

UnMonday your Monday and Every Day with **LAUGHTER!**

by Sarah Routman

Every Monday morning you can find me tumbling out of bed to lead my Monday Morning Laughter Call.* That's right. Usually exhausted because I'm a late-night person and 9am is early for me, I grab my phone, dial in the number, punch in the code, and wait for people to join the call. They've called from 24 states and 3 countries in the 3 years I've been holding these weekly opportunities to share healthy laughter and share what I know transforms people's lives. There's every indication that it's working. At the end of each call, I ask everyone to share how they're feeling. Their answers never cease to delight me.

"I'm overjoyed you are doing this!"

"Awesome!"

"Clear purging feelings of joy!"

"Energized, happy and alive!"

"Always lighter after the call - Thank you!"

"Giddy!"

As for myself, I always start out thinking that if I can just make it through the 15 minutes of the call, I'll return to bed to get more sleep. It never fails. As the call ends, I feel uplifted, energized for the day, and am so happy and productive. I catch myself smiling, and sometimes even skipping.

It almost sounds too good to be true. Yet, these Monday calls feed my soul and keep me doing what I do: sharing healthy laughter, the principles and practice of Laughter Yoga, with as many people as I can. Laughter what? Hahahaha! Don't worry. There are no special clothes or yoga mats required. No special poses like 'downward facing dog' or 'mountain' or 'tree'. Called Hasyayoga, Laughter Yoga was developed in 1995 by Madan Kataria, an Indian physician who was studying the health benefits of laughter. Now practiced in over 100 countries around the world, at its core is the idea that your body doesn't know the difference between intentional or spontaneous laughter.

I like to describe it this way: Laughter Yoga is heavy on the laughter, light on the yoga. Don't be fooled, though. The yogic breathing is a key component. When we laugh heartily, we can get winded, so we stop, stretch and breathe in between the exercises. With deep breathing, we oxygenate our cells and then we're able to laugh some more. Each laughter session ends with a laughter meditation, which is a sustained laugh, followed by deep breathing and relaxation. With some mental imagery thrown in, culminating in this way provides a wonderful calming energy that sustains us throughout the day. It's the combination of the two that creates all the magic.

The positivity that Laughter Yoga helps foster, cannot be overstated. Shawn Achor, leading expert on positive psychology, the area of study that looks at how positivity, success and human potential interrelate, has said, "Positive emotions flood our brains with dopamine and serotonin, chemicals that not only make us feel good, but dial up the learning centers of our brains to higher levels." He goes on to say, "Your brain at positive is 31 percent more productive than your brain at negative, neutral, or stressed."

My favorite quote is by Irving Berlin. He has said, "Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you respond." What I love about Laughter Yoga is that you don't have a good sense of humor or think something's funny. You can choose to laugh with any situation. What better way to develop a healthy response to life than learning to laugh with it. The more you laugh the more opportunities you have to reap the enormous benefits. (See Benefits of Laughter on opposite page.)

For maximum benefits, it's important to laugh deeply, from the diaphragm, and repeat it for a duration of 15 - 20 minutes. With practice, you may notice that you become more present-oriented and have a more positive outlook on life even when faced with challenges.

Benefits of Laughter

Decreases	Increases	Extra Perks
Stress	Energy	Its. FUN!
Anxiety	Focus	Great exercise
Depression	Creativity	You carry it with you - it's accessible anywhere
Blood Pressure	Oxygen to your cells & blood flow	Adaptable to any mobility or energy level
Pain	Positivity	Strengthens the immune system
Tendency toward pessimism	Productivity	Always better when shared - helps foster social interactions

In my 60 + years I've explored and learned all kinds of tools and techniques for how to handle stress; deal with fear, depression & anxiety; manage time, and more. I'm a student of life, with a penchant for the relevant. In all my world travels (to 20 + countries) and in all my 20+ years of schooling, I have yet to discover anything that can hold a candle to Laughter Yoga. It is brilliant. It's simple, easy. portable, contagious and transformative. You don't need a prescription, and the only side effect is you feel better. The best news is you carry laughter with you everywhere. It's always available and you can fill your pockets with it, leaving a trail of laughter in your wake wherever you go!

Laughter. Do it for your health. It is a laughing matter!

Seriously.

To join Sarah's Monday Call at 9am CST simply dial [218-339-2460](tel:218-339-2460) and punch in the code: [LAUGH#](#) or [52844#](#)



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