

Laughter Yoga Alleviates Depression

from Dr.Madan Kataria's International Website

www.laughteryoga.org

Depression is the number one disease today. It is a combination of symptoms that interfere with the ability to work, study, sleep, and eat. It is a disabling condition and can affect a person many times during their life. Depressed people seldom laugh, and laughing people are seldom depressed.

Laughter Yoga has helped thousands to overcome severe depression all over the world as it uses laughter in the form of physical exercise rather than using cognitive humor. This means that anyone can laugh, regardless of their state of mind and cognitive ability. So, even depressed people are able to laugh. It is not unusual for people who have suffered long-term depression to recover through laughter, even after years on anti-depressant medication.

How Laughter Yoga Alleviates depression

State of mind: The world is a reflection of our state of mind. The pessimistic state of mind common to depression makes our world a miserable place to be, full of unhappy relationships and pressures.

Laughter Yoga creates a positive state of mind. It fosters a positive and hopeful attitude with increased optimism. This makes the world seem a wonderful place full of fun and interesting people and great potential for achievement and happiness. In this state one is less likely to succumb to feelings of depression and helplessness.

Neurotransmitters: Depression is connected to an imbalance of hormones and neuropeptides in our bloodstream, especially those resulting from high levels of stress. Research shows that Laughter Yoga quickly reduces the levels of stress-related hormones and neuropeptides and replaces these with happiness-related hormones and neuropeptides.

Stress level: Often associated with high stress levels, depression-linked worry and negative emotions can further increase stress to dangerous levels. Laughter Yoga is a powerful remedy to counter the negative effects of stress. It elevates the mood state instantaneously and lifts the spirits which enables one to perform better and succeed in any field of work.

Physical effects of stress: Depression-linked stress switches off body systems not required for a 'fight or flight' response. These include the immune, digestive and sexual systems. Thus the chronic stress of depression causes one to lose

interest in activities that bring pleasure, including sex and good food. The weakened immune system leaves one prone to illness and disease.

Laughter Yoga on the contrary has the opposite effect on the body. It switches on and boosts the immune, digestive and sexual systems thus restoring the pleasures of good food and sex and enabling the body to fight infections and disease.

It Releases 'Feel Good' Hormones

Endorphins: Depression is often associated with physical pain and feelings of despair. Practicing Laughter Yoga releases endorphins, a natural form of opiate, into our bloodstream. This provides substantial pain relief for hours and provides a feeling of happiness and safety.

Energy levels: Depression is often associated with reduced energy levels and chronic fatigue. Laughter Yoga which stresses deep diaphragmatic breathing fully oxygenates the bloodstream and major organs thus providing a complete sense of well being.

Insomnia & oversleeping: Depression is often associated with sleep disorders including insomnia or oversleeping. Extended hearty laughter is reported by many practitioners to resolve these problems, with a great many people reporting full recovery from chronic insomnia.

Appetite problems: Depression is often associated with loss of appetite or overeating leading to weight loss or weight gain. Extended hearty laughter is reported by many practitioners to resolve these problems, especially where they involve stress-related self-medication with food, or stress-related lack of interest in food.

Self medication: Depression-related stress may lead to self-medication involving alcohol or drugs as a means of coping with emotional problems. Many practitioners of Laughter Yoga have reported a significant reduction in these problems.

Exercise: Depression often leads to immobility and a lack of exercise. This can lead to a rapid decline in health and wellness. Laughter Yoga is a great way to exercise the body system and the mind. Laughter provides a gentle but substantial aerobic workout.

Cardio problems: Depression is often associated with cardiovascular problems and high blood pressure. Extended hearty laughter in Laughter Yoga is one of the fastest ways of boosting heart rate and provides an excellent cardio workout. This maintains cardio health and allows the blood to flush accumulated waste away from major organs.

Mind-body & body-mind: Depression exerts negative effects on the mind, body and emotions. Depression may result directly from medical problems or illness: a heart attack, paralytic stroke, cancer, hormonal disorder and terminal disease can all induce a state of depression.

The recovery from such illness is often slow as the person has no will to improve his physical condition. He gives up on life and retreats into a shell.

Extended hearty laughter is a body exercise with powerful body-mind healing effects. In addition to strengthening the body to aid recovery, it can provide mental tools to help cope with the stress of illness, and also transform the emotional condition, providing a strong motivation to become well.

It Boosts Positivity

Negative emotions: Depression is often associated with negative emotions, including fear, anger, loneliness and self-pity. These may lead to increased stress, feelings of intense despair, and overwhelming sensations of helplessness and sometimes thoughts of suicide. Laughter Yoga reduces negative emotions and promotes positive emotions including feelings of happiness, safety and self-worth.

Anxiety & worry: Depression is often associated with anxiety and intense worry, a mental activity with a remarkable ability to increase stress levels.

Worry can only occur when we think about the past or the future. By bringing us into the present, laughter can help to end the worry cycle. It also helps us to see the ridiculous aspect of worry and teaches us to laugh as problems and issues that previously seemed insurmountable.

Self esteem & motivation: Depression is often associated with debilitating feelings of low self-esteem. Practitioners of Laughter Yoga commonly report increases in self-esteem and resulting increases in motivation in many aspects of their life.

Performance abilities: Depressed people often report a lack of concentration and difficulty in making decisions. This can impact negatively on their ability to perform at work or in other situations.

The reduction in stress levels resulting from sessions of laughter can restore concentration and improve cognitive and decision-making abilities. Coupled with an energy and motivational boost that often leads to remarkable transformations in the ability to perform.

Communication: Depression is often associated with reduced communication with others. Laughter is one of the oldest tools of communication. Laughter Yoga

sessions lead to feelings of connection, a willingness to communicate and improved communication skills.

Social networking: Depression is often associated with a withdrawal from others with consequent loneliness. Modern science recently 'discovered' that a rich network of emotional connections is the number-one reason for people to be happy and that the most powerful factor in our happiness is good relationships --- more important than money, job satisfaction or marital status.

To be happy, humans need a network of healthy emotional relationships with a group of people who care about them and about whom they care. Regular sessions of Laughter Yoga practiced with the same group of people (as happens at social laughter clubs) provide this rich network of social contacts.

Thousands of laughter club members have reported that their depression has vanished and that they are happier than ever before.