

Laughter is the Best Medicine

The therapeutic use of laughter — to relieve stress, combat disease and strengthen the immune system — no longer raises medical eyebrows. The idea that humour is healthy and that a hearty laugh can make a person feel much better has gained much medical respectability in the last two decades.

Humour therapy has been accepted on the basis of considerable research conducted in the West. The case of Hunter 'Patch' Adams (immortalised by actor Robin Williams in the film Patch Adams), who developed laughter therapy over 35 years at the Gesundheit Institute in Virginia, USA is well-known. The other is the story of Norman Cousins, the late editor of the American paper The Saturday Review, who was taken ill with a severe connective tissue disease where the body just wastes away. When doctors gave up on him. he cured himself with large doses of vitamin C and comedies starring the Marx Brothers. Cousins found that ten minutes of genuine belly laughter had an anaesthetic effect and gave him at least two hours of pain-free sleep. He recorded his experiences of self-healing through laughter in a best selling book. Anatomy of an Illness.

This has been an inspiration for many practitioners of laughter therapy, including Dr Madan Kataria, a Mumbai-based general practitioner who has pioneered the concept of laughter clubs in India. As the founder of Laughter Club International. Dr Kataria is credited with initiating over 300 laughter clubs throughout India. Each of these conducts regular group laughter sessions on the premise that laughter is healthy for the body and mind.

We still know very little about what happens in the brain when we laugh, but there's a fair amount of evidence to suggest that laughter has wide-ranging effects on us psychologically and physiologically. The most obvious effect is on our mood but laughter is also known to keep away negative emotions like anxiety and depression, which tend to weaken the immune system. It relieves stress, a common cause of heart and blood.

Pressure problems. It improves lung capacity and oxygen levels in the blood and thus Iviates complaints of asthma and bronchitis. It also releases endorphins, the body's natural pain killers, thus reducing the frequency and intensity of arthritic pain and muscular spasms. It is also known to help with insomnia, migraines, allergies, and ulcers.

French neurologist, Henri Rubenstein. said that even one minute of laughter can give the body up to 45 minutes of therapeutic relaxation, It also reduces heart rate and stimulates appetite and digestion. French doctor, Pierre Vachet, who studied the physiology of laughter has concluded that laughter expands the blood vessels and sends more blood to the extremities. As it sends more oxygen to every cell in the body, it also serves to speed tissue healing and stabilise many body functions. Other experiments have shown how watching funny films lowers our blood pressure and generates more endorphins in the blood, producing a feeling of well-being.

However, new insights say that not everyone benefits equally from this therapy. Researchers say that if people with a strong sense of humour are less affected by stress, it's not necessarily the laughter that's helping them cope; it could mean that if they are coping well, they can laugh a lot. In fact, one study showed that viewing funny videos led to a rise in immune chemical levels, but that they rose most in people whose tendency to laugh was the greatest, to begin with.

Questions 28-32

Complete the sentences below using **NO MORE THAN 3 WORDS FROM THE PASSAGE**.

Laughter raises [28]_____in the blood to improve lung function for conditions like asthma.

Laughter helps the body to release [29]_____called endorphins.

When we laugh. [30]_____expand, which assist circulation and help tissue to heal.

Hospital patients who were [31]_____the comedies they watched had the best response to laughter therapy.

Researchers have shown that humour and the ability to play contribute to [32]_____

Questions 33-35

Which **THREE** of the following (A-J) in the passage have **NOT** been attributed to laughter?

[33] _____

[34] _____

[35] _____

List of descriptions

A reduced pain **F** weakened immune system

B improved sleep **G** stimulated appetite

C slower heart rate **H** higher blood pressure

D increased anxiety I less stress

E better digestion

Questions 36-40

Match the following names with a phrase (A-I) from the list below that describes the work of each

36. Dr Hunter Adams

37. Norman Cousins

38. Dr. Madan Kataria

39. Dr. Henri Rubinstein

40. Dr. Pierre Vachet

List of Phrases

A. studied the relaxation response produced by laughter

B. starred in a movie about laughter therapy

C. wrote about self-healing through laughter

D. developed the concept of comedy dubs in India

E. proved that happiness is the best medicine

F. treated patients using funny films

G. showed that laughter facilitates the delivery of oxygen to cells

H. initiated group laughter sessions

I. pioneered laughter therapy in medical settings