

# LAUGHTER THERAPY

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Laughter is believed to be beneficial because it reduces anxiety and stress, renders pain manageable and boosts the immune system. When you are grieving, it may be difficult to laugh. Laughing may make you feel like you are dishonoring your loved one's memory. Some of us feel guilty for laughing when our loved one is no longer here to laugh with us. I can assure you that you are not dishonoring your loved ones. Our minds will tell us that our loved ones would be happy if we are happy. It is our heart that takes some time to reconcile that. Maybe your ability to laugh has to be minimal for now. That is okay. When you are ready, you can rely on the information here to help when the time is right for you.

## **Physical Benefits**

Laughter causes the release of several hormones and chemicals in the body that improve health. By laughing your body releases endorphins that activate the body's opiate receptors, causing a natural painkilling effect. Stimulation of good endorphins can help reduce pain and inflammation and repair the body. Research also shows that continuous laughter can increase pain threshold by as much as 10 percent and help in strengthening the immune system.

## **Mental and Intellectual Health**

There are many significant benefits laughter provides to mental and intellectual health. Laughter raises the levels of serotonin in the body which can help with depression. A 2015 study on depression in middle-aged women showed that laughter increased serotonin levels in the women in all three groups – those without depression, those with mild depression, and those with severe depression. Serotonin increased the most in those with severe depression. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter known as the "happy chemical."

Laughter relieves stress. A 2019 study found that maintaining a sense of humor significantly reduces stress. Laughter triggers the production of "calming hormones" which can reduce unpleasant feelings such as tension and anxiety. Studies have proven the groups of people who were engaged in laughter therapy for 40 minutes twice a week for four weeks, had significantly fewer sleep problems than those who did not. Laughter helps with relaxation.

## **Social Benefits**

Laughter therapy provides significant social benefits. Studies have shown that employees were able to think creatively when their boss used humor in the workplace. Laughter has been found to help resolve conflict and improve communication. Laughter between friends nurtures the friendship!

## **Exercises to practice laughter therapy**

Smile with your eyes-While looking in a mirror, try smiling with your eyes!

Laugh and walk-take a short walk around your house and "fake laugh".

Pencil Challenge-hold a pencil or pen between your teeth, this produces a fake smile.

Watch a funny movie.

Read a funny book or comic strips.

Go to a comedy club for a night out.

As you can see, there are many benefits to laughing. The day will come that you will find yourself laughing when something is truly funny, and you will enjoy it!