

LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE ?

The most wasted of all days, is one without laughter.

e.e.cummings ~

Although some of us take it for granted, laughter is an intrinsic, fundamental part of our lives.

Research shows that laughing is a 'full cortex' experience, meaning that before we laugh, an electrical wave (current) sweeps through and *completely blankets* the cortex.

Laughter has wide ranging effects, physiologically as well as psychologically. After a laugh, the blood pressure and heart rate go below normal, putting the body into a relaxed state. Additionally it, indirectly, stimulates endorphins, which is a natural pain killer. Laughter increases creative thinking, encouraging out of ordinary ways of looking at things.

Scientifically, laughter activates T-lymphocytes and natural killer cells, both of which destroy invading micro organisms. It also increases production of immunity boosting gamma interferon (essential for resistance to viral infections), and speeds up the production of new immune cells. Laughter **reduces** levels of the stress hormone 'cortisol', which weakens the immune response; and affects the levels of immunoglobulin-A, an anti body secreted in saliva to **protect** against respiratory invaders.

Humor may help some people more than others. Nearly all research links mood with humor, this is called *correlational*, hence the more sober minded may benefit less from laughter. It is therefore important that we learn to put ourselves into a more playful state of mind.

LAUGHTER:

alleviates depression, lowers blood pressure, improves blood circulation, causes the body to secrete enzymes that protect the body from forming an ulcer, it promotes relaxation, reduces stress, and gives more energy by increasing oxygen levels in the blood.

At the height of laughter, the universe is
flung into a kaleidoscope of new possibilities.

Jean Houston ~

Humor is intensely personal. This instinctual development occurs very early in life. As a motor reflex, laughter usually presents itself four months after birth. There are reports that claim that children laugh approximately 400 times day, if we let them! Adults on the other hand laugh about 15 times a day, if they're lucky. Perhaps the children in our lives can show us the way back to laughter.

Humor is a very important ingredient in a relationship. Not only is it a powerful and reliable way to show talent and creativity, wit also reveals an active and healthy brain; it is a powerful antidote to severe problems, and a major attracting force.

Unfortunately, a lot of people see humor as superficial, which is why some people are so reserved. Yet, humor is important in working through problems. We have to incorporate humor into our lives more. We can train ourselves to think more optimistically, enthusiastically. If we do this often enough, we easily change negative experiences into something positive.

We can learn to take ourselves less serious, and break away from conventional expectations; give life a creative twist. Here we find our relationship with self and with others bounteous, our health enhanced, and a happier human being. This benefits not only our selves, but those around us as well.

" Laughter is the shortest distance between two people. "

~ Victor Borge ~

(*) ~ On a personal note: Several years ago my sweet Paul got struck with AIDS, through him I learned that laughter is a very powerful antidote. I witnessed how his sense of humor literally added years to his life. I dedicate this article to Paulie, in gratitude. EdB ~