

Lighten Up with **Laughter**

"The human race has only one really effective weapon and that is laughter." Mark Twain



A laugh a day keeps the heart attack away

Ever heard someone say, "Laughter is the best medicine"? Researchers from the University of Maryland can support this statement when it comes to protecting your heart. Their study was the first to reveal that **laughter may help prevent heart disease.**

Why? Mental stress impairs the endothelium (protective barrier lining blood vessels), and laughter appears to *cause the endothelium to*

dilate or expand, which increases the blood flow (University Of Maryland Medical Center, 2005).

Laughter may help mental health issues

The psychological benefits of laughter are truly remarkable (Brown & Johansson, 2011). To name a few:

- ✓ Relaxation
- ✓ Restful sleep
- ✓ Counteracted depressive features, anxiety, and psychosomatic problems
- ✓ Improved cognition
- ✓ Encouraged creativity
- ✓ Improved mood
- ✓ Increased social attraction
- ✓ Amplified resiliency

Physiological Benefits of Laughter

- Relaxes muscle tension
- Lowers stress hormones
- Increases endorphins
- Boosts immunity
- Improves respiratory
- Increases T-cells
- Increases dopamine
- Increases blood circulation
- Lowers heart disease risk

Ways to laugh more

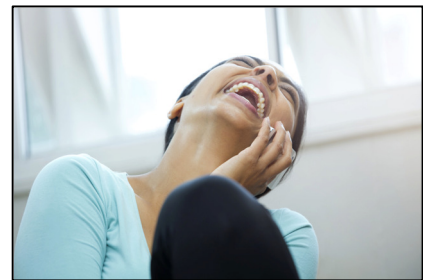
Watch a funny movie or TV show.

Host a games night with friends.

Visualization. Think about a positive event that made you laugh. Let yourself back in that moment and focus on the joy and peace.

Allow yourself to laugh at yourself. Do not be afraid to take yourself less seriously! Start by playing with your kids or other children. Both of you need to learn that it is okay to simply laugh, be silly, and be yourself.

Accountable laughter. When you check in with a friend, also check in if you both have had moments of laughter or not. If you haven't, fix that!



Brown, A.D., & Johansson, E. (2011). The benefits of laughter. *Canadian counselling and psychotherapy association.*

Retrieved from www.ccpa-accp.ca

University of Maryland Medical Center. (2005). University of Maryland school of medicine shows laughter helps blood vessels function better. *ScienceDaily.* Retrieved from www.sciencedaily.com

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