

Portland Laughter Yoga's

*Certified Laughter Yoga
Leader Resource Manual*

Topics, tips & resources to help you authentically live & lead
Laughter Yoga.

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Welcome!

I am honored, and frankly thrilled, that you choose me as your Laughter Yoga Teacher. As the laughter movement continues to grow in popularity, there are more and more choices for training and experiences, so thank you. My intention with this e-manual is to share the extensive experience and knowledge I've gathered since 2008 with my students in one easy to access place. This originally began as a simple resource document that included any follow up information from the weekend trainings. During all of my trainings I have what I refer to as 'the parking lot'. A piece of paper where I collect all of the questions that I either can't answer (because I don't know the answer) or discussions I may need to table for lack of time or a really wonderful tidbit of information that someone shares which we all collectively think will benefit everyone. All of these things from 'the parking lot' end up in the resource document and I would email it out after the training. It continued growing with subsequent trainings as I've gained more and more experience and trained more than 80 leaders. The very first one was only a few pages. Eventually there was so much information that I turned it into a manual in its own right by fleshing it out with more of my thoughts and personal learning. Even though it is now over 40 pages, it is simply meant to be a companion to, not a replacement for the official Laughter Yoga International Leader manual. I hope you enjoy all the little morsels of information gleaned from all of your Portland Laughter Yoga Leader predecessors and myself.

Light & laughs,

Andréa Crisp

Certified Laughter Yoga Leader & Teacher, Certified Laughter Coach

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Affiliate Disclaimer: *Some of the links in this manual and on my website may be affiliate links, meaning, that at no additional cost to you, I may earn a small commission if you click through and make a purchase. My recommendations are independent. I only recommend items I have personally used and liked.*

My Objectives

- To share my knowledge, experience and passion for laughter and Laughter Yoga with my students
- To prepare my students to take the next step in actively living and sharing Laughter Yoga in their lives and communities.
- To offer a loving, non-competitive, open-door policy where my students feel individually and collectively supported in their personal laughter journeys.

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My Laughter Journey

I discovered Laughter Yoga while looking over another Health Coach's website back in 2008 and knew immediately that I wanted to be part of this global movement. One of the things I was figuring out in my first year of coaching was that joy was missing from many people's lives and this was the number one contributor to their dysfunction with food. Helping people through laughter was something that spoke directly to my heart as someone who loved to laugh, was kinda silly *but never felt funny*, and suffered from depression and anxiety. I felt in my heart like it was the missing piece for myself and others.

I figure that Portland had everything cutting edge alternative, so there was bound to be a club somewhere already, right? No! At the time no one was hosting a regular weekly Laughter Club or offering leader trainings in the Portland area. Or anywhere in the NW for that matter!! So even though I had never personally experienced Laughter Yoga, I had seen the videos and I was driven. I needed it! I went about conspiring to get the training as soon as possible.

It turned out that the founder, Dr. Madan Kataria, was scheduled to be in the United States and actually Northern California offering a teacher training in less than 2 months. I enrolled in the teacher training. After the fact I found out I would be required to take the leader training sometime before arriving in CA. At this time the official website was less user-friendly and it was unclear that there was a structure like there is now: Leader Training, then Teacher Training, then maybe becoming a Master Trainer. I was able to arrange my leader training locally just in the nick of time. It turned out that there was a Certified Laughter Yoga Teacher in Lake Oswego, she just wasn't offering trainings, nor did she have a club. We worked out a deal where she trained me one-on-one. Since I had never experienced Laughter Yoga, we meet in chunks, for several hours at a time, over the course of a few weeks. I led my first session with my partner and a few friends and graduated a week before my California trip. I have never looked back!*

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Originally, I undertook the Laughter Yoga training with plans to incorporate it directly into my one-on-one coaching practice somehow, which I did eventually, but not immediately. Back in 2008, I never thought I would have a Laughter Club or lead trainings etc. After my teacher training I was on a laughter high! I was already offering corporate talks, so I developed a talk on stress and the benefits of laughter and added it to my list of offerings. From then on, every time I presented an organization or corporation with my list of topics they all picked, you guessed it, laughter! People began contacting me regularly through the International Laughter Yoga website asking about classes or a local Laughter Club. Between these two things, I finally got the hint!

I had my Teacher training at the beginning of April and in October of 2008, I started the first weekly Laughter Club in Portland to last for any reasonable amount of time, the Awakenings Laughter Club. Then in February of 2009, with encouragement from my fellow CLY Teachers, I offered my first leader training. At the time, I lived in a tiny house and we moved much of the furniture to the garage for the weekend! Soon after that I began working with Seniors on a weekly basis, my soon-to-be star student and fellow Laughter Yoga advocate, Laura Lou Pape-McCarthy joined our Laughter Club and the rest is history.

My professional offerings have continued to morph over the years, but laughter is a bigger part of my business & my life than I ever imagined. I love it for its ease and simplicity. Laughter has so many physical, spiritual, emotional and social benefits and anyone can do it! It is my sincere hope that once you complete your Certified Laughter Yoga Leader training with me that you will also realize that you've discovered the launch pad for a life-changing experience!

** I actually do not recommend doing this! It is normally recommended that you lead regularly with various audiences for at least a year before moving on to the Teacher training. It was apparent that I was woefully behind my classmates during my training. I was even more out of my comfort zone than anticipated. Despite my passion, I actually waited almost a year before I trained anyone else as I felt like I needed to gain some vital experience first. I am not sure that the organization would even allow this to happen today.*

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Laughter Yoga Basics

The official training manual discusses three major components of Laughter Yoga:

- ☺ The Laughter Session
- ☺ Laughter Meditation
- ☺ Guided Relaxation (or grounding)

The Laughter Session is further broken down into four steps. I will follow this same format so that there is not any confusion and simply share from my experience regarding each piece.

Please note that the official manual gives guidelines for a full session, but like many things in Laughter Yoga there is flexibility. The Laughter Session is the bulk of a Full Laughter Yoga experience, then the Laughter Meditation and ending with the Guided Relaxation or grounding exercise. Each piece builds up to the piece that follows and the most benefit is derived from doing all three together. However, depending on style, location, audience and time frame it may look differently. Sometimes in a corporate environment I do not have the space or time to do a full Laughter Meditation and Guided Relaxation piece. This is unfortunate since they would greatly benefit! But I feel that it is better to expose people to the concept of Laughter Yoga and work within the limits they have than to pass on the opportunity. Another example is if a club meets outside here in the NW the grass may be soggy, so you may not lay down to do a full Laughter Meditation and Guided Relaxation. You may do a standing version and shorten it up quite a bit. During the Friday evening session you will experience a full length Laughter Yoga experience as described in the official leader manual and then you will see other examples throughout the weekend.

We will begin here with the breakdown of the Laughter Yoga Session and again I am following the order and descriptions as given in the official manual with exceptions noted so that you can easily distinguish between my style and influence versus the official teachings. At the end of this section you will see an outline that I've created combining all of these steps plus lists of additional breathing and laughter exercises.

Four Steps to Leading Laughter Yoga

- ☺ Step 1: Clapping and Warming-up Exercises
- ☺ Step 2: Deep Breathing Exercises
- ☺ Step 3: Childlike Playfulness
- ☺ Step 4: Laughter Exercises

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Step 1: Warming-up - Clapping, Chanting, Moving, Smiling & Eye Contact

In a full Laughter session, we usually begin with a brief history and remind participants to move within their own comfort range. No pain in Laughter Yoga whether new or old. Then we introduce the clapping chants and do some warming-up. You may do a warm-up and then introduce the chants it just depends on your overall teaching and warm-up style. This will be explained further as you continue reading.

Clapping & Chanting

Regardless of the particular order, we always clap with wide open palms. This stimulates acupressure points in our hands and increases energy. We also have a built in muscle memory from the time we are tiny; clapping means we are happy and pleased with something. This seems to be universal, across human cultures. Ever seen the documentary *Babies*? All humans, regardless of culture clap from a young age. Just the act of clapping like this - palm to palm, fingers to fingers - gets the happy chemicals flowing.

When clapping we have two traditional Laughter Yoga claps and chants that are used: **Ho-Ho, Ha-Ha-Ha** with a 1-2, 1-2-3 beat and **Very good, Very good, Yay!** Even though they each have their own rhythm in the original teachings, the rhythm is something that can be played with and changed up to create new exercises or warm ups.

Besides being fun, expressing child-like playfulness and building energy the clapping chants are used as transitions. This lets everyone in the session know that the leader is about to move to the next activity. This is very helpful with large groups or when leading outside so that the leader can catch everyone's attention. Often participants are having so much fun they may not realize how long they are hamming it up. Clapping may not be as necessary as a transition in smaller groups, but overall the chants are a cohesive way to grab attention, build camaraderie and have more childlike fun.

When chanting is added to clapping, such as with Ho-Ho, Ha-Ha-Ha. The chants should be heavy exhalations that come from the belly and stimulate diaphragmatic breathing. Leading the chants in this way adds to the exercise effects and benefits of Laughter Yoga. This is also one reason chanting can be used as a warm up activity.

Warming-up

Overall, warming-up can mean various things. It usually involves clapping, chanting, breathing, smiling and gentle movement. In my original training with Dr. Kataria the only warm-up taught was using the Ho-ho Ha-ha-ha Chant as a group movement & warm-up activity. This means there is no set number of times to say the chant (more on this in a minute!). It also means that everyone moves

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randomly, smiling and making eye contact with others in the group. This is a key to helping activate mirror neurons so that the laughter becomes contagious.

As a leader you will need to encourage smiling and eye contact often, especially in groups where everyone is new and feeling awkward. During the chanting warm-up you can add dance movements to the sequence, which boosts feelings of happiness and joy. Enthusiastic clapping, chanting and movement can help build positive energy, get the diaphragm moving and create a positive group dynamic, preparing the group to really laugh.

Just like each leader develops a leading style over time, each person does the warm-up differently. The important thing is that you do something to warm people up before diving into full blown hearty, mirthful laughter. There are some improv games that can accomplish the same things. Gentle stretching and breathing, adding some gentle movement and giggling in the beginning are just fine. Often people bring in warm up ideas from other disciplines or areas of expertise (theater, Choir/Voice, Thai Chi or Qi Gong etc.)

I may use the chant or dancing as a warm up, but often do some very basic stretching from a more traditional exercise routine (arm circles, stretching over head and behind the back with fingers clasped to open the chest) and add deep breathing and giggling - talking through the warm-up, casually giving instructions & setting expectations for the session. Here you could also use some basic gentle yoga poses and breath work. Or do some exercises incorporating balance as one of my students often does. I also may do laughter tapping, laughter scales, laughter humming or the "Feel the Laughter" exercise where we practice feeling the laughter in various parts of the body (Ho in the belly, Ha in the chest). You can start out more gently and ramp up into the Laughter session. This is an area where I encourage exploration in the beginning. I still change it up sometimes and doing the something new and different can add to the fun.

Notes on Developing Your Style

Overall I like to expose you to various ways of leading to show the built in creativity within the Laughter Yoga framework. At the *Hawthorne Laughter Club* you will see some things that differ from what I've demonstrated during the training. This is done purposefully. Laura Lou often leads the warm-up during graduation so that students can see a different style of warm up than mine. Another leader may lead the meditation.

Another example is that at the *Hawthorne Laughter Club* we've decided to just do the Ho-Ho, Ha-Ha-Ha chant 2 times on each side and end with an added Yay!! This is a change that we made which deviates from the original teaching I had with Dr. K. It evolved over time. At my first club, the *Awakenings Laughter Club*, we had Laughter Yoga Leaders and someone trained in another school, the World Laughter Tour. This variation blended the two styles and worked well with a small club. If you have a large club you will may need to do the chant for a longer period of time to get everyone's attention when using it as a transition. I share all of this to illustrate that there is a framework, but you can still make Laughter Yoga your own. This will

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not be the last example regarding personalizing and finding your style! Below are a few more examples of this that are specific to warming-up.

Here is a video of [the comprehensive warm-up](#) done at the Laguna Laughter Club in Laguna Beach, CA. This club has a lot of actors and performers and Laughter Yoga extraordinaire, Jeffrey Briar, has been a traditional yoga teacher and musician for years.

Lastly in this section is a testimonial from a Laughter Yoga Teacher colleague of mine regarding her simple and fun warm-up routine:

*I usually warm-up with the same thing my first LY leader used in his classes and it's another way that I utilize recorded music. We do "the conductor". I play a very upbeat, feel good pop/rock song as we move about the room waving our arms like a conductor leading an orchestra. Participants can dance or just walk about. I use this at laughter club and businesses, but not seniors. I usually play about 3/4 of the song. There is no laughing or talking, but some folks start singing and giggling anyway. I always tell them to just move about walking or dancing (no pressure to dance) and raise their arms above the shoulder, moving to the music like a conductor. I let them know this is just a warm-up for our muscles and to do what makes them comfortable. A popular song for this has been, ELO's "Hold On Tight to Your Dreams". ~ **Mandie Crawley Navarro, CLYT, Texas***

Step 2: Deep Breathing Exercises

In Laughter Yoga we breathe deeply. Often you will find some breathing sprinkled throughout the warm-up, but definitely breathing is interspersed between laughter exercises during the bulk of a session. Breath work is an important part of Laughter Yoga. Pranayama or yogic breath is the entire reason it's called Laughter YOGA. The word yoga in Sanskrit means yoke or union, so I think of Laughter Yoga as the union of Laughter and Breath.

Integrative medical doctor, Dr. Andrew Weil is a huge advocate of breath work. No matter what his patient's diagnosis or condition he is known for prescribing a deep breathing routine. For this reason he has become a huge fan of Laughter Yoga. The idea in a deep breathing practice is to focus on exhaling longer than normal to release all of the built up stale air in the bottom of our lungs and then breath in deeply and replace it with clean air. Most Westerners are not using anywhere close to their full lung capacity.

What most people do not realize is the importance of our lung capacity. It usually decreases as we age and in the USA we often have a smaller capacity to begin with. Our decreased lung capacity negatively impacts our health in various ways:

- lack of oxygen impairs metabolic function
- lack of oxygen reserves increase risk in heart attack and stroke
- overall poor energy and fatigue

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- declines in focus, concentration and memory
- decreased stamina and endurance
- decreased lung capacity is associated with less oxygen & increased inflammation

A famous study that followed 5,200 individuals for three decades and tracked many measures related to health, the Framingham Study, demonstrated that *the greatest predictor of health and longevity is actually lung volume*. I will repeat that again:

The greatest single predictor of health & longevity is lung volume!!

This was a surprise to everyone, but the numbers showed that those with higher lung capacity were healthier and lived longer than those with decreased lung capacity.

In addition, deep breathing is one of the only ways we can directly impact our autonomic (sympathetic) nervous system. Deep breathing brings physical and mental relaxation and can stop the fight or flight stress response by activating our parasympathetic nervous system.

The Relaxation Response was discovered and coined by Dr. Herbert Benson. This response is a physical state of deep rest that changes the physical and emotional responses to stress (i.e. decreases in heart rate, blood pressure, rate of breathing, muscle tension). <http://www.health.harvard.edu/fhg/updates/update1006a.shtml>

Benefits of the relaxation response:

- ☺ Decreased metabolism
- ☺ Heart beats slow, muscles relax
- ☺ Decreased respiratory rate
- ☺ Decreased blood pressure
- ☺ Increased levels of nitric oxide

The easiest and cheapest way to tap into these benefits is through a deep breathing practice. The most fun deep breathing practice is having a Laughter Yoga practice! I will discuss having a solo practice during the training and it is in the official manual, because you do not necessarily need access to a Laughter Club to reap the rewards!

Here is a simple and typical deep breathing exercise in Laughter Yoga:

From a relaxed standing position, bend forward at the hips to a point where you are comfortable (different for everyone & if you have low back issues you do not need to bend at all) while exhaling through the mouth to fully empty your lungs. Dangle your arms. Bending helps push the diaphragm up and empty your lungs. Hold briefly. Straighten up slowly while inhaling through your nose and take as deep a breath as possible. Raise your arms to the sky,

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stretching your body slightly backwards. Hold your breath for 4-5 seconds. Exhale slowly as you bring your arms down and bend forward. In a deep breathing practice you try to exhale longer than you inhale in order to empty your lungs completely. Hold... Repeat.

A variation is to hold your breath a little longer, then letting the air burst forth in hearty laughter. It is not a necessity to do a breathing exercise after every laughter exercise. Nor is it necessary to add laughter at the end of each breathing exercise, although many breathing exercises might naturally lead into some laughing towards the end (Puffer Fish is a good example).

Overall, breathing exercises are designed to give everyone a break, catch their breath and relax a bit so that participants do not get worn out or get a headache from doing laughter exercises continuously. You can use your judgment as a leader to decide when you or the group needs to do another breathing exercise. Do you as the leader need to breathe? Are you working with seniors or another population who may need more chances to catch their breath? Is your intention to have a really aerobic laughter session? Depending on the audience you may purposefully do more or less deep breathing in between laughter exercises. You can always do breathing exercises in the beginning and at the end as everyone warms-up or cools-down.

The biggest issue I see with this is with new leaders feeling unsure of when to do what. Use yourself as a gage in the beginning. Often the leader needs to breathe more often as you are laughing and talking more. If you are still having trouble and feel unsure in this regard you can do a breathing exercise after every two or three exercises in the beginning just to make it easier to remember as a new leader, however, the reality is that over time you will develop the ability to read the group's needs and when you stop to breathe will greatly depend upon the energy levels and needs of each particular group. The more you lead the easier this becomes to decipher. Remember, you are the leader! Everyone is following whatever you say to do and they want you to succeed!

As you will find, much of leading Laughter Yoga is intuitive and the only way to get better is to get out and lead!

Step 3: Childlike Playfulness

One objective of Laughter Yoga is to cultivate childlike playfulness so that you can easily laugh without reason (i.e. intellectual stimulation like humor or jokes). This does not mean that Laughter Yoga is completely void of all humor, however, we do not focus on it and if there is humor it is usually has a more physical basis relying on our body more than our mind.

We sometimes chant after an exercise: **Very good** (clap), **very good** (clap), **Yay!** (swinging arms up into a Y shape with jazz hands or thumbs up in childish exuberance and exhilaration). Chanting of very good, very good, yay in between laughter exercises and breathing exercises with the entire group is used as a

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transition, as mentioned previously, but it is a prime example of Childlike Playfulness as used in Laughter Yoga. This helps keep energy levels up and builds cohesiveness and enthusiasm within the group.

Another example of childlike playfulness is Gibberish. Gibberish is just what it sounds like! Nonsense language: Sounds, gestures, noises, facial expressions all combined to communicate with everything except real words. Studies by Dr. Albert Mehrabian show that only 7% of communication is verbal anyway, so Gibberish is easier than our left-brains would have us think! In terms of what it may sound like: Baby talk is a great example. The chef from The Muppets another. Or the adults in Charlie Brown & The Peanuts.

Gibberish is fun and playful. People love it or hate it, but the beauty of it is that just like laughter it puts you in the present moment and gets you out of your stressed out monkey mind. For this reason it can be considered a type of meditation, just like laughter. In fact, when I took my Laughter Coaching course, one of the exercises we use with clients is 3 minutes of Gibberish to help stop whatever story the client may have going on in their mind. This is when I began to transform my relationship with Gibberish, because frankly in the beginning of my Laughter Yoga journey I did not quite like it or get it. Some of this was due to a lack of confidence.

Another reason I struggled with Gibberish in the beginning is that I was not giving a structure to it during my Laughter Club Sessions. In the beginning, I would just say okay let's speak Gibberish and let everyone go mingle. It seemed to fall flat many times and I was not enthusiastic about introducing Gibberish. I have since learned through trial and error and seeing others lead at conferences and some of my own laughter students and club members etc. that giving participants a container really helps and was the missing key to leading Gibberish.

An example of leading Gibberish might be to have people pair up and exchange presents in Gibberish. Or we may do Campfire Gibberish and everyone goes around the circle telling the punch line to a scary story. You can tell jokes, give infomercials and even play the old fashion game Telephone with a Gibberish twist. I also always give a brief explanation of Gibberish with one easy and one more complex example and I give participants the options to pass when doing it in front of the larger group.

I do want to point out that in Dr. K's manual Gibberish is listed in the warm-up section, however, I feel like it is better addressed in this section on playfulness. Each club is different and my intention with this manual is to share what I have learned and expose you to some ideas not in the official training manual. Some people may use Gibberish as a warm-up, but I have personally found that I get better participation, including from brand new laughers, when Gibberish is introduced further within a session, once people are truly laughing, enjoying themselves and the guard/the mask is down. At the Hawthorne Laughter Club we usually do Gibberish more towards the end of the session, just before Laughter Meditation. In my experience doing Gibberish in the beginning can be too soon for some participants and not everyone will participate (Again I want to stress that we always give people the right to pass/opt out in Laughter Yoga!! Being forced is not

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fun!). However, I will say this many times: Everyone is different and every club is different. Experiment and do what works with your style and your group. It very well could be that my previous hang-ups/experiences with Gibberish are still coloring my leading of it despite the fact that I feel like I have healed my relationship with Gibberish. Ha ha ha

A great example of how easy or complex Gibberish can be and how fun it is would be Jeffrey Briar's Laguna Laughter Club. They love Gibberish and even have parties only in Gibberish! Our own local leader Deanna has fallen in love with it and has hosted some Gibberish only events here in Portland. You can find Jeffrey Briar's Laughter Yoga Institute training video on [Gibberish 101](#). It is required viewing prior to the training as it is the best way to show you what Gibberish is and can be. Enjoy!

Additional Aspects of Playfulness

During the 15th anniversary of Laughter Yoga in 2010, Dr. Kataria got a lot of media exposure and was answering a lot of questions about Laughter Yoga, including talking about what he had learned in the first 15 years of the global movement. What he realized is that Laughter Yoga is really all about play. At this time he began encouraging teachers, leaders and clubs to do anything that promoted play whether it was traditional Laughter Exercises and breathing or playing, dancing and singing. He then developed the concept of the [Four Elements of Joy: playing, singing, dancing and laughing](#). This development has greatly opened up the creativity that is involved in the movement and Laughter clubs around the world.

Of course, all of these things are done while laughing during Laughter Yoga. For example, we might sing Row Your Boat or Happy Birthday during a session, but we laugh through the tune. We often dance during club, but we use props made for little kids music classes, like scarves, bells and egg shakers, and laugh and smile while we dance!

Step 4: Laughter Exercises

Laughter exercises are the bulk of a Laughter Yoga session and what most people think of once they learn more about or experience Laughter Yoga. The official manual talks about the exercises divided into three types: Yogic, Playful and Value-based. I will not cover these distinctions since it is in the other manual. Now that I have been doing Laughter Yoga since 2008, I like to think of both Laughter and Breathing Exercises in the terms of either context or movement.

An exercise that has context would be an exercise that is taken from everyday life. This can be any and everything. It can be something mundane like washing your hair or something stressful like getting a traffic ticket. The key is that you pantomime the activity and add laughter to the movements. Many leaders like to create an outline for each club session by focusing on a theme. I sometimes do this, especially around holidays or season changes, but not always. The idea is that many or all of the exercises have a context and relate somehow to the theme of the

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session. Thanksgiving, 4th of July, Going to the Fair. Many of these context-based exercises can have built in humor. An example is during Milkshake Laughter we usually begin by shaking up the drink and then laughing as we drink it. Usually we switch to sharing the milkshake with others and then dumping it on them. This is inherently humorous for the reasons humans usually laugh at slapstick, physical comedy like *The Three Stooges*. It doesn't involve as much thought and intellect. It is not as subjective as a joke. This type of laughter often relies on the element of surprise.

Laughter Exercises that do not necessary have a context usually still have some type of movement. My student, Laura Lou, who has a background in adult physical fitness and physical theater, is wonderfully creative with new Laughter and Breathing Exercises that use simple range of motion. The movement is usually the trigger for the laughter or the inhalation or exhalation. A simple example is inhaling as you raise your arms to towards the sky and exhaling laughter as you bring your arms back down to your sides. However, it can get more complex from there.

Sebastien Gendry, the founder of The American School of Laughter Yoga and the Laughter Wellness movement, is well known for making up new exercises and teaching his students how to do this intuitively. You can watch some of his YouTube videos and easily find him and many of his various resources online.

Positive Affirmations

Many Laughter Yoga Leaders around the world use various forms of positive affirmations throughout their Laughter Yoga sessions. A common one is the I am, You are, We are. Simply fill in the blank with your favorite positive descriptor like: Amazing, sparkly, stupendous etc. At the Hawthorne Laughter Club we also say Yes a lot like this: Raise your hands to the sky as you say "Ahhhh!" and then pull them down as you enthusiastically yell "Yes!" Some people close their fists or might even raise a knee at the end. ☺ And, of course, our club likes to throw Yay! in lots of places.

The 4 Elements of Joy - Playing, Singing, Dancing & Laughing

I mentioned all four elements earlier. Laughter is thoroughly covered, obviously, but I'd like to address the other aspects briefly.

Playing is something that happens throughout a Laughter Yoga session, but you can also specifically play during a session by introducing games. There are a few Laughter Games in the Appendix of the official manual, but I have also used some Improv games or childhood games at times. Usually, this is when I have more time, so an hour or hour-plus session versus 30 minutes.

Another way we often play at Hawthorne Laughter Club is with the use of a squishy ball, beach ball, exercise ball or even balloons. The idea is to use something that is easy to throw and catch and limits the chance of injury. A great activity while you

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wait for everyone to enter the room is to toss the ball in a circle and have everyone state their name as they catch it. It is also a great way to stress safety & the importance of eye-contact by asking everyone to make eye contact with other laughers before they throw the item to them.

Singing in Laughter Yoga is fun, joyful and good for the brain. Music can be a fun and important part of play and finding your inner joyful child. Laughter Yoga is all about play. Singing songs is especially beneficial when working with seniors. Music happens in a different part of the brain and is often not affected by dementia, so even if they can't remember a family member's name they can often remember songs from earlier in their lives. Singing old classics as they were is fun or changing the words to sounds of laughter and following the tune. Singing in Laughter Yoga is fun, joyful and good for the brain. I do not recommend having recorded background music when working with anyone possibly hearing impaired, but with a general audience it can be okay, and combined with a sing-a-long can be fun.

Example songs that have been used in Laughter Yoga sessions with seniors and clubs:

Hokey Pokey, the Itsy Bitsy Spider, Row-Row-Row Your Boat, Twinkle-Twinkle Little Star, If You're Happy and You Know It, Bicycle Built for Two, Make New Friends But Keep the Old, The More We Get Together The Happier We'll Be, You are My Sunshine, [Every Little Cell in my Body is Happy](#) (done while laughing).

Many of these songs are fun and have hand movements. A popular option is to add laughter sounds to the tune instead of words. Some people opt to use a popular tune, but change the words to be more joy inducing and Laughter Club related (Every Little Cell is an example). Ask for suggestions from club members and participants!

You can also use recorded music to facilitate some Laughter Exercises. Here are a few examples from others, but feel free to be creative!

- The Ho Ho Ha Ha Grounding Dance to music (Calcutta Laughter) as mentioned below. Dr. Kataria has a CD specifically for this, but anything with a good beat will do.
- Pennsylvania 65000 – Dance and laugh and then freeze when you hear the bell (Thanks to Cathy Petersen, CLYL)
- Musical Laughter Chairs

And some testimonials from other Leaders and Teachers regarding recorded music:

I do use recorded music at a lot of my LY sessions. The one that always has everyone in hysterics is "walking the red carpet". We do it 3/4 through the class. Form 2 lines facing each other, standing 5 ft. across from each other, making an aisle down the middle. Explain that we all starred in a blockbuster movie and we are up for best actor at the Oscars. Each person will get their 15 sec. of fame as they walk the red carpet. Each person walks or dances

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*their best celebrity strut down the aisle as the 2 lines (fans) laugh, cheer and clap for the "celebrity". The song will be any rock song that celebrates "you". The song I use the most is, "I'm too sexy..." (GASP!) Everyone bursts out laughing when they hear the 1st few notes of the song and that loosens everyone up even more. I incorporate this same exercise/game into all kinds of themes using music that reflects the theme, i.e. for kids class I might use a jungle theme that has us walk down aisle as animals with a song from Jungle Book. Another music & laughter exercise is: "Love at First Sight". Form 2 lines facing each other. Imagine we're in a field of wildflowers when we see someone across the field and we fall madly in love. We run to each other in slow motion, laughing slowly. When we meet we join hands and twirl around blissfully, then move on to the next person. The song I play is the White T's, "1,2,3,4,...". Another exercise - we do actually laugh and tip-toe through the tulips while listening to the song (laughing in harmony with the tune). So, I do like to have some fun with music and laughter. I don't do these at senior homes or skilled care (we sing songs), but everywhere else. They love it at team building business events. ~ **Mandie Crawley Navarro, CLYT***

*I am a newbie Leader and I have started a Laughter Club at the retirement community I work at. I play the Chicken Dance for warm up, and have added Mr. Sandman for singing and Lollipop while doing patty cake. They really enjoy it. ~ **Kay Hamilton James, CLYL***

Dancing is an easy and fun exercise to add to a session. You can play upbeat or popular music and let people just free form dance. Or you can simply start with what Dr. K calls the Grounding Dance, which is based on the Laughter Exercise named after the Calcutta Laughter Club. Basically it is Ho-Ho as you push your hands & arms out in front of you to the beat and then Ha-Ha as you push your hands & arms to the floor. This is done for a longer period of time (meaning several minutes) and as the leader you can begin to change the tempo (faster or slower) or switch up the movements to the chant/beat. Clapping your hands, slapping thighs, pumping arms, stomping etc. Get creative. The store at LaughterYoga.org sells a soundtrack with a great drum beat just for this purpose.

To add to the fun, over the years, I have purchased movement scarves and egg shakers which are tools that teachers use with young children when teaching them dance and music. I also have cheap Hawaiian leis and a collection of silly hats and things that I gotten from *The Dollar Tree* or *Lippman's Party Supply* over time. Props are not needed, but can add fun and spur creativity, often helping draw out more reserved adults/groups.

Here is an example of a [Laughter Club in Taiwan](#) using singing, dancing, clapping and call and response to add more playfulness and joy to their club session.

Putting It All Together

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On the following two pages you will find sample outlines for a one hour Laughter Yoga session and a 30 minute session. The times are approximate. It is a guideline. Feel free to experiment and find your own groove. If someone asks for something longer than an hour you will want to do things like extending the introduction and the relaxation pieces, adding in games etc. You do not want the laughter exercise &/or the meditation sections to get too long to go beyond 30 minutes total. Too much laughter can causes physical distress.

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1 Hour Session Template

Introduce Laughter Yoga – 5-10 minutes

- ☺ Introduce Leader(s)
- ☺ 5 Points, History, Benefits etc.
- ☺ Explain Session – Laughter & Breathing Exercises, Meditation, Relaxation
- ☺ No Pain
- ☺ Teach/explain chants

Warm-up – ~5 minutes

12-17 Laughter & Breathing Exercises – 15-20 minutes

- ☺ Can also include playing, dancing, singing and Gibberish

Laughter Meditation – 5-15 minutes

- ☺ Sitting &/or laying down

Relaxation & Grounding – 5-10 minutes

- ☺ Short Yoga Nidra, guided relaxation/visualization, Ho-Ho Ha-Ha
Grounding Dance &/or Humming Breath

Announcements & Feedback – 5 minutes

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30 Minute Session Template

Introduce Laughter Yoga – ≤5 minutes

- ☺ Introduce Leader(s)
- ☺ 5 Points, History, Benefits etc.
- ☺ Explain Session – Laughter & Breathing Exercises, Meditation, Relaxation
- ☺ No Pain
- ☺ Teach/explain chants

Warm-up – ≤5 minutes

~10 Laughter & Breathing Exercises – 10-12 minutes

- ☺ Can also include playing, dancing, singing and Gibberish

Laughter Meditation – ≤5 minutes

- ☺ Sitting &/or laying down

Relaxation & Grounding – 3 minutes

- ☺ Pick one – Short body scan, Ho-Ho Ha-Ha Grounding Dance or Humming Breath

Announcements & Feedback – 2 minutes

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Breathing Exercises

This is only a sampling of breathing exercises. People are always making up new ones or bringing them in from other disciplines like Qi Gong Thai Chi, Yoga etc. Feel free to make up some of your own! These first four are considered the basic four by Jeffrey Briar, of [the Laguna Laughter Club](#) and [the Laughter Yoga Institute](#), the others are some of the fun exercises or Tai Chi inspired exercises that have been shared over the years. Remember to breathe in deeply. On the first repetitions, breathe out quietly (extend effort to exhale as deeply as possible, emptying the lungs). Then move on to a loud, audible exhale/sigh. On the later repetitions you may laugh aloud in the place of the exhalation.

1. **Up The Front** Start with hands down by the sides, fingertips towards the earth. On the inhale, raise arms high up above the head (palms face forward). Lower arms slowly on the exhale. This is the very basic, original breathing exercise from Dr. Kataria.
2. **Hastasana** (or Tadasana Urdhva Hastasana) (Arms Stay Above Head) First, bring arms up above the head, place palms together in prayer position. Inhale and exhale while keeping the arms up and hands in position.
3. **Reverse Prayer** (or Butterfly Wings, aka "Montalbanasana") Bring backs of fingers together in front of the chest (thumbs toward sky); then hands go up and behind the head, fingers pointing down towards the earth (behind the back). Stretch elbows wide apart; inhale and exhale (keeping arms in position).
4. **Arm Stretch** (aka "Salutation To The Fun") Interlace fingers below the waist, palms facing the belly. While inhaling, raise the arms up: palms to the face, then rotate the palms forward and up, ending with palms directed to the sky. Take a big stretch, continuing to inhale deeply ---"Hold it, hold it..." --- release the hands as you exhale, lowering the arms gradually down to the sides.
 - ☺ **Picking & Smelling Flowers** – You can have the flowers suddenly multiple into a large armful, they can also magically turn into butterflies and then continue with Butterfly Laughter. Or you can make it funny with adding in a stinky Peppé Le Pue flower!
 - ☺ **Blowing Kisses**
 - ☺ **Stirring & Blowing Bubbles** – At the end you can have Bubble Popping Laughter!
 - ☺ **Puffer Fish Exhale** – puffing out cheeks while exhaling (I let people make silly sounds on the final breath).
 - ☺ **Silly Laughing Gas Breath** – can begin with simply breathing from an oxygen mask and switch to laughing gas
 - ☺ **Humming Breath** – stimulates the [vagus nerve](#)
 - ☺ **Hugging breath** – Outstretch arms to the side while exhaling. As you inhale bring arms to your torso and hug yourself, continue to inhale and maybe even pause as you squeeze. You can reverse this breath too.

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- ☺ **Ron's Energy/Namaste Breath** – Beginning with arms down by your side scoop energy with your palms as you inhale and raise outstretched arms overhead. Once overhead, join palms in the prayer position and slowly lower hands passing your face and chest while exhaling; slow down or pause to extend the exhale. Continue with a fluid cycle of movement as you inhale and exhale.
- ☺ **Monster/Mummy Breath** – Moving the arm and leg of the same side together, up and down, as you walk around and inhale and exhale loudly. If you are familiar with yoga can you use the [Ujjayi](#) breathe in this exercise.
- ☺ **Arthur's Conductor's Breath** – Standing tall with arms extended overhead, wave alternating hands as you take three quick, deep inhales (sniffs). Bow deeply with the exhale.
- ☺ **Arthur's Hara Breath** – Hold both hands on your energy center (hara, dantian, tanden in different traditions)/belly. Begin with a deep exhale and then inhale just before beginning the movement. As you make each movement, be quick and raise hands above your head as you loudly exhale HA – all four movements are done on the first big inhale. Step forward with the right foot and back to center, then step forward with your left foot and back to center, step to your right side & back to center and then the left back to center, always ending with your hands down and places on your energy center. Fully exhale when done and inhale deeply again. Repeat sequence several times.
- ☺ **Laura Lou's Jazz Hands Breath** – Begin with fingers touching like spiders on a mirror. Play with that for a moment stretching the fingers as if the spider is doing push-ups! Then inhale as you move one hand out and away from the body. When it gets to the end of the inhale and range of motion make "Jazz hands" as you shake the hand and exhale back to the starting point. Again you can add in laughter after doing some straight breathing reps.
- ☺ **Cathy's Rainbow Breath** – Reach across the body as you inhale deeply and exhale as you paint a rainbow over head. Switch sides.
- ☺ **Terra's Yawn & Sigh Breath** – Pretty much just what it sounds like: Yawning and Sighing! This breathing exercise has an emphasis on sound. You can also add arm movement if you wish.
- ☺ *Tai Chi Inspired Breathing Exercises-*
 - **Lifting Energy Ball** - Begin with arms outstretched, all the way down in front of you, near your hips -positioned as if you are holding an imaginary ball. Continue to hold the ball and move your arms as you breathe. Inhale your arms to the chest then exhale to the sky, then inhale arms to chest and exhale straight out, then inhale to the chest again and exhale down to starting position. Repeat at least 3Xs
 - **Ball/Tree (Step & Rotate)** – Begin with palms horizontal & facing each other in front of your chest, with enough space between palms as if you are holding an imaginary ball. Left foot flat on floor with right toe barely touching the floor. If you are flexible and have good balance, you can move your foot onto your opposite leg (as in Tree pose). As you inhale you will step to the side with your right foot while simultaneously rotating the ball of energy. Exhale as you come to rest

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and move left foot into Tree Pose position and repeat by stepping with the left foot as you inhale.

Additional Laughter Exercises

In the appendix in the official manual you have the list of the 40 Foundational Laughter Exercises plus an additional list of extra exercises. I am also providing a list of exercises I commonly use. YouTube is another goldmine for new exercises as is your own experience and imagination!

Gibberish Story Telling (giving a scenario for using Gibberish. Ex. exchanging gifts), Gibberish Punchline (People take turns telling a joke in Gibberish and everyone laughs), Laughter Story (laughing after each sentence, great way to add perspective to stressful situations), Laughter Mantra (A sarcastic drawn out Haaa-haa-haa – can follow Laughter Story), Laughter Problems (Throwing problems in the center of the circle and laughing), Hokey Pokey & Happy Birthday Laughter Yoga Style (any popular song done with Ho-ho, Ha-ha, Hee-hee), Ants-in-your-pants Laughter, Ice-cube-down-the-back Laughter, Cold Shower Laughter, Shampoo Laughter, Bathtub Laughter, Towel Laughter, Pocket Laughter (hiding smile/laughter in your pocket – the leader puts it on and takes it off & everyone tries to watch and follow suit), Roller Coaster Laughter, Humming Laughter (laughing without opening your mouth), Feel-the-laughter (concentrate on feeling laughter sounds in each part of body: Ho in belly, Ha in chest, Hee in throat), Vowel Laughter (can be done in a circle, holding hands or alone – Aaaaeeeeee-ha-ha-ha), Whip Cream Pie Fight Laughter, Digging/panning for Gold Laughter, Rainbow Laughter (Paint all 7 colors laughing), Sumo Wrestler Laughter, Weight-lifter Laughter, Seed Sprouting Laughter, The Sprinkler, Cheers Laughter (like with drinks), Karate Chop Laughter, Creep in-Run away Laughter (in a circle – like doing the Ding-Dong Dash), The Wave, Point-n-Laugh, Swimming and any other sports, Amusement Park Laughter, Holiday Laughter (themes), Giggle Massage (Form a line or circle and people massage shoulders as they giggle or have people partner up and then switch), Bumper Car Laughter, Car Wash Laughter (good with big groups - people take turns washing & getting washed), Hug Yourself Laughter, High-five Laughter (missed High-five), Bowl-Full-of- Laughter, Popcorn Laughter, Fireworks Laughter, Affirmations, Guru Laughter (Touch your head with each phrase/alternating arms - *I learn from my mistakes* ha ha ha. *I learn from others mistakes* ha ha ha), Email Delete Laughter, Jack-n-Box Laughter, Giraffee Laughter, Donkey Laughter, Marinette/Puppet Laughter, Pat Head/Rub Belly Laughter, Opera Singer Laughter, Tarzan Laughter (Thymus Thump) or Tar zan Meets Jane & Cheetah (Tarzan Thump, Oo’la Oo’la, Monkey sounds), Laughing to the Chicken Dance, Ape/Gorilla Laughter, Awkward Laugh, Arrow Laughter, Long-distance Tickling Laughter, Dr Frankenstein & his Monster laugh, Tarzan Meets Jane laugh, Thumb Circle Group Laugh, Lomi Lomi Massage Laughter (long stroke – aaahhh! Then laugh), Popcorn Laughter, Zoom-bie Zombie Laughter, Hee-Haw Scales, Spilling Food Laughter, Old Man Laughing with No Air, “I Remember!” Laugh, Opera Singing Laugh

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There are many other laughter exercises! I encourage you to make up your own by yourself, with your club or other groups with whom you share Laughter Yoga. Improv games, Voice games and childhood games can be used as well. Exercises are composed of movement and/or pantomiming with breath and laughter. Breathing exercises are movement cues combined with breathing. Remember that exhaling through the mouth is cooling and through the nose is more warming. You can always find exercises from others on YouTube by searching for Laughter Yoga.

Before you arrive at the training please watch a fast speed demo of [the 40 Foundational exercises](#) by Teacher Robert Rivest, from MA. He has training as a Mime, which really shows. This is a fast and fun intro to the original Laughter Exercises developed at some of the first Laughter Clubs in India.

Science of Laughter

What is Laughter?

This section has some of the information from the intro videos that is not in the official manual.

Laughter is the physiological response to humor. Laughter consists of two parts -- a set of gestures and the production of a sound. When we laugh, the brain pressures us to conduct both those activities simultaneously. When we laugh heartily, changes occur in many parts of the body, even the arm, leg and trunk muscles.

Under certain conditions, our bodies perform what the Encyclopedia Britannica describes as "rhythmic, vocalized, expiratory and involuntary actions" -- better known as laughter. Fifteen facial muscles contract and stimulation of the **zygomatic major muscle** (the main lifting mechanism of your upper lip) occurs. Meanwhile, the respiratory system is upset by the **epiglottis** half-closing the **larynx**, so that air intake occurs irregularly, making you gasp. In extreme circumstances, the tear ducts are activated, so that while the mouth is opening and closing and the struggle for oxygen intake continues, the face becomes moist and often red (or purple). The noises that usually accompany this bizarre behavior range from sedate giggles to boisterous guffaws."

Research has shown that laughing is **more than just a person's voice and movement**. Laughter requires the coordination of many muscles throughout the body. Laughter also increases blood pressure and heart rate, changes breathing, changes levels of certain neurochemicals, neurotransmitters and hormones. Laughter is actually a complex response that involves many of the same skills used in solving problems.

Researcher [Robert Provine](#) - One of his studies looked at the **sonic structure** of laughter. He discovered that all human laughter consists of variations on a basic form that consists of short, vowel-like notes repeated every 210 milliseconds. Laughter can be of the "ha-ha-ha" variety or the "ho-ho-ho" type but not a mixture of both, he says. Provine also suggests that humans have a "detector" that

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responds to laughter by triggering other neural circuits in the brain, which, in turn, generates more laughter. This explains why laughter is contagious.

Philosopher John Morreall believes that the first human laughter may have begun as a gesture of shared relief at the passing of danger. And since the relaxation that results from a bout of laughter inhibits the biological fight-or-flight response, laughter may indicate trust in one's companions.

A more recent theory comes from Robert Provine. Given the tendency for laughter to disappear in the laboratory, he enlisted the aid of a number of undergraduates to wander public places and take note of the behavior of individuals involved in laughter. He found that most laughter was **not** in response to jokes or stories. Only some 10 to 20 per cent followed anything remotely recognizable as a punch line. A lot of laughter came in response to things such as "Gotta go now!" a comment which by itself does not seem to immediately bring forth a stream of laughter. *Only 10% of lines that caused laughter could be seen as anything close to funny.* Laughter in this respect has a **social function** and may act as a **bond** between individuals in a group. This has been reinforced by studies of chimpanzees who exhibit a panting sound in situations to those similar to where laughter in humans is created. Apes laugh during tickle type games, as well as rough and tumble play.

While laughter can create bonding within a group, it can also be used in a way that laughs at a person rather than with the person. In this case, the function of laughter is to force some type of **conformity** to a social norm, or even to force an individual out of a group.

An **electroencephalograph (EEG)** is used to see what areas of the brain were stimulated. Laughter seems to be produced via a circuit that runs through many regions of the brain. This means that damage to any of these regions can change or impair one's sense of humor and response to humor, experts say. It also means that brain damage in any specific area doesn't mean someone will lose the ability to laugh completely.

Read More @ Science & Physiology of Laughter

<http://health.howstuffworks.com/human-nature/emotions/other/laughter.htm>

<http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/exchange/node/2053>

<http://www.shockmd.com/2009/01/07/were-does-humor-and-laughter-reside-in-the-brain/>

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-science-of-laughter-and-why-it-also-has-a-dark-side1/>

Read More @ Origins of Laughter

Discussions of some of the proposed origins of laughter.

☺ <http://www.physorg.com/news8395.html>

☺ <http://theconversation.com/the-evolutionary-origins-of-laughter-are-rooted-more-in-survival-than-enjoyment-57750>

☺ http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/features/2014/the_humor_code/why_do_humans_laugh_the_evolutionary_biology_of_laughter.html

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Hearty Sustained Laughter & Contraindications

Epilepsy was not on the original list. Neither was pregnancy. I mention it here as it has come up many times over the years in my trainings and with Dr. Kataria. They are now both on the official Laughter Yoga International list.

I had a midwife and a massage therapist take the training years ago who recommended adding pregnancy. She was more concerned about early stages of pregnancy in high risk pregnancies. I also started a discussion on the Laugh4Health Yahoo! Group years back to get other people's opinions about it, so it is in the archives there. Eventually, it was added to the list. Here's a direct quote from Dr. Kataria on the FB ProZone group 3/14/14 - *Anyone with a history of miscarriages, bleeding during pregnancy or anyone considered high risk should not do LY. Also in the last month of pregnancy it should be avoided until the mother is ready to deliver as intense laughter could rupture the membranes prematurely.*

Epilepsy was added simply, because Dr. Kataria once had someone have a seizure during one of his sessions. There is no proof or studies, but the reality is that exercise and thus possibly laughing might be a trigger. He has done thousands of sessions and had few medical emergencies or issues. Most people with epilepsy know their triggers. The same goes for asthma.

I have added asthma to my own list simply, because some people have exercise induced asthma. However, just because someone has a condition on the contraindications list does not necessarily mean that they cannot participate in Laughter Yoga. It simply means that they should consult their doctor. It is at their and their doctor's discretion. Usually, if someone has been given the okay to exercise, then Laughter Yoga is safe. I always try to mention the philosophy of no pain at the beginning of a session, but especially with any new participants, and remind everyone that they know their body best.

You can see [my current contraindications list](#) on my website.

Serotonin and the Gut

Serotonin is not only made in the brain! It may be that hearty laughter helps stimulate serotonin production in the gut. I don't have direct proof, but these links explain why I think this is the case. Gut health is really important!

☺ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serotonin>

☺ http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/24/health/24iht-snbrain.html?_r=1

The Brain

There has been some discussion about the human brain and how it works during trainings, especially related to aging (working with seniors). Here are some things to research if you are interested in learning more about this: Brain Dance, Brain Gym, *Brain Fitness* is the title of a PBS show that you can usually get at the library.

The Kindling Effect

The kindling model was first proposed in the late 1960s by Goddard and colleagues in association with epilepsy and seizures. The term now gets used in other ways,

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usually in the field of mental health (depression, bi-polar). The word kindling is a metaphor: the increase in response to small stimuli is similar to the way small burning twigs can produce a large fire. The basic idea is that repeated stimulation "lowers the threshold" for more of the behavior to occur. Seizures beget seizures. Depression begets depression. But couldn't it also be used to say laughing begets laughing? That the more you laugh the easier it is to laugh? It is my personal experience over the years and it certainly seems to be true when you talk to people in the LY community. Food for thought. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kindling_model
http://www.allaboutdepression.com/gen_05.html

Epigenetics

Epigenetics shows that environmental factors can alter the way our genes are expressed, making even identical twins different. So DNA is not destiny as we once believed. From a 2007 article on epigenetics in Time Magazine, "Epigenetics is the study of changes in gene activity that do not involve alterations to the genetic code but still get passed down to at least one successive generation. These patterns of gene expression are governed by the cellular material — the epigenome — that sits on top of the genome, just outside it (hence the prefix epi-, which means above). It is these epigenetic "marks" that tell your genes to switch on or off, to speak loudly or whisper. It is through epigenetic marks that environmental factors like diet, stress and prenatal nutrition can make an imprint on genes that are passed from one generation to the next."

This is important when you consider the impacts of stress on the body and on our gene expression AND how laughter can combat those effects! Yay! Read more: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epigenetics>
<https://www.whatisepigenetics.com/fundamentals/>

To learn more look for books and audio on this subject. A few I've read or listened to are: The Wisdom of Your Cells: How Your Beliefs Control Your Biology by Bruce H. Lipton, The Genie in Your Genes by Dawson Church.

Science Related Laughter Myths

I was a sociology major in college, but probably should have been a biology major or medical professional. I can be a stickler regarding research. So I am going to address a few laughter related internet/media myths. Unfortunately, both of these myths have been perpetrated by the Laughter Yoga Leader manual and community over time. I do not want any of my students to ever get caught quoting something as fact that isn't 100% true and then have a science-minded person ask for a reference. I am not the only person concerned about this in the community. There have been many discussions over the years and this is why I have so much information reading these two items. I suspect that part of the reason this is in the manual is, because English is not the primary language in India and that there are culture differences in what is acceptable as a fact. Keep reading for more of an explanation.

Laughter vs. a rowing machine

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Psychiatrist and professor at Stanford University, William Fry is reported as saying that one minute of hearty laughing is equivalent to 10 minutes on a rowing machine (Page 30 in the manual & a million other places online). It gets misquoted and used out of context in various ways. However, this was not a scientific study. I was unable to find a direct quote or interview with Dr. Fry, just a bunch of internet articles with various interpretations of this quote. I emailed him directly in 2009 to see if I could get a direct quote and did not hear back. I am under the assumption that he is retired as he is listed as a professor emeritus at Stanford. From everything that I have found and heard discussed within the global professional laughter community he personally laughed for one minute and then measured his heart rate. He then exercised on a rowing machine and claims that it took him 10 minutes to reach the same elevated heart rate as the one minute of hearty sustained laughter. This was mentioned by him in an interview then probably taken out of context and championed by the media and the myth was born. [More info on this myth](#) from Sebastien Gendry.

Children Laugh XXX Many Times a Day

My Certified Laughter Yoga Teacher, Elaine Helle, has a lot of research links on her Global Belly Laugh Day website. <http://www.bellylaughday.com/> This statistic is often attributed to Dr. Michael Titze (German, I believe). It is in the manual on Page 46 & quoted everywhere in various forms. She asked him the following via email and his reply is below. Per his answer, it looks like there is no actual research regarding this stat.

Q: Dear Dr. Titze has there been any research into how many times a day children laugh?

A: *"In 1983 Josef Scheppach started a fine article dealing with the phenomenon of laughter with these words: "It's really not ridiculous: We Germans lose our humor! We laugh only 6 minutes a day. 40 years ago it was, anyhow, 18 minutes? in a time which has been in every respect less funny!" This has been published in P.M. a (popular) scientific magazine.*

In a book dealing with humor in psychotherapy (published in 1985) I mentioned this statement of Scheppach in a short sentence. In the following years a countless number of journalists cited my quotation of Scheppach's statement. Eventually, even the London Times published it.

Since 1996 I have organized/conducted several international congresses dealing with therapeutic humor in Switzerland and Germany. 1998, on the occasion of a panel in which participated, among others, William Fry and Patch Adams someone said that children laugh 400 times a day and adults only 17 times. Because I was moderating this panel, journalists implied that I was the origin of this statistical statement!

On the other hand, I am convinced that in our postmodern time the situation for everyday man is developing increasingly confusing (cf. Oliver James: Britain on the

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Couch). People seem to less appreciate a good humor. At least in Central Europe they enjoy more and more sarcastic forms (derisive forms of humor, schadenfreude). This, again, has lead to a specific fear of laughter which I have called "gelotophobia" (cf. search engines)."

Check out Elaine's site if you haven't already. She started January 24th as Global Belly Laugh Day. Everyone is supposed to let out big hearty belly laugh at 1:24 pm local time. She picked Jan. 24th, because it was listed as being the most depressing day of the year and had no other major holidays on it. :) She has a lot of [research info links](#) on her site as well. Enjoy! [More information](#) on this particular myth from Sebastien Gendry.

Three Myths of Laughter

from Sebastien Gendry/Laughter Wellness Institute

1. You must have a sense of humor to laugh. Laughter is a physiological response to humor.
2. You need to be happy to laugh. Laugh to be joyful & happy!
3. You need to have a reason to laugh. How 'bout for your health?

Social, Emotional & Spiritual Side of Laughter

Fake it 'till you make it!

Or as said during one of my trainings by a student, "Simulate to stimulate!" You can also refer to Laughter Yoga as unconditional, intentional, guided, pretend and induced laughter. Laughter Therapy is often used. At senior centers we often call it Laughter Club even though I am getting paid to be there. The term yoga can be confusing for elders. However, I only do this if it is not being advertised to the outside world as an event, but is simply the way it is listed/advertised internally to residents. Usually, we use a different title and in the description explain the process and mention the Laughter Yoga movement. Discuss this with the Activities Director as they will know their residents the best.

Laughter as meditation

Laughter puts us intensely in the moment, some say it is the only place we can experience true joyfulness. For this reason laughter has been considered a form of meditation for hundreds of year. It is one of the fastest ways to get out of your story.

"As for sitting in meditation, that is something that must include fits of ecstatic, blissful laughter. Laughter that will make you slump to the ground, clutching your belly, and even after that passes and you struggle to your feet it will make you fall anew in further contortions of slide splitting mirth." ~ [Hakuin Ekaku](#) (famulus Zen Buddhist Monk)

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Ho'oponopono Prayer

An ancient Hawaiian practice of reconciliation and forgiveness mentioned in one of my previous trainings. "I'm sorry. Please forgive me. I love you. Thank you."

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ho%CA%BBoponopono>

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)

Dr. Kataria mentions NLP when talking about Laughter Yoga in his video *Laughter Yoga: A Life Changing Experience*. It is also mentioned in the manual so I like to give a bit more information: According to [NLP Comprehensive's](#) website, "Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is the science of modeling the patterns of human behavior. NLP explores the inner workings of the human mind: how we think, how we develop our desires, goals and fears and how we motivate ourselves, make connections, and give meaning to our experiences. NLP is like the 'user's manual' for the mind, and allows us to use the language of the mind to consistently achieve our specific and desired outcomes." NLP is probably more common than you know. It is one of the main tools utilized by world-famous personal growth author and speaker Anthony Robins. You can read more about it at [NLP University](#).

Energy Medicine & Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) or Tapping

I throw this in as students typically ask about both items after hearing me share about EFT and doing the morning energy routine as we begin our training day. I typically throw some tapping in with my laughter warm-ups.

Donna Eden's 5 minute Energy Routine – an easy way to keep your energies humming. [Video tutorial](#) and a [PDF guide](#)

Information on [EFT](#) –Tapping is an excellent way to help remove blocks to accomplishing your goals and also releasing physical and emotional issues. Here is [a great introductory video](#) from the Founder, Gary Craig. My training has been with Gary Craig's original manual and DVDs, [EFT Universe](#) and [AAMET](#).

Starting a Laughter Club

From my experience there are two things in the United States you need to think about when starting a club 1) Finding a location that is convenient and also free or inexpensive and 2) Finding the first few club members who love Laughter Yoga as much as you. I will address these two aspects.

Finding a Location

Many of the original clubs in India were outside in local parks since the weather is more temperate year round in much of the country. Although there are some exceptions like California or Florida, here clubs typically need to meet inside in the winter at least. In Portland 9 months out of the year! Thus it can be difficult to find a location in which to hold a regularly scheduled Laughter Club.

During the search you need to think about many things, but here are a few of the key questions to ask yourself:

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- ☺ Is the time & location convenient for me, the leader?
- ☺ Is there a neighborhood of residents & businesses or a built in audience from which to draw participants?
- ☺ Will the sound of laughter disturb others in the building?
- ☺ Is it free or can I sustain the fee or work involved long-term?
 - Example: We originally got the Hawthorne Laughter Club space in exchange for cleaning the movement studio each week. After 3 years we started paying for the space based on a percentage of our weekly donations.
 - If there is a fee can you sustain covering the fee out of pocket for a few months while you build/find regular participants? Can you cover the fee during lean times or growing pains?

Many clubs meet at churches (remembering that LY is non-religious), schools, individuals' homes, yoga studios and in the summer they might temporarily meet outdoors. You can also use non-typical spaces creatively like lobbies or business showrooms. Currently, PLY alum Stephen Rosenstock is leading a club in Beaverton that meets at the local Police Station in a conference room for free. The key is to have a large, clean open space. You do not need to be at a studio with equipment like blankets and yoga mats. These are nice, but you can simply ask participants to bring their own supplies as needed for their comfort.

Finding Supportive Members

Unless you have a lot of disposable income, the next piece you will want to think about is how to reach people without spending a bunch of money through traditional advertising. The best and easiest thing to do is post your club on the free Laughter Club listings through LaughterYoga.org. Many people look there first as it is the top ranking site for Laughter Yoga in most search engines.

In terms of getting the word out in other ways, fliers posted in the neighborhood (libraries, coffee shops), Craig's List, local neighborhood newspapers (they often have a section for events or are looking for a story compared to big newspapers), free local online event calendars (TV & radio stations have these typically), Facebook (personal profile & setting up a club page), Instagram and Twitter are just a few options that are usually cheap or free. It can also be helpful if you are at a location that might provide a built in audience like a studio or a church who can advertise on their website, in their newsletter etc. This is not always available, necessary or even helpful, but can be a nicety.

Hitting up friends and family for support can also work, but do not get discouraged if they are not as excited or willing as you would like. You *will* find your laughter family if you persevere. My husband is supportive; he attended my initial club for the first year, but hasn't laughed with the community in a long time. I thought my dad would love it and he could care less, but my mom enjoys it and even brought a friend with her for a while. None of my good friends at the time attended club or have even ever visited! So just know that if you stick with it you will find others who love it too. It is not everyone's cup of tea.

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As a side note, I have had great success with hosting a Meetup for our local laughter clubs, but this is not free. It runs \$90 for 6 months and you can host up to three Meetup Groups. I find it worth the price as I have hosted several Meetups for other aspects of my business (EFT, essential oils) and we steadily get new participants from Meetup.

My first club met at the studio in the wellness center where I had my office at the time. The owner said I could have the space for free if it was in the morning before other practitioners were in the office. This meant we would be meeting before 9 am. I chose to hold a 30 minute club beginning at 7:10 am in hopes that I would catch people before work. I began collecting names of those interested and when I had a good size list I emailed everyone to ask who would be interested in the am Laughter Club. I got four people to commit to giving it a go and we started meeting. It grew from there and after a few months we regularly had 8-15 people each Tuesday morning for 2 years before membership waned and I decided to stop the club about 2.5 years in.

Despite the Awakenings Laughter Club not lasting, it put Laughter Yoga on the map in Portland and the Northwest. By the time it ended the Hawthorne Laughter Club had been going for more than a year, so I felt okay about letting it go. I am NOT a morning person. The Awakenings Laughter Club gave me tons of experience, made me the expert in the community; I got many paid gigs out of it over time, made the front page of the Oregonian's Living section and also met some awesome and amazing people. One turned out to become one of my best friends, another one of my star students and local fellow Laughter Yoga champion. Yay!

Another option that works well, especially if you are not paying out of pocket for a space, is to simply begin holding a Laughter Club and commit to laughing each time whether anyone else shows up or not. This can be hard in the beginning mentally, but if you put out the intention, remain joyful and use the time wisely (i.e to laugh!) the universe will begin providing laughers.

Once people begin to attend regularly, another important piece to this is getting them involved in the club. Help them take ownership and feel appreciated. Without your laughers there is no Laughter Club! This was another lesson I learned with my first club. In the beginning, I really felt like I was in it alone despite my regulars. However, my lovely laughers made sure I knew that was not the case. Yet, it would likely have been even more successful if I had approached it that way from the beginning! Start getting them involved; teach them to lead some exercises, ask them for ideas and opinions, plan outings and get-togethers outside of laughter club.

[Business of Laughter](#)

[Important Websites](#)

We mentioned quite a few web sites or personalities associated with Laughter Yoga or the laughter movement in general. Many of these links with descriptions can be

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found on the Portland Laughter Yoga CLYL Yahoo! Group. I encourage you to check them out! I also have a lot of links on my Resources page on my personal website. Please note that I am in the process of moving a lot of the laughter information to my main coaching page and will eventually transform the Portland Laughter Yoga website to a more simple format.

- ☺ [My Laughter Yoga Links](#)
- ☺ [My LY Research page](#): Here is a link to my website where I try to include all of the research that I come across. Feel free to refer to it at any time. Having a link instead of listing it all here will keep it dynamic, as it is an ever changing field. If you come across new research please share. I'll add it to the list!
- ☺ You can also find me on FaceBook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube:
 - <http://facebook.com/PortlandLaughterYoga>
 - <http://facebook.com/andreawrightcrisp>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/AndreaCrisp.Wellness>
 - <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/6/142/92b>
 - <http://twitter.com/AndreaCrisp>
 - <http://www.youtube.com/user/PortlandLaughterYoga>
 - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXAkYo4JP_VxH3XfVens4rw

The Annual All-American Laughter Yoga Conference is the longest running laughter related conference in the US. It is usually on the western side of the country since Sebastien Gendry lives in CA and produces the event. Portland hosted in 2015 and 2017!! This year it is in June in Pasadena, CA. More information can be found on Sebastien's website. <http://laughterconference.com/>

Marketing & Networking Avenues

You may hear me mention [Toastmasters](#) for improving speaking and leadership skills, so thought I would through them in. This is a great way to meet new people you otherwise wouldn't and, of course, great for building skills.

Other avenues to look into:

- Portland Business Alliance or other area Chambers of Commerce
- Local civic/volunteer organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions etc.
- Free advertising on Craig's List and local calendars for TV and Radios stations, newspapers etc.
- Meetup.com See the [Portland Laughter Yoga Meetup](#) as an example. This is free for members to join, but not free for the person organizing a group. Many people however, charge a small joining fee or ask for donations to cover the costs.
- Press Releases to small town newspapers or small local neighborhood papers.

[Vista Print](#) – Business Cards and other marketing materials that are free with shipping. Once you order from them you will get offers for various free things all the time. The old business card samples & business card size magnets etc. were from them (**Remember! Nothing is free. They get you on the shipping, but a good place to get your first cards. There are many other places. This is just the site I used when I first*

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started, so feel free to do research and ask around) It is free, because their logo and website is on the back of your card.

My current business cards are from MOO.com. They have other offerings like mini cards (which I also have & love), postcards etc. They allow you to customize your cards and have each card with a different quote or image on the back. They are a very high quality, thick card with an eco-option also. However, these cards also cost more.

Creating your own Website

These are sites mentioned and/or used by previous graduates as free and easy to use for making a webpage/site: www.weebly.com and www.wix.com as well as WordPress.com and Blogger. Andréa uses SquareSpace for Portland Laughter Yoga and her new AndreaCrisp.com. PLY.com is on an older version of their platform. AC.com was recently redone, my moi. I love it! It's not free, but SquareSpace has different tiers, depending on needs and is easy with lots of potential! It is a host and provides an intuitive tools and template to create the site. You could also use other programs and services such as using WordPress.org software and pay to host your own website. WordPress.org is the most popular website platform with some do it yourself templates (called Themes) and it is also commonly what web designers use if you ever plan to hire someone in the future. I switched my coaching business site AndreaCrisp.com to WordPress.org for a few years, but went back to SquareSpace last fall. I just love them. While I was using WordPress I loved the support from Build Your Own Business Website [dot] com BYOBwebsite.com. This is a great site with lots of free stuff and a paid area. It is worth the \$ if you really need a flexible website and need to do it on your own due to a budget. It is only for WordPress.org site using Thesis or Genesis Themes. There are a ton of other resource sites like this and a quality WP.org theme like Thesis or Genesis also has its own forums too. If you plan to have a business, you will eventually want a website that you can control and update on a regular basis without always relying on paying someone. So think about that before you spend too much money and do your due diligence! Most of my students are able to get away with using one of the many free platforms available as they just need to have something basic giving them a web presence.

If you want to purchase a custom URL such as *portlandlaughteryoga.com* instead of *portlandlaughteryoga.squarespace.com* or *portlandlaughteryoga.weebly.com* you need to purchase the address from a web hosting company such as www.GoDaddy.com or DreamHost.com I have used both for different things. Also there are other great URL buying/hosting sites out there, such as BlueHost, Host Gator and even some local ones if you want to keep it local, so feel free to ask around and research on your own. You may find a better deal. Google search for discount codes before signing up with any provider.

Liability Insurance*

I have used Yoga Journal Teachers Plus and Alternative Balance Professional Group for liability insurance. Many of these companies actually use the same few big insurance companies. Almost all group liability policies require you to join the group

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or association to get the insurance (i.e. group discount). Everything together is around \$250 or less for a year, depending on whether you are full time or not.

If you are doing anything else like Reiki, aerobics etc. you can often get everything covered under one plan, just make sure you read the plan and talk to an agent. Insurance companies are out to make money and the wording and policies vary. Some plans only cover one specific thing or require you have so many hours of training. You can often get them combined if you call and speak to someone or email. You sometimes need to list each address you teach at to ensure you are covered at each location ... But this is not always the case. Check with your policy/company for details. Also, places you teach may require that they be listed as an additional insured on your policy. Some plans/companies charge for each additional insured listed, some give you a few for free, but charge as you list more than two. (Usually only \$10 or \$20 for each additional address).

There has been mention of yoga related insurance through [Sports & Fitness Insurance](#). Many of the LY folks using this plan had some kind of yoga &/or fitness certification outside of Laughter Yoga certification. If you are only doing Laughter Yoga Part time and nothing else that require insurance Yoga Journal may be the cheapest options. I am currently using Alternative Balance as they offer liability insurance for many wellness professions and just happen to cover all of the things I do. They used to have Laughing Yoga on their list, but it is no longer there. When I spoke to an agent they suggested that I select Yoga and Fitness categories to cover Laughter Yoga since it is a mix of both. They have been responsive when I have contacted them via phone and email.

Often these group plans offer othe benefits, so cheap them out to see what is a good fit for you. They are often just for show, but Yoga Journal's group plan offers a free subscription to their magazine. The others offer some different perks.

**Remember: I am not a lawyer or CPA, so this is not a professional recommendation. I am telling you what I do, but you need to do your own research & make an individual decision based on your life circumstances, risk tolerance and overall needs. Liability Insurance vs. Limited Liability Company or incorporating, which insurance company and the amount and type of coverage you need will vary based on your training, background, other offerings and your personal and business assets.*

More Business Help

The US Small Business Administration - <http://www.sba.gov/>

Small Business Development Centers – This will help you locate an office near you. There are also online resources available - http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/sbdc/sbdclocator/SBDC_LOCATOR.html

SCORE: Counselors to America's Small Business - <http://www.score.org>

MercyCorps NW: Financing Change through Micro-enterprise - <http://www.mercycorpsnw.org/>

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Lewis and Clark Community Law Clinic <http://law.lclark.edu/clinics/>

Phone Service

Skype, Google+ Hangouts are free ways to talk via webcam. There are other ways to integrate these services with your computer. Google Voice etc.

Virtual Phone numbers like Google Voice, Phone.com – a way to have a separate phone # ring to your other numbers (home/cell) for free or cheap. I began using Google Voice at the beginning of 2012. There is a little bit of a learning curve and it is free, but I am looking at switching to a paid service as there is no support for free Google products and they have combined Google Voice into Hangouts. Overall, getting a number like this can be a great option for getting a business number without having to get another phone or line.

<http://www.google.com/googlevoice/about.html>

<http://www.magicjack.com> Cheap home phone service using your internet connection – could be used as a way to have a dedicated business line if you don't normally have a land line. I've heard pros and cons about this, but students have mentioned it. There are also a lot of other similar services/products out there now, so read up on some reviews first to see the latest and greatest.

Tips on Working with Other Audiences

Hecklers & Difficult People

I hope you do not ever have to deal with this in a laughter session, but I want you to be prepared just in case. This is a good life skill whether it happens in a Laughter Yoga session or not.

Non-Violent Communication

Usually, when someone is complaining or making a scene and generally acting out they have a need that is not being met. They need to be acknowledged. With Laughter Yoga it is often that they are fearful. Fearful of being judged or labeled stupid, childish or something else they deem bad. Most people just need to be acknowledged that what they are feeling is okay; that you hear them. A great tool to look into if you want more information about communicating in this type of situation is the concept of Non-Violent Communication. Marshal Rosenthal wrote a book and there are a lot of resources online and in the NW.

<http://www.nonviolentcommunication.com>

<http://www.cnvc.org/>

<http://www.orncc.net/>

The Three Step Model of Assertiveness

Another communication tool is the Three Step Model. This a great tool to help in setting and maintaining boundaries. It is something useful in all kinds of situations, with friends and family, co-workers and possible perpetrators or pushy

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dates/friends. I taught this model often during the Personal Safety Workshops I gave through the [WomenStrength program](#) in Portland where I volunteered from 2006-2013. It may be useful if you ever have a heckler at an event that is not stopping despite your attempt to acknowledge their fears.

1. Name the behavior
2. Criticize the behavior
3. Tell them what to do

Example: You've asked your child to clean their room every day this week and each day they have said they would clean their room. However, now it is Saturday morning and the room is still a mess and they want to go to the mall or movies etc. You could use this model to say: "You've said each day this week that you would clean your room, but you never did (Step 1 – stating behavior or situation). It isn't good to make promises that you don't keep (Step 2 – showing disapproval or disappointment in the behavior). You can't go to the mall until you have actually cleaned your room. (Step 3 – telling them what to do)"

With a heckler it may look something like this: "I understand that you are skeptical and may think Laughter Yoga is a little weird/stupid (acknowledging, using their words if possible), but your interruptions are distracting those who are here to learn about Laughter Yoga and actually laugh and have fun. If you can't keep your comments to yourself I will need to ask you to leave so we can continue the session."

I would not go to this immediately. It would be dependent on the situation and what was said etc. In truth, I have never had to do this in a session. Usually, acknowledging and addressing their fears/concerns, maybe adding some humor to lighten the atmosphere without making fun of anyone, has been enough. The worst thing you can do, however, is to completely ignore someone like this and let it escalate. Acknowledge early and lovingly.

PS/ My advice here goes against what is in the official manual. Ultimately, you need to do what you need to do and what you feel capable and comfortable doing.

Tips on Working with Companies & Organizations

Remember to always bring it back to the bottom line, but in a way that resonates with each particular company. It is better to give a free consultation and find out their needs and where they are coming from and then tailor each proposal. If you approach them being interested in their needs and how you can help, it makes it much easier and less like you are pushing your services. Remember that health care savings may be big for one company where employee safety on the job may be the number one concern somewhere else and another company may be looking to improve the company culture and moral. There are some companies looking for an overall increase in employee health, wellness and thus happiness and productivity! You can always push the bonding/team building side if the wellness side is of no interest, but there can be money in the wellness area too. It will depend on the organization's values and culture.

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Remember:

- ✓ Think time & materials times two! It is better to start high and negotiate down. Think about your prep time, travel time, are you providing materials or fun goodies etc. Also mileage and parking fees may be a concern as well. You may also want to charge based on the number of people. There is a big difference between 25 people and 250 people in terms of prep and your own personal energy and skill as a leader. You may also charge a different amount to a corporation versus a non-profit or state agency.
- ✓ Do not be afraid to ask about budgets and/or the usual price range for training or outside speakers. Have an idea of your bottom price and your preferred price before beginning the conversation, but realize that many people are open and honest about this more than you might think. It is often easier to talk about when it is not "their" money, but the organizations. Often they know the budget up front or they do not, but would like a proposal to submit to management. Or they might be very upfront and say they thought Laughter Yoga was free! This happens more than you might think. I then direct them to the local Laughter Clubs.
- ✓ Start with places you know – your current job, somewhere you worked previously, places friends and family work or have contacts. And feel free to do things for free or cheap while you are getting experience. Remember to use any free gigs as a way to gather constructive feedback, testimonials and contacts. Do not continue to undervalue your services long-term. Laughter has value! And so do you!
- ✓ Get some experience before you start targeting or cold-calling businesses/organizations. Set boundaries around what you will do and not do, how far you are willing to travel without charging mileage expenses, how many free gigs you will do a year or Which audiences or areas you want to donate your time. It is also a good idea to do some free or reduced price work in an area before you begin charging or soliciting business. If you do not have experience in an area, get some experience to help build your confidence and skills. Remember to ask for testimonials everywhere, but especially when you are doing something for free. It's the least they can do!

Emotional Intelligence

[Emotional Intelligence](#) (EQ) was coined by Daniel Goleman in his 1995 best seller *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Emotional Intelligence describes the ability, capacity, skill or, in the case of the trait Emotional Intelligence model, a self-perceived ability, to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of one's self, of others, and of groups. Emotional intelligence (EQ) was one of the most important ideas to hit the business world at the time. It is based on the notion that the ability of managers to understand their own emotions, and those of the people they work with, is the key to better business performance. Gee-wow! Sounds simple, but anything but in the world of business. The right brain had been so disconnected that this was an Ah-ha for the Business world. This is an angle that can be used if trying to work with businesses. You could use survey metrics to show an increase in EQ after doing a set # of sessions of Laughter Yoga. This is one of

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the areas Merv Neal (Laughter Yoga Australia) is using in his extremely well paid 8 week corporate gigs done with Fortune 500 companies around the globe.

- ☺ More information about [Emotional Intelligence](#)
- ☺ Provides links to lots of [tests and assessments](#)
- ☺ LaughterYoga.org links related to EI [here](#) & [here](#)

[Daniel Pink](#) – author of *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-brainers Will Rule the Future* is a great book that you can get at the library and can be used in development of a program for organizations. I listened to it as a book on CD. He mentions Laughter Yoga in this book and in an older interview with Oprah.

This is still a growing area and there are now many books covering similar themes, especially coming out of the field of Positive Psychology and Organizational Development/Effectiveness. See the resources section for additional books.

If you look at either of these books on Amazon, watch for the area that says 'Customers who purchased this also purchased this,' to find similar titles.

Seniors

Connection and community are important. Many people in retirement communities are lonely and may not have much interaction outside of the classes they attend. For this reason I may allow more talking and sharing in this environment than I would in a typical club since the goal is not just laughter related. You definitely need to take into account your audience and their mental abilities.

While waiting to get started I always go around and greet everyone, looking them in the eyes, usually touching them on the shoulder or with a hand holding while I say "hello" or hug (depending on the person, if this is a regular group or one-time event). Showing interest and caring are very important.

Singing is wonderful with/for this population. Ask them to teach you some old favorites that might be fun in the Laughter Yoga setting if you aren't sure. Music is in a different part of the brain that is often not affected by dementia. Songs & laughter can light up even non-responsive participants. I have heard/experienced amazing stories over the years.

I do not recommend having recorded background music when working with anyone possibly hearing impaired. This can be further isolating or confusing. Using recorded music to sing-a-long to as a group, however, is different. If I do use it in the background, I may use it at the beginning as people are filing in and I am setting up the room. It can help set the mood.

If you do not have career or life experience working with this population you may wish to start with Independent Living groups before moving into Assisted Living, Skilled Nursing or Memory Care.

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It is helpful to have staff involvement. Residents usually love seeing staff take part and laugh with them. Plus if you have a large group or a lot of memory care participants you will want the help and will want to have a staff member in the room in case there are any issues.

Most regular exercises done in Laughter Clubs can be done while sitting down with seniors or other groups with limited mobility. Adding in exercises that uses their legs can be good.

Repeatedly remind this group that they should not have any pain and should only move within their own comfort range. Be ready to show modifications to exercises.

If you have a regular gig, you should also be ready to fall in love with some of your regulars! And also realize that life is precious and you very likely will lose some of your participants as health changes occur over time.

Children

Remember, that kids do well when they are given instructions and know what is expected, what they can do and cannot do. Also make sure you understand the rules of the group or organization and what is not allowed (Some places may have no touching or no running rules etc.). When working with kids the key is to give them freedom within limits.

Also find out what concepts the kids are working on or if there are already triggers or inside jokes within the classroom or group. Often this can be incorporated into your session, just as you would with a business client.

Remember the Four Elements of Joy and that Laughter Yoga is ultimately about PLAY. Play naturally leads to laughter. This means you can incorporate lots of childhood games in your session. Find out what is new and cool or bring in some of your favorites. Ask the kids!

Children are less inhibited, especially when they are younger. They are immensely creative and will have tons of ideas for new exercises. Talk to the adults in charge and figure out an appropriate way to allow the children to share their ideas.

For liability reasons, if you are a visiting teacher/leader working with a school or organization, be sure that you are never left alone with children.

To Dress Up or Not to Dress Up?

Along the lines of developing your personal style - This question was posed in 2014 to the Laughter Yoga International professional ProZone Group: *Do you like to use silly hats or other props when presenting laughter yoga for seniors (or other groups)?*

I use hats after laughter meditation, when we are dancing, at the end of my sessions, that way they are a surprise and a treat like sprinkles on cupcakes..I sell them in a bakers dozen (13) for \$60. + shipping that's less than \$5 per hat which makes them very affordable, not the quality of elope hats but 1/4 the price :o) you

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can contact me at www.LaughingLydia.com assortment includes ...crowns/ jesters/ wild colors/big brimmed/chicken/plus much more tried n true I have been using these for many years in my senior groups (since 2003). I use hats AFTER the laughter meditation when we dance, it is FUN, have been for many years I don't bring them out until the end when I put on music, and folks get to pick which one they want, along with a rubber squeaky toy. I do however spray/clean the hats regularly and only use rubber squeakys so I can clean easily it becomes the sprinkles on the icing on the cup cake. :o)

~ **Lydia Gonzales, CLYT**

I am happy to admit I attended one of (I think it was) Lydia's sessions - in a community center, it seemed like it was not specifically for seniors - and the props were a lot of fun to play with. What was most laugh-evoking was their being used as a source of creative play (like, "what can I DO with the 'Rubber Chicken of Elvis Presley' toy?"); it wasn't that IT (the prop) was funny, it was more like we had FUN - WITH the toys. It could just as easily have been a popsicle stick or a piece of string. Nonetheless, I personally prefer to not use props with elders, for the previously mentioned reasons: so that we, and passersby, can see that we don't need props or costumes or anything which might be viewed as "degrading" to evoke heartfelt laughter. ~ **Jeffrey Briar, Master Trainer**

I buy bulk bags of yellow smiley face balloons from a local party supply place, 100 for less than \$30! They look neat on the floor in the middle of the circle when we aren't "playing" with them. Most of the seniors I work with find the silliness less helpful than having a silly attitude while breathing deeply, silly grins everywhere he he he. ~ **Laura Lou Pape-McCarthy, CLYL** (Our own PLY Alumni!!)

I have smiley stickers that are popular in age care and smiley badges for other groups but they are more like reminders of the program rather than props. To me laughter yoga is all about laughing for no reason so no, I don't use props.

~ **Bronwyn Roberts, CLYT**

I too am a prop-less wonder. Ha ha. For me it is all about energy. Sharing laughter, love and joy with LY exercises, smiles, facial expression, body movement and upbeat positive energy. ~ **Robert Rivest, CLYT**

I use hats and boas for special occasions such as Halloween or Mardi Gras themes just for fun! ~ **Annie Goglia, CLYT**

I feel we should make people feel that laughter yoga is like an exercise routine and we don't need props every time. But some days we should designate as fun days and do all silly things!!! ~ **Dr. Madan Kataria**

While I rarely use props and don't wear hats with seniors, there are teachers who are particularly gifted/drawn to using them. I think teachers should be encouraged to develop their own style. If the use of props or hats fits the personality of the teacher and the particular group of seniors, go for it! Be effective by being yourself. ~ **Jody Ross, CLYT**

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Other Laughter Related Resources

North American Laughter Experts

- ☺ **Jeffrey Briar** California <http://www.lyinstitute.org/>
- ☺ **Sebastien Gendry** California <https://laughterconference.com/>
<http://www.laughteronlineuniversity.com/>
<http://www.thelaughterconsultants.com/>
- ☺ **Laura Gentry** Iowa www.laughinglaura.com
- ☺ **Robert Rivest** Massachusetts <https://www.robertrivest.com/>
- ☺ **Sue Anasari** Florida <https://www.thejoyfitproject.com/>
- ☺ **Linda Leclerc** Quebec, Canada <https://www.yogadurire.com/eng/>
<http://hahasisterhood.com>

To see a current list of official Laughter Yoga Master Trainers and offerings visit LaughterYoga.org

Apps & Ringtones

There are many Laughter related Apps available now. You can also get ringtones for your phone that sound like singing bowls, bells etc. for use in Laughter Meditation. You can even get quite a few ringtones with laughs! Please do a Google to find these as new stuff is added or deleted all of the time.

Finally, there is a Laughter Yoga specific App!! Linda Leclerc's *Let's Laugh! Laughter Exercises App*. It is GREAT for anybody wanting to add laughter to their lives. The price is less than a cup of coffee and it is available in the [iTunes App Store](#) and [Google Play](#). *Please ensure you have the Laughter Exercises App as there are a few different Apps with similar names.*

Please note! You download anything at your own risk!

Laughter Yoga on the Phone

"[LAUGHTER YOGA ON THE PHONE](#)" is a virtual group that unites people the world over in remarkable, spontaneous and hilarious sessions of health and healing through laughter. Started by Gaga Barnes in CA, there are now many calls throughout the day. Please check the website for current times. Last count was 14 a day, 365 days a year, but it is always in flux. Calls are 20 minutes and each call is recorded, so if you are not able to make a live call you can call into a specific number to hear the recording (Different from the live #). You can also volunteer to help lead or fill in for folks, so contact Gaga if you are interested.

DIAL (712) 432-3900 and then enter access code 6071292# Depending on your service the call may use your cell phone minutes or long distance charges might apply.

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Skype Laughter Club

These video based [Skype Laughter Clubs](#) were started in Europe and now there are various times slots and countries available. You can find details on the International LY website to see what time the calls are available and learn more about how it works. PLY Alumni Chris Van Schaack is currently leading the US Skype Laughter Club daily at 7:30 pm.

Music for Laughter Yoga

Here are a few of the albums I have used or songs you may want to check out if you are interested in using music. Or come up with your own! I have added this as students usually ask what music I am playing during the training. The first two albums are the ones I use the most for Laughter Dancing. I created a playlist with a mix from these that lasts exactly 1 hour or 30 minutes and includes a slow song for the intro, laugh tracks for the laughter meditation and tanpura for the humming section. I used this in the beginning to help me keep track of session time. I do not use it often now, but it was very helpful in the beginning as I was developing the skills and intuition needed for leading. Depending on the group and room/location music can be a great addition or detract from the experience. Use your judgment.

Mo'Rockin – *Sands of Time* – Great dance beats to modern Moroccan inspired music

Bombay Beat – *Various Artists* – More dance beats to modern Indian inspired music

Glenn Miller - *Pennsylvania 65000* makes a fun song to use as its own laughter exercise.

Pharrell Williams' Happy
Big Band or Swing music

I am sure there are a zillion others! Use what calls to you. Many people use oldies or popular songs that most everyone will know or songs with dance moves like *The Chicken Dance* or *Macarena*.

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Laughter Yoga Related Movies

Please let me know if you are aware of any Movies, Documentaries or Books that should be added to this list!

Disclaimer: Some of the links in this manual and on my website are affiliate links, meaning, that at no additional cost to you, I may earn a commission if you click through and make a purchase. My recommendations are independent. I only recommend items I have personally used and liked.

Enlighten Up: A Skeptic's Journey into the World of Yoga

(2009) – By Kate Churchill. Recent Documentary about yoga that references Laughter Yoga

Laughing Clubs of India (1999) – Short documentary by Mira Nair. Can be found on Full Frame Documentary Shorts – DVD 2003©

Laughter for Seniors (2 DVD set) – Allan O'Meara – Allan was the first person really doing Laughter with seniors. He has training in Laughter Yoga and the World Laughter Tour. He uses a lot of props, silly hats and bright colors in his approach, but still a lot of good material. One DVD is a “how to” the other has interviews with some of the folks he works with at clubs and one-on-one.

www.readysetlaugh.com

Laughter Yoga with Older Adults: an instructional tool for leading joyful chair fitness (2011) – Carmela Carlyle - We watched parts of this DVD on the second day of training. It actually has the piece we watched explaining working with elders, a section with testimonials and another full run-through of the first introductory Laughter Yoga session at an elder community.

<http://www.carmelacarlyle.com/>

Laughter Yoga: A Life Changing Experience - Concept and Step by Step

Session (2 DVD Pack)– Dr. Kataria www.laughteryoga.org We watched part of the first DVD during training.

Laughology (2009)– by Albert Nerenberg. A documentary look at laughter: Laughter Yoga, holy laughter, the laughter epidemic in Tanzania and the most contagious laugh in the world.

Anatomy of an Illness (1984) Starring Edward Ashner. Based on Norman Cousins' book

Laughter Related Reading & Other Books Mentioned

Anatomy of an Illness: As Perceived by the Patient

By Norman Cousins (this is the book credited with ignited interest in the scientific community to begin taking laughter seriously.)

The HoHo Dojo: Lighten Up and Love Life Laughing

By Billy Streaan, Ph.D. & PHD (Professional Humor Dude)

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The Power of Laughter: Seven Secrets to Living and Laughing in a Stressful World by Gail Hand (motivational speaker, comedian & CLYL from Portland, OR)

Laugh for No Reason

by Dr. Madan Kataria (Now updated and available as an eBook)

The Inner Spirit Of Laughter

by Dr. Madan Kataria (This book is a complete testament of the first 16 years of his journey with Laughter Yoga. Filled with interesting stories to help you understand how unconditional laughter helps one to get in touch with their true self and spiritual nature.)

From 0 to Laughter in .5 Seconds (Out of print)

By Sebastian Gendry (You can find new eBooks from him [here](#))

Laughter Therapy

by Annette Goodheart, Ph.D. (This is an excellent book that can now be harder to get since Annette passed away in July 2011. Amazon sometimes has it. You can hear an interview with her here – they have technical difficulties and she is not actually on the line until 20:00 as she suffered from a power outage and was disconnected multiple times during the original call:

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/sixdegrees/2010/01/26/six-degrees-in-laughter-therapy-with-dr-annette-goodheart>

Great review of her life: <http://www.independent.com/news/2011/dec/06/annette-goodheart-1935-2011/>

The Courage to Laugh

By Allen Klien, jollytologist

Laughter: A Scientific Investigation

By Neurobiologist Robert R. Provine

The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want

By Sonja Lyubomirsky, professor of psychology at University of California, Riverside and recipient of the Templeton Positive Psychology award.

Why Is God Laughing?: The Path to Joy and Spiritual Optimism

By Deepak Chopra

The Little Book of Yoga Breathing: Pranayama made easy

By Scott Shaw

Shifting Gears: a brain-based approach to engaging your best self

By Robin Rose (An easy tour through the science of how your brain works and why breathing and self-talk matter.)

Yoga Calm for Children: Educating Heart, Mind, and Body

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By Linea and James Gillen (This detailed manual is an indispensable guide for introducing yoga in public school and therapeutic settings, as well as a great handbook for parents who would like to share yoga with their children.)

Even Cowgirls Get the Blues

by Tom Robbins (book and movie – A quirky and magical piece of fiction – one of the characters often says Hahahahohohoheeheehee)

The Art of Soaring

by Vladimir Dolokhov, Vadim Gurangov and Leonid Sharashkin (A bestseller in Russia this book reveals potent ancient techniques for manifesting your reality through humor, the book became an instant favorite with over one million readers. Changing your life on the spot has never been so much fun! The theory section is followed by hilarious real life stories of healed personal relationships, financial success, miracle cures, and more. Simple and irresistibly positive, it makes you feel lighter, and as you start applying these amazing techniques, get ready for miracles and laughter to enter your everyday life.)

When the Body Says No: Exploring the Stress-Disease Connection

By Gabor Maté M.D. (Addresses the effect of the mind-body link on illness and health and the role that stress and one's individual emotional makeup play in an array of common diseases. Cites scientific studies and lots of case studies and personal anecdotes.)

The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology That Fuel Success and Performance at Work

By Shawn Achor (The author spent over a decade living, researching, and lecturing at Harvard University, draws on his own research—including one of the largest studies of happiness and potential at Harvard and others at companies like UBS and KPMG—to fix our broken success formula. Using stories and case studies from his work with thousands of Fortune 500 executives in 42 countries, Achor explains how we can reprogram our brains to become more positive in order to gain a competitive edge at work.)