

# Laughter~ The Best Medicine

## 8 Reasons Why Laughter is the Best Medicine

*"I don't trust anyone who doesn't laugh."*

*~Maya Angelou*

Along with every notorious saying rides a bundle of truth.

I adore a good chuckle...not just any variety of chuckle, a hearty one. The kind that leaves you gasping for air, clutching your mid-section, and complaining about how much your face hurts for minutes after. The variety of laughter that arrives when all inhibitions are released, when there is no worry about what's right, what's acceptable, what's proper, or how or what others are seeing. Laughter that urges you to reach out to someone, if only to avoid falling. ☐ Laughter that instantaneously invites others to this special place...even, or *especially* if they have no idea what you're even laughing about.

I love that laughter is such an innate, unlearned response. Infants begin to smile during the first few weeks of life and begin to laugh only months into their journey. It is awe-stirring that we are all born with this intrinsic affinity towards smiling and making noise out of pure delight for...errr...whatever we find funny. For anyone (that would be all of us?) who simply feels really incredible after a hearty laugh, laughter having "measurable" benefits won't come as a surprise...or even, really, an interest. Still, I thought it was interesting enough to intermingle the whole beautiful, riotous mess with a smidgen of organization in written form. So, here 'tis:

8 of likely many quality reasons we all should lean into a

good belly laugh (or twenty) every day.

## **Laughter relaxes the whole body.**

A good, body-involving laugh evaporates stress and relieves physical tension, relaxing muscles for a stretch of up to an hour after.

## **Laughter releases endorphins.**

Merriam- Webster's definition of endorphins: any of a group of endogenous peptides found especially in the brain that bind chiefly to opiate receptors and produce some pharmacological effects (as pain relief) like those of opiates.

{ahem?!}

My definition of endorphins: feel-so-good, feel-so-happy chemicals.

The more we laugh, the better we'll feel...so let's heartily chortle at every meal! ☐

## **Laughter boosts your immune system.**

I've come across several studies that suggest that laughter helps to boost your immune system through decreasing stress hormones and increasing immune cells/infection-fighting abilities, improving the body's overall resistance to disease.

## **Laughter protects your heart.**

Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, decreasing high blood pressure, which can help protect against a heart attack and other cardiovascular complications.

## **Laughter dissolves distressing emotions.**

Go ahead. Enjoy a good laugh the next time you and your spouse are 'spiritedly' processing through a difference!

It's so very difficult to feel nervous, angry, or sad while you're deep in authentic laughter.

## **Good humor shifts perspective.**

It allows us to see situations in a less menacing light. Just as I was beginning to write this, my 7 year old daughter—already in a questionable mood—stepped it up a notch or three on the voice decibel meter. Out of seemingly nowhere, I told her that she was acting like a pirate. She followed up with announcing that I was acting like a recycling can. We went back and forth, eventually wrapping up our obscure fest with “acting like a smurf’s knee.” We were both, by that time, laughing so hard that we could barely understand each other. The moment was entirely transformed. Neither of us could recall what she was upset about to begin with. The ability to laugh, play, and have fun with others not only makes life more enjoyable, it also helps to revamp problems and strengthen connections with others. People who incorporate playful humor into their daily lives discover that it renews not only themselves, but has a ripple effect, reaching many of the people surrounding them.

{On third thought, that “connection” bit should be a point all its own...}

## **Laughter helps us connect with others.**

Simply written: it feels good to laugh with someone. It feels *great* to laugh with someone. It feels great to laugh with *anyone*. hella~great. Laughter is a sort of bonding cement, deepening the bonds that we experience with people we're already close with and forging bonds with people we've only recently met. And feeling connected, is (in general) one of the most important foundations of good health.

*“Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.”*

*~Victor Borge*

{and my personal favorite...}

## **Laughter holds us in the present moment.**

When we're laughing, we're focused on whatever is funny in the moment. We're not replaying the past or worrying about the future. We're simply enjoying what is here. What is *\*now.\**

Regardless of how badly we might feel or how tough things may (momentarily) seem, laughter has the ability to immediately transform us and, often, our surrounding circumstances. It has the ability to bring us into a cozy space, to a place of pure joy and bliss, to a new and more balanced perspective, to happiness— over and over again. There's really nothing quite like a really good, from-the-gut, tears-streaming-down-the-face, nose-wiping, can't-quite-breathe, where-did-the-seat-go?!, belly-aching guffaw.

There's only one downside to laughter: it happens far too infrequently. While I don't feel like writing about them here, I can think of a whole slew of, mostly culturally based, reasons why laughter seems to occasionally, if not often, get placed on the back burner.

To steal a dear friend's one word response that is quickly becoming a "go to" staple when "things" become too intense or weighty: *\*burp!\**

Just laugh! Laugh heartily! Laugh often! Laugh while you're rolling out of bed. Laugh while you're making breakfast. Laugh while you're making love. Laugh, solo-style. Laugh in large crowds. Laugh while you're crying. Laugh *until* you're crying. Laugh when your heart hurts. Laugh when your heart is happy. Laugh when it feels appropriate. Laugh when it feels inappropriate. Laugh until you have no idea what you're laughing about...and then laugh some more.

Cheers to consistently finding ourselves amidst a hearty concoction of unrestrained "medicine."

No doctor or therapist required.

*“Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be.”*

*~William Hazlitt*

*“Laugh as much as you breathe and love as long as you live”*

*~Andrea Levy*

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