

## Laughter therapy in the Workplace

By Dr Madan Kataria

Laughter Clubs Internationals! [www.laughteryoga.org](http://www.laughteryoga.org)

The growing popularity of Laughter Clubs all over India, and the interest shown by many who have visited these clubs from all over the world have made one point very clear - these clubs are no laughing matter. While tens of thousands are taking to this unique therapy, there are many who wished to join a Laughter Club, but could not do so because of time constraints. Most clubs start quite early, between 6.30 a.m. and 7 a.m. and they are held at public parks where people go for a morning walk. This is the time many office goers cannot come, because they have to leave early for office. Quite a few women cannot participate because they have to send their children to school and their husbands to office.

I was inspired by the idea from some companies in Japan where it is a regular practice to do some physical exercises in the office premises in the morning, before employees start their work. All the members of the company, from Managing Director to peons, participate. We believe that introducing Laughter Therapy in corporate houses is a very significant and worthwhile idea. It can help to improve inter-personal relationships at all levels in an organization, replacing mutual lack of trust and confidence with a more positive outlook and co-operative attitude towards one's colleagues and subordinates. This should, in turn, definitely help to improve the prevalent work environment and overall performance of an organization.

**Fear of indiscipline:** Initially, many people showed interest, but such proposals did not materialise because of some hesitation about anything new being started and that too a funny concept. Maybe they feared that this might be ridiculed, or it may cause indiscipline. I wrote to many companies, corporate houses, medium and small sized factories. Many bosses thought the workers might not understand the concept well. Many of them, and rightly so, were waiting for its bonafides to be proved. I went on to give seminars and demonstrations in many offices and factories. I found some resistance from the management, who were not very keen on mixing with their workers, because they feared that the workers might not respect them or might disobey them if they laughed together. Usually, they would send their managers to attend the sessions and they themselves refused to come out of their cabins. Fortunately, this fear was proved wrong when we successfully implemented this programme in many factories and offices in Mumbai. Our laughter leaders in many countries are making presentations on laughter yoga in companies, organisations and corporations.

**Productivity through Laughter:** Today business houses and industries all over the world are facing the worst ever recession. Profits are declining and workers are hard pressed to match their incomes with rising prices. Executives are pressed hard to step up sales in the face of fierce competition. Members of the business community (Managers, Sales and Marketing Personnel, Executives, Administrators) are living very stressful lives. It is important to realise that most of our time is spent at the workplace and the maximum amount of stress is also at the workplace. Most diseases like high blood pressure, heart disease, peptic ulcers, insomnia, depression, allergies and even cancer have some relation to stress. This contributes to absenteeism, poor performance and addictions.

### Advantages of Laughter Therapy in Corporate Houses

Laughter Therapy increases oxygen levels in the body and releases endorphins (feel-good hormones) from the brain cells. Daily laughter exercise will promote a sense of well-being and feeling of freshness throughout the day. Participants learn to wear smiles on their faces.

It will help reduce inhibitions, increase self-confidence and develop leadership qualities among participants. Starting the day on a positive note will improve interpersonal relationships and hence performance. Bosses and subordinates will work with a better frame of mind, rather than fearing each other.

Deep breathing and neck and shoulder stretching exercises will help remove stiffness and pain resulting from stress and a sedentary lifestyle.

Laughter Therapy increases body resistance by stimulating the immune system of the body. Regular laughing sessions will significantly reduce the frequency of coughs, colds and throat and chest infections.

It will help to control many diseases like high blood pressure, heart disease, irritability, insomnia, anxiety, depression, allergic disorders, asthma, bronchitis, tension and migraine headaches, as well as aches and pains due to arthritis, cervical spondylitis and backache.

Laughter Therapy is one of the easiest types of meditation which promotes instant relaxation. It disconnects your mind from the physical world. While laughing you cannot think of anything else. In other types of meditation you need to concentrate a lot to take your mind away from unwanted thoughts, which is easier said than done.

As a group effort, all the Laughter Club members try to identify and remove negative factors like guilt, anger, fear, jealousy and ego, which stop us from laughing. They cultivate the spirit of laughter by following ways and means of sensible living, like paying compliments, the art of forgiveness and understanding human relationships.

By holding periodic seminars we impart practical training to help members to discover their own sense of humour and celebrate life, in spite of its tough challenges.

Through the practice of Yogic Laughter we want to make people understand that happiness and laughter are states of mind and should be unconditional, irrespective of the ups and downs of life. If you are in a happy and positive frame of mind you can solve your problems in a much better way. We want to make people believe in the philosophy that motion creates emotion. If you act like a happy man first thing in the morning your chemistry will become real.

To make people aware of the power of group effort. Anything practiced in a group becomes easier, as compared to trying to do the same thing alone. Not only do we laugh and do stretching exercises together, we are also learning to understand the ways and means of sensible living all together.

Every human being has infinite potential to perform and achieve anything he desires, but most of his power lies dormant and untapped. Through Laughter Therapy and meditation, one can release one's infinite potential and achieve greater heights in life.

### **Dream of a “Laughing Room” in companies**

While I was conducting a seminar in Copenhagen, Denmark, for Hewlett Packard I saw a room called the Smoking Room and suddenly the idea flashed into my mind that if there can be a smoking room in companies, why not a “Laughing Room” where the employees can go and laugh together for 10-15 minutes and feel relaxed.

This is a dream I am carrying in my mind and one day it is going to be realized. Laughter in the workplace is the only way we can have laughter therapy sessions everyday or at least five days in a week. Social laughter clubs in western countries laugh once in a week which is good but not enough. To reap concrete effects of laughter therapy quickly one needs to laugh everyday. The advantage of having a laughing room in the workplace is that we don't have to specially invite people for the laughter session. People are already there in the workplace and it becomes much easier to get the required number of participants for a group laughter session.