

ART117

exercise technique series

Laugh Your Way to Fitness

Written by Sharon Foy

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YOU MAY NOT WANT TO LEAD AN EXERCISE SESSION WEARING A RED CLOWN NOSE or size thirteen men's multi colored aerobic shoes (or maybe you do want to), but including laughter in your classes can enhance the outcome of your workout. Laughter exercises many muscles, makes workouts appear easier, lowers stress hormones, and give the heart muscle and immune system a boost. Creating a laugh class is a fun way to increase student adherence, motivation, and interest. A laugh class is another mode to add to a cross-training program. In addition, the many benefits are surprising. Yet, creating a laugh class requires knowledge and imagination to design exercises that lead participants to laugh with each other, but it is contagious.

WHAT IS LAUGHTER?

Laughter is a physiological response to humor including movement and sounds, which the brain forces the body to accomplish simultaneously. Philosophers believe that laughter is a gesture of shared relief after danger, a mode to strengthen human bonding, and may have evolved to change the behaviors of others to reduce the threat in a tense situation.

LAUGHTER RESEARCH

The physiological study of laughter is called Gelotology. Lee Berk Ph.D. MPH, associate director for the Center for Neuroimmunology and assistant professor in the Loma Linda University School of Medicine has been conducting laughter research since the 1970's. His scientific experiments have proven that laughter increases immune activity by activating T-cells and increasing the cells that attack virus and tumors: Gamma interferon, Immunoglobulin-G, Compliment-3, and Immunoglobulin-A antibody that protects the upper respiratory tract. He also found that stress hormones, which constrict blood vessels and suppress immune activity decrease. These beneficial effects of the laughter occurred during the research and continued into the next day. Medical research shows that the same "feel good – pain relieving" endorphins that are released during exercise are released during a good laugh. William Fry, MD, professor emeritus at Stanford University, has conducted research for over 40 years and is considered the grandfather of laughter research. His studies showed the effects of laughter on the heart are like a vigorous massage including positive changes in blood pressure and heart rate.

THE MUSCLES INVOLVED DURING LAUGHTER – INTERNAL AEROBICS

Research concludes that it is possible for all six hundred muscles in the body to work during a good “belly laugh,” and if you could sustain a laugh for one full hour, you could burn as many as five hundred calories. Laughing is like jogging for the intestines. Laughing one hundred times is equal to ten minutes on the rowing machine or fifteen minutes on an exercise bike. There is an increase in vascular blood flow and oxygenation of the blood. Fifteen facial muscles contract including the lifting of the Zygomatic Major muscle. The diaphragm, abdominal, respiratory, leg, arm and back muscles also contract. Think about a long period of laughter you experienced and how tired your muscles felt afterwards. Dr Fry says, “It’s a total body exercise. The benefits build when you laugh often and regularly...Conditioning requires repetition.”

LAUGHTER AND THE BRAIN

The production of laughter involves various parts of the brain. Brainwaves tracked by EKG concluded that the left side of the cortex, the frontal lobes, the right hemisphere of the cortex, and the sensory processing area of the occipital lobes stimulate motor sections and thus physical response. Central to the process is the limbic system, which in humans controls motivation and emotional behavior. Researcher, Robert Provine, suggests that humans have a detector in the brain that responds by triggering other neural circuits that generate more laughter thus making it contagious. Age, culture and personal experience determines what an individual thinks is funny.

In regard to health, “If medicine could harness the proven health benefits of laughter, drug companies would be knocking themselves out to get the patent,” says Clifford Kuhn, M.D. professor of psychiatry at the University of Louisville School of Medicine.

So, Lighten up your class with laughter. It will increase not only health, but also adherence. The word will spread and attendees will want to enroll in the “feel good” class or train with the fun personal trainer. Class member will bond through laughter, and your relationship with your client will strengthen. Laughter will motivate your clients through difficult sessions and exercises, and most importantly, their well-being will be enhanced.

Finally, laughing does not mean being irresponsible. Maintain your professionalism. Use your own personality and unique sense of humor to share your own brand of humor. If you smile and laugh others will follow. Be safe...Teach better...Live better...Laugh more. Try it. Smile and say loudly three times in succession,

“HO-HO-HA-HA-HA”

10 WAYS TO LAUGH IT UP DURING EXERCISE

Here are 10 ideas to get you started. Find and use what works for you.

1 - START BY SMILING. Put a smile on your face and in your voice. Others will follow.

2 - THE SIT & SMILE EXERCISE. At an appropriate part class, just sit and have everyone put a smile on their face. Big...Bigger..."Well not that big." Everyone will soon be laughing by starting with just a smile.

3 - INTERNAL VISUALIZATION. Close your eyes. Visualize of the heart muscle and organs smiling.

4 - INCORPORATE HUMOROUS SONGS IN WITH YOUR MUSIC. Examples: YMCA, Mambo #5. The Macarena, Hand Jive. Sing songs aloud. Change the words.

5 - ESTABLISH A JOKE AROUND OR STORY SECTION OF WORKOUT. Bring short one liners to personal training sessions. Have each participant share a joke during a specific part of class. Search for joke sites on the internet. Select exercise, diet, & fitness jokes. Examples:

- "I'm in shape. Round is a shape"
- "How does a 1 pound box of candy make you gain 10 pounds?"
- "Inside me is a thin person struggling to get out but I can usually sedate her with 4 or 5 cupcakes".
- My mother started walking 5 miles a day when she turned 60. She's now 97 and we have no idea where she is."
- If you drink a diet soda with a candy bar, the calories in the candy bar are cancelled out by the diet soda."

6 - CREATE KOOKIE EXERCISE NAMES. Example: The Dipsy Doodle Dunkaroo.

7 - MAKE A COMEDY BULLETIN BOARD. On your "humor board" include diet and exercise jokes, cartoons, quirky quotes, humorous news stories, and silly photos.

8 - REPETITION - HA, HO, HE. Instead of counting for each repetition of an exercise, substitute ho, ha or he. Example with the first repetition ho, second repetition ho ho, third repetition ho ho ho, etc).

9 - LAUGH AT YOUR MISTAKES. Others will feel safe to laugh at theirs.

10 - FIND A COMMON HUMOR INTEREST AND SHARE IT. Seinfeld, The Simpsons, comedy movies, whatever strikes your clients' funny bone. Mimic or share your favorite episodes. Look for episodes that are about diet, exercise or working out.

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ART117 QUIZ

In the body of an email to askesaoffice@gmail.com, place your first and last name on the first line and number the page from 1 to 10. DO NOT SEND AS AN ATTACHMENT. Answer TRUE or FALSE to the accuracy of each of the 10 statement below based on the information in this ESA article. You will be emailed a CEC validation certificate of completion, which you must keep for your records. ESA cannot replace lost forms and the article would need to be resubmitted.

- 1 - Laughter is the physiological response to humor.
- 2 - Scientific experiments show that laughter increases immune activity.
- 3 - Immunoglobulin-T antibody protects the upper respiratory tract.
- 4 - Laughter increases stress hormones which constrict blood vessels.
- 5 - Endorphins are released during exercise and released during a good laugh
- 6 - All six hundred muscles in the body can work during a good "belly laugh".
- 7 - Laughter increases vascular blood flow and oxygenation of the blood.
- 8 - Thirty facial muscles contract during a laugh.
- 9 - The limbic system seems to be central to the process of laughter.
- 10 - Age, culture and personal experience determines what an individual thinks is funny.