

Humor/Laughter Model Manual

For

Cancer Warriors & Providers



This manual is intended for patients and healthcare providers those who want to better understand the benefits of humor and laughter and how to incorporate laughter and humor into the treatment plan. The purpose of this manual is to provide a model to inspire daily laughter, increase a sense of happiness, to reduce stress and strengthen the immune system.

Pictures of the basic exercises make it easier to remember how to do the laughter activities and may make you laugh just looking at them.

If you want to see videos of these exercises, you can visit www.laughteryoga.org or go to the “100 Laughter Yoga Exercises” video on YouTube.

The manual also lists three other activities to increase laughter and humor throughout your day. The more you laugh or smile, the better you will feel.

Plus, your smile may make someone else smile and feel better.

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Here are the major benefits of Laughter and humor for cancer patients and survivors.

1. Reduces Stress.
2. Strengthens the Immune System
3. Elevates Mood.
4. Decreases Blood Pressure.
5. Helps with Pain Control. Laughter releases a natural painkiller that may last up to 2 hours after a laughter session.
6. Oxygenates the Body.
7. Improves Focus and Memory.
8. Improves Sleep.
9. Enhances Relationships.
10. Improves Coping with Cancer and other Life Challenges.



What is Humor?

Healthy humor is the feeling of delight, wonder or the release that comes from a surprise, and the perception of something as absurd or funny.

It is also important to list what is considered “unhealthy” or “toxic” humor. This type of humor should be avoided as it is harmful to both parties and has no health benefits.

Unhealthy humor includes the following:

- sarcasm
- Bullying
- Making fun of someone that causes pain
- Stereotyping jokes
- Racial or ethnic jokes

What is Laughter?

❖ Laughter is the **physical response** to humor.

❖ The emotional response to humor is **Mirth**.

❖ The mental or cognitive response to humor is **Wit**.

Laughter and humor have the ability to change the way we

Think, Feel and Act.

The 5 Secrets of Laughter Yoga

1. **You don't need a sense of humor to laugh. Just allow the laughter** to emerge as you practice the laughter exercises.
2. **Motion creates emotion.** This is the theory of motion creating emotion, which means whatever happens to the mind, happens to the body and conversely. Laughter Yoga can bring harmony to the mind and body creating a sense of well-being.
3. **You can laugh even if you are not happy.** Medical research shows that even if you pretend to laugh or act happy, your body produces happy chemicals. Your body doesn't know the difference between real or fake laughter, so "fake it till you make it".
4. **Cultivates playfulness.** Laughter is about more than laughing, it is about cultivating child-like playfulness. Research is now showing that adults need to play more often to reduce and manage stress.
5. **You can train your body and mind to laugh.** As you laugh, the brain develops new neuronal connections that produce happy chemistry in the body. These reactions can be triggered simply by doing laughter exercises.

Start your day with a SMILE.

Smiling at yourself in the mirror releases the happy endorphins that make you feel good or happy.

Hold that smile for at least **16 seconds** to release the happy endorphins. Sometimes that first look when our hair is out of whack is enough to make us smile, if not laugh.

You can make it a habit to start your day with a smile. Smile at others as much as you can. You will find that you will feel better throughout the day.



Tips for Finding Humor during Cancer Care

1. **Give yourself permission to laugh.** You may be going through a difficult time right now, but it doesn't mean you have to give up laughing. Laughing provides a well-needed distraction from your current situation. When you let yourself laugh just a little, it can make you feel a lot better.
2. **Laugh regularly.** Make a point to laugh every day. Practice laughing for five minutes a day. You may have to fake it at first before it becomes more natural. Write down some funny quotes or stories and hang them up around your home to remind yourself to laugh. Create a joke book and keep it at your bedside.
3. **Look for humor around you.** It can be refreshing to find humor in everyday situations. Make an effort to incorporate humor in your daily life.
4. **Smile often.** Smiling can make you feel more positive. When we smile, we're also closer to laughing. Remember, though, that it's okay to have days when you feel more like crying. Crying can be healing too. Accept these days for what they are and embrace the days when laughing comes easier.
5. **Participate in fun activities.** Physical activity can have positive effects on your mood and can also be a source of laughter. If you're physically able, try fun activities, such as dancing, skating, racquetball, or hula hooping. Play your favorite music and dance alone in your house.
6. **Have a humor-themed party.** Theme or costume parties can be fun and induce plenty of laughs. Get together with friends and family and play fun games together (e.g., Pictionary, Cranium, Apples to Apples). Share funny stories and past experiences, including embarrassing moments.
7. **Join a laughter group.** Some humor therapy sessions focus specifically on helping cancer patients and their families. These groups, led by a laughter therapist, take you through a number of laugh-related exercises to help you use and enjoy laughter as a tool for healing.
8. **Seek out humor-related entertainment.** Seek out things that make you laugh. Watch a humorous TV show or movie, read a funny book, listen to a silly song, play a funny game, go to a comedy club, look at silly pictures, or visit a funny website.

LAUGHTER YOGA EXERCISES

9. **Laugh with others.** Try to surround yourself with fun-loving people who have a good sense of humor and who can be playful. If you sense that others feel awkward joking around you, let them know when you're ready to laugh again. Once you open the door to laughter, you'll find it brings people together.

10. **Don't be afraid to be silly.** Do at least one silly thing a day. Try new activities that bring out your playfulness. Laugh at yourself. Over-exaggerate simple mistakes. Be spontaneous, as the element of surprise can be humorous.

Reference:

<http://www.hopenavigators.com/managing-matters/mind-body-matters/mind-body-matters/laughter-lightens-a-cancer-journey>



Laughter Pills:

Hold a handful of imaginary laughter pills. Begin taking them, one at a time. Each pill makes you laugh for about 5 seconds. Keep taking the pills and laugh. Share with others and laugh together.



Milk Shake Laughter:

Hold two imaginary glasses in front of you. Pour one glass into the other while making the extended sound "aeee", Then pour it back into the first glass making the same sound again. Next drink it and laugh. Repeat a few times.



Vowel Movement Laughter:

Make a prolonged sound of “aaaaa” and burst into laughter. Do the same with each vowel sound. Laugh out the sound as long as is comfortable.



Aloha Laughter:

Inhaling raise both arms up while saying “Aloo...” for a long breath. At the end of the breath, bring arms down and bend over with a firm “Ha haaaa” and continue laughing while bent over.



Knee Slapping Laughter:

Slap one knee and say “Ha!”. Slap the other knee and say “Ha!Ha!” Lean forward and slap both of your knees several times and laugh. Repeat a few times.



Cell Phone Laughter:

Pretend you are having the most hilarious conversation on the phone. Laugh out loud and point at your phone as the source of your laughter.



Body Scan Laughter:

Be aware of any aches, discomforts, or itches that you have-don’t push them away, just be aware. Laugh from that area of pain or itch and imagine that some of the discomfort is exhaled with laughter, leaving your body. Repeat a few times.



Bubble Popping Laughter:

Laugh as you blow imaginary bubbles and pop them. Even better—actually blow real bubbles and laugh!



Gratitude Laughter:

With your eyes either open or closed, put both hands on your chest, one on top of the other, and laugh as you express gratitude for something or someone in your life.



Cute Baby Laughter:

Hold an imaginary baby in your arms and laugh with delight.



Silent Laughter:

Laugh without making a sound. Feel your diaphragm move up and down.



Laughter Cream:

Squeeze a tube of imaginary laughter cream into your hand, then laugh as you apply it to yourself. Laugh as you cover your entire body with the cream.



Pen/pencil in Mouth Laughter:

Hold a pen or pencil between your teeth while laughing. Research on stress reduction shows that doing this for 3 minutes reduces the stress response and starts the production of the feel-good endorphins.

Humorous Thoughts and Sayings

- ❖ “I may have lost all my hair due to chemo, but now I can find out if Blonds really do have more fun!”

- ❖ “I finally have strong fingernails due to the chemo.”

- ❖ “Life may not be the party we hoped for, but while we are here, we might as well dance!”

- ❖ “You can’t scare me. I’ve been through chemo!”

- ❖ “Smile and remember that at the end of the day your blessings outweigh your problems.”

- ❖ “If something happens and you think ‘I will laugh at this one day’. Go ahead and laugh today!”

- ❖ You trip down the stairs. Positive response: “Whew, I got down those stairs fast!”

List Your Humor Ideas

(What makes you laugh or smile.)

The Humor/Laughter Model

This model is based on a number of research studies about what is needed to increase the number of health care providers who incorporate laughter and humor into the treatment plan for cancer patients. The main concern was that a standardized model of laughter therapy was not available.

Also, to provide an ongoing resource for patients and survivors.

The model incorporates four elements that are fairly easy to include in a treatment plan.

Here are the four elements. Each will be explained in detail on the following pages.

1. **Attend a Laughter Yoga session** at least once, either in-person, or on-line. Attend as often as you can.
2. **The Laughter/Humor Model manual** provides ongoing support and information.
3. **The Laughie.** Record your own laugh for 30-60 seconds on your cell phone. Then listen to your laugh a couple of times a day and laugh with yourself.
4. **Touchpoints.** Putting signs, pictures, notes, etc. around the house that make you smile or laugh.

The Four Elements of the Model

1. Laughter Yoga:

Laughter Yoga can be experienced in many formats.

- **Attend a Laughter Yoga Session.** You can search for classes by going to www.Laughteryoga.org.
- **Laughter by telephone.** A free call where people just laugh together for 15-20 minutes. The calls are open on the hour. 1-712-432-3900, passcode is 6071292#.
- **-24-hour Laugh Line:**
1-888-424-2424. Hosted by www.comedycures.org
- **Laughter Yoga on YouTube.** Search 100 Laughter Yoga Exercises Video.

2. This Manual:

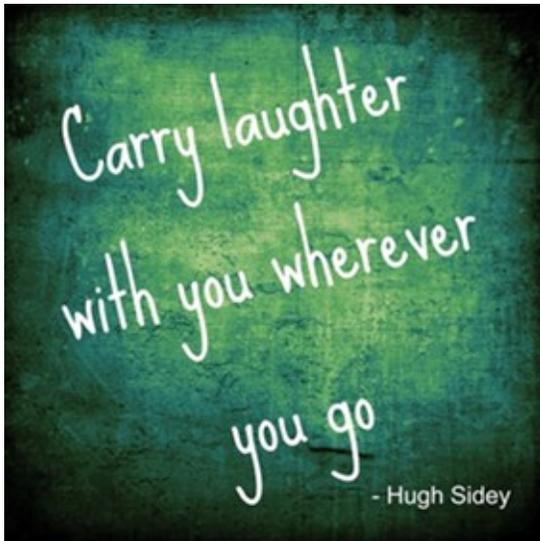
The manual provides all the information needed to continue the journey of laughter and humor and to improve your overall sense of well-being.

3. The Laughie:

Laughter is contagious. It is hard not to laugh when you hear someone else laughing. Hearing your own laughter provides the same effect. This entails recording your own laugh for either 30-60 seconds on your cell phone. Then listen to it several times a day and laugh. The research on the activity did make a difference in folks' sense of well-being.

4. Touchpoints:

Touchpoints are about **creating an environment that is open to humor and laughter**. This is simply putting happy symbols, photos, sayings, etc. that remind you to smile or laugh. It can be as simple as putting a sticky note on your mirror that says “SMILE!”



Research references used in the development of this manual

1. Laughter and Stress Relief in Cancer Patients: A Pilot Study

www.hindawi.com/journals/ecam/2015/864739

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3. The Laughie. Laughter Prescription. Researching Laughter for Health and Well-being

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Freda_Gont-Schoupinsky

4. The Laughter Prescription: A Tool for Lifestyle Medicine

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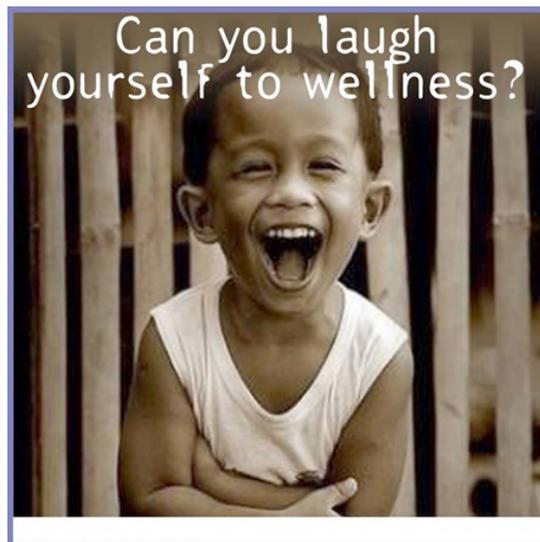
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Suneel D. Kamath, MD

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This manual was developed as a project to become a Certified Humor Professional through the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor, www.aath.org

LIVE, LAUGH, LOVE



KEEP SMILING!

KEEP LAUGHING!