

# Wheel of Well-being laughter yoga



We all know we should be more active but did you know laughing can be a great way to do it? Laughter Yoga is a unique technique, devised by a doctor from India, that combines laughter exercises with yogic breathing (pranayama). It increases the amount of oxygen in your body, making you feeling more energised, and actually changes the physiology of your body so you start to feel happier.

Laughter Yoga is often done in groups (there are now 6,000 all over the world), although it can be practiced alone. Experts tell us to “Fake it, fake it, till you make it” because our bodies don’t know the difference between fake and real laughter. As long as you laugh, you experience the same health benefits.

Here are some exercises and activities to inspire you to try a little laughing out loud.



## laughter exercises

### laughing up the body

Start laughing with your tummy and make the sound “Ho ho ho” (like Santa Claus), patting your belly as you breathe out.

Move your laughter to your shoulders - shake your shoulders and laugh with a “Ha ha ha” as you breathe out.

Now laugh in your throat with a big witch’s cackle – “Heh heh heh” - as you stir your cauldron! Laugh as raucously and as cackle-y as possible!

Now, use your face and make the sound “Hoo hoo hoo”, like a cheeky monkey as you breathe out. You can also move around the room like a monkey while you do this one.

Finally, tap the top of your head – and make a really high-pitched “Hee hee hee” sound as you wave your hands in the air!

### the milkshake

Imagine you’re making a milkshake, and you’re holding two big glasses, one containing milk, the other containing some syrup or fruit. Pour one into the other with the sound “Ooooooohhhhhh!!!”, then back again with the sound “Aaaaaaahhhhhh”. Then put the lid on the cup, give it a good shake, then on the count of 3, knock it back with a big laugh!

### the traffic jam

This is a great one for kids.

Imagine you’re all driving cars and the traffic is terrible. When the leader shouts “Green Light”, everybody drives around the room, holding their steering wheels and making driving sounds. When the leader shouts “Red Light!”, everybody stops moving and laughs. Repeat often for maximum merriment.



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## hold it!

Take a breath in, stretch your arms up in the air, hold your breath for a second, then let go of your breath and flop down, bending over at the waist if that's comfortable. Do this twice.

On the third go, take a breath in and stretch up - when your arms are up in the air, say "Hold it... hold it... HOLD IT..." then instead of breathing out and flopping down, exhale, drum-roll your hands on your knees and laugh.

Try it again, and this time, move around the room at the same time as you drum-roll your hands on your knees and laugh.



## group exercises

### hello Sally

The group stands in a circle. Everyone in the group is called "Sally". Group members have 3 things to remember - 'Hello, Sally', 'Yes, Sally' and 'Tell Sally'.

The 1st person says to 2nd person 'Hello, Sally', 2nd person replies 'Yes, Sally' and the 1st person then says 'Tell Sally' to the 2nd person. The 2nd person then turns to the third person and it all starts again.

Have a couple of practice rounds. The rules are that there should be no mistakes and no hesitation. If somebody makes a mistake, put a sticky dot on their face. One dot means their name changes from Sally to "Ho Ho". If they make another mistake, they get 2 dots and they are "Ho Ho, Ho Ho" and so on.

### animal crackers

The group stands or sits in a circle - with one person in the middle.

The group leader demonstrates three animal movements:

**Elephant** - wave hand in front of nose to make trunk

**Monkey** - blow out cheeks and hold ears

**Crocodile** - extend arms and snap together for croc's mouth.

The person in middle points to someone in the group and that person has to immediately become an elephant, while the person on their right has to be the monkey and the person on their left, the crocodile. The last to do it goes in middle and points for the next round.

For more laughter yoga ideas, visit: [www.laughternetwork.co.uk](http://www.laughternetwork.co.uk) and [www.shinetime.co.uk](http://www.shinetime.co.uk)



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## the benefits of laughter



### LAUGHTER – ho ho ha ha ha

- L** aughter releases endorphins, giving us the ‘feel good factor’
- A** cts as aerobic exercise, just like ‘internal jogging’
- U** nleashes inhibitions, breaking down barriers
- G** reat team-building tool leading to better communication
- H** elps boost our immune system which fights disease
- T** ones muscles, improves respiration and circulation
- E** ncourages positive thinking, clarity and creativity
- R** elaxes the whole body by reducing stress and tension

### Ten tips for laughter in your life

- 1 Practice laughing for around 5 minutes each day. Fake it, fake it till you make it.
- 2 Look for humour around you - on signs, in people’s behaviour, on TV, in newspapers, funny things that people say. Keep a journal that you could look back on.
- 3 Laugh with other people when they laugh, but don’t laugh AT them! Laughter acts like ‘social glue’ - it bonds you together.
- 4 Wear a smile. It brings you closer to laughing and it’s easier to smile than frown.
- 5 Seek out entertainment which makes you laugh - a funny film or comedy club.
- 6 Buy and listen daily to a tape of laughter, a laughter box or a laughing toy.
- 7 Wear silly clothes or hats that remind you to laugh, odd socks, funny ties, odd earrings.
- 8 Be creative with fun and make sure you have fun.
- 9 Give yourself permission to laugh at anything you need to.
- 10 Have a cartoon, or screen saver, photograph or newspaper cutting to hand that makes you laugh.

With special thanks to [Julie Whitehead of the Laughter Network \(www.laughternetwork.co.uk\)](http://www.laughternetwork.co.uk)



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### Natural Highs

Here is a list of a few 'Natural Highs'. Can you add some of your own?

|          |           |                    |
|----------|-----------|--------------------|
| Sunrise  | Sunset    | Rainbows           |
| Moon     | Stars     | Wind               |
| Clouds   | Sea Spray | Beaches            |
| Dancing  | Walking   | Snorkelling        |
| Giggling | Singing   | Listening to music |

add your own ...

|                              |                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Seeing a beautiful garden    | Sweet dreams           |
| Getting or giving a hug      | Yoga or exercise class |
| Dancing to favourite sounds  | Wearing velvet clothes |
| No queue at supermarket      | Being in love          |
| Smelling a beautiful flower  | Listening to birdsong  |
| Having a massage or facial   | Relaxing bubble bath   |
| Eating a delicious chocolate | Stroking a pet         |

add your own ...

Holding hands with someone you care about

Have someone play with your hair/feet

Making eye contact with a attractive stranger

Lying in bed listening to gentle rain

Watching children play joyfully

Accidentally hearing someone say something nice about you

Finding some money in your coat pocket

Finding a parking space first time round

Laughing so hard your face and tummy hurt

Waking up and realising it's the weekend

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