WL 248

West Virginia University
EXTENSION SERVICE

Laugh A Latte

Rebecca Smith, WVU Extension Agent, Harrison County

Did you know that children laugh 400 times a day, and the average adult laughs 15 times a day?

– "Laugh a Latte for a Latte Life"

Why is it good to "Laugh a Latte"? Let's look at the origin of the word "latte" particularly in the use of the latte stone, which was used as building supports by the ancient Chamorro people. Using laughter as a support to a healthier life will have lasting benefits. Notice the word connections throughout this topic and how this interwoven relationship of laughter and supportive provisions for well-being is linked together.

Let's describe laughter . . .

- Finding amusement in something
- The noise produced by laughing
- The experience of mirth, amusement, or joy

> I was so naive as a kid,
> I used to sneak behind
> the barn and do nothing.
>
> *– Johnny Carson*

History of the therapeutic support of humor

- **14th century:** French surgeon Henri de Mondeville used humor to care for surgery patients.
- **16th century:** Martin Luther used humor therapy in pastoral counseling of depression. Robert Burton, an English scholar, used humor as a cure for melancholy.
- **17th century:** Sociologist Herbert Spencer used humor to release excess tension.
- **18th century:** German philosopher Immanuel Kant used humor to restore equilibrium.
- **1930s:** Clowns were brought into U.S. hospitals to cheer up children hospitalized with polio.

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- **1972:** The Gesundheit Institute, founded by Doctor Hunter 'Patch' Adams, brought fun and joy into health care.
- **1998:** Norman Cousins publishes his book *Anatomy of an Illness* based on his experiences with a terminal condition and using humor therapy to overcome his illness.

Physical advantages of a good laugh

- Stimulates the immune system
- May help relieve pain
- Relaxes tense muscles
- Speeds up oxygen to our bodies
- Helps regulate heart rate
- Increases endorphins
- Lowers blood pressure
- Lowers serum cortisol levels
- Lowers blood sugar

Mary Payne Bennett, director of the Western Kentucky University School of Nursing, stated, "Laughter is a good thing, with no major harmful side effects. This is a longstanding component of major belief systems around the world, but now we're documenting it."

Laughter and emotional resiliency

It is hard to feel angry, depressed, anxious, or resentful while you are laughing! Here are some emotional rewards of laughter:

- Combats stress
- Provides moments of joy
- Eases anxiety and lifts depression
- Lightens a threatening situation

Benefits of laughter and mental well-being

- Great antidote to boredom and frustration
- Clears the mind for problem solving
- Gives you a different perspective on problems
- Makes it easier to cope with difficult situations

> I don't deserve this award, but I have arthritis and I don't deserve that either.
>
> – *Jack Benny*

Thrive socially by laughing

- Connects us with others by developing closeness
- Understanding that laughter is a universal language
- Breaks down barriers of culture, race, etc.
- Unites us with everyone else who is laughing
- Draws us into social relationships
- Lowers natural stranger anxiety
- Everyone loves someone who makes them laugh

Laughter yoga

- This exercise is based on laughter, not on your mood
- Has health benefits
- Is playful – not silly
- Is a body-mind approach to laughter
- Has a goal of harmony and balance
- Helps cope with stress
- Increases productivity and creativity
- Improves communication and teamwork

Gendry, a Manhattan laughter yoga instructor, said, "This will not change your life. You will not be happy all the time from laughter yoga. I, myself, am not happy all the time. Sometimes I am disturbed or unhappy. But the laughing helps me cope with the stress."

Including laughter will transform your life. Practice these easy ways to laugh:

- Tune into your favorite sitcom.
- Call a friend and laugh for a few minutes.
- Send a funny email.
- Tell a joke.
- Imagine something funny.
- Force a laugh once in a while.
- Practice laughter yoga (*www.laughteryoga.org*)
- Laugh like a child.

So remember to "Laugh a Latte!"

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