeutic value?" Cousins made it a point to enjoy a hearty belly laugh several times a day. A few minutes of laughter gave him an hour or more of pain-free sleep.

Scientific studies have proved that hearty laughter has a powerful and immediate strengthening effect on our immune system. See especially the work of Dr. Lee Berk of Loma Linda University, <http://www.llu.edu/news/today/mar99/sm.htm>

Laughter quickly increases immunoglobulin levels that help fight infection and increases the number of Natural Killer Cells (NK cells) in the blood. Natural killer cells play a key role in cancer prevention. Dr Berk took blood samples from subjects watching humorous videos and found that natural killer cells increased significantly with laughter. The NK cells in blood samples from laughing subjects quickly killed cancer cells he introduced into the samples.

There is medical evidence that laughter releases natural hormones (endorphins) which help you feel good. Laughter reduces stress, increases energy, boosts the immune system, provides natural pain relief, and improves brain functioning.

According to Dr. Kataria: "We start laughter as an exercise, and combine it with yoga breathing. When you laugh in a group it turns into real laughter until it becomes unstoppable, from your deep within. Anyone can laugh: no jokes, no humor, no comedy skills.

One minute of laughter is equivalent to 6-10 minutes on a treadmill. Fifteen minutes of laughter a day can lower the risk of cardiovascular disease.

"The most wasted of all days is one without laughter." ~ *e.e.cummings*

"Laughter is an instant vacation." ~ *Milton Berle*

"With the fearful strain that is on me night and day, if I did not laugh I should die." ~ *Abraham Lincoln*

"Laughter may or may not activate the endorphins or enhance respiration, as some medical researchers contend. What seems clear, however, is that [laughter](#) is an antidote to apprehension and panic." ~ *Norman Cousins*

Do you want to add more laughter to your life?

3) About Laughter Yoga

Dr. Madan Kataria founded Laughter Yoga in 1995. There are now more than 6,000 laughter clubs in 60 countries. See <http://www.laughteryoga.org>

Included in this program are excerpts from the audio tracks of several videos on YouTube:

- John Cleese reports on Laughing Yoga for the BBC
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXEfjVnYkqM&NR=1>

- Laughter Yoga in London, a report from Jim Weeble of the BBC
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWi6QVsW-qA>
- Laughter Steps, from Dr. Madan Kataria
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EGTETc5oFU&feature=related>
- Why go to a laughter yoga session?
http://www.laughteryoga.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=198:laughter-clubs&catid=90:about-laughter-clubs&Itemid=266
- Reggie Wells, Oprah’s makeup artist and resident skeptic and complainer, attended a laughing yoga class.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Ia4L6Zlh_w&feature=related
- Laughter Yoga on the Discovery Channel.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahhN3Ryw4O4&feature=related>
- What is Laughter Yoga, with Dr. Madan Kataria
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vGtxmlfx8>
- Laughter Yoga on Today Health with Meredith Vieira
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-DRLr8PCCA>

4) **Some Resources for Seniors**

Sandy describes how she used Laughter Yoga exercises during her mother’s decline and death from Alzheimer’s. Laughter helped raise her mother’s spirits and enlist her cooperation, and it also helped Sandy as the caregiver take care of her own self. In the course of the conversation we mentioned several resources for seniors and caregivers.

Aging Service Access Provider (ASAP) is a federal program, organized at the state level. In Massachusetts, the primary resource page is http://www.seniorconnection.org/aging_network.htm

Similarly, the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are also organized separately by state. The national organization can be found at <http://www.n4a.org/>

Click on the tab “Answers on Aging” to find services in your area.

There is a rich network of services for senior citizens. Sometimes these services are available to younger people who are disabled. Feel free to ask, as they may be able to guide you to services in your state who can help. For a listing of the kinds of services you will find, see <http://www.n4a.org/files/about-n4a/community-based-services.pdf>

Contact the Eldercare Locator at 800.677.1116 or www.eldercare.gov to find home and community-based services.

