

## The Art of Laughing is the Science of Breathing

Patch Adams understood that laughter was important not only in healing, but also for filling the souls of those who care for patients. Each of us has a well within us, full of compassion, caring, and healing. Yet we daily face fear, pain, frustration, exhaustion, grief, and loss. All of these can deplete us while our patients are expecting more. There is perhaps no quicker way to replenish our wells than by the simple act of laughing.

As we take on the responsibilities of the world, many of us come to believe that laughter is something only children do. Especially in a healthcare environment plagued by burnout, we tend to become serious and don a stoic professional face. Some of us even believe that laughing makes us less professional.

Laughter brings physiological benefits to the body. It lessens people's pain, so if anything, we need to be spreading more healing laughter in all of our interactions. It is like a bee pollinating flowers and bringing them to life. How can you as a busy healthcare professional do this?

### Here are five ways to bring smiles and giggles to AHS.

**Smile.** Smiling is contagious. So called "mirror neurons" (important in early human development) allow babies to mimic facial and emotional responses and fire in response to sensory input. Have you ever noticed when someone yawns; others in a room will yawn as well? Those are mirror neurons at work. Smiling and laughter activate mirror neurons in the brain of primates and humans. This is why sitcoms often include laugh tracks—hearing the laughter makes us laugh. So, laugh and watch: others will join you.

**Have some jokes ready.** According to research, those who can tell a good joke are perceived as more competent. Some data even suggests that employees with a good sense of humour are more likely to get a raise or promotion. However, humour can be tricky, as it is subjective. So, keep your jokes simple, no offensive, and short. Remember to know and read your audience.

**Plan silly times.** Theme days replete with outfits or with sundries that may reflect your patient's tastes or those of your inpatient teams can add smiles and joy while breaking a dismal routine.

**Be a good sport.** Self-deprecation can be a way not only to bring a smile or two, but can help diffuse a tense situation. Being a good sport not only helps people spread joy to others but is a great way to be seen in a positive light by employers.

**Celebrate success and fun.** Encourage smiling, pleasure, and laughing. When managers and administrators look like they are enjoying themselves, they set the company culture that it is a fun place to work.

Laughter is the best medicine. It not only heals others, but also helps lighten our daily loads, and brings a smile to our face and everyone we meet. Consider trying this opportunity to bring you and those around you a world of good.

There is an old saying that goes, “Laughter is the best medicine.” Is it true? What does laughter do to your body? Can laughter affect relationships? Why don’t you laugh when you tickle yourself?

Laughter raises your heart rate and blood pressure. Your breathing speeds up, too. It is like you’re exercising! Laughing for 10 to 15 minutes burns about 50 calories.

The science of laughing and its effects on the body is called Gelotology.

Want a good laugh? Watch a funny movie with friends or family. People are 30 times more likely to laugh in a group than alone

Laughter fights stress. Your brain releases endorphins when you laugh, which makes you feel happy.

It is hard to catch your breath when you laugh because your diaphragm spasms. This is why your laughter sounds like “ha-ha-ha” or “ho-ho-ho” or “he-he-he”.

If you laugh a lot, you may get sick less often. Laughing causes a hormone called HGH to be released. HGH boosts your immune system and helps you fight germs.

Tickling and laughter is a form of bonding and communication between a parent and a child. (Charles Darwin noted this in the late 19th Century.)

You cannot make yourself laugh by tickling yourself. Why? It is impossible to surprise your brain. Your brain predicts the sensation your fingers will make just before you tickle yourself, so it is not a surprise.

SMILE . . . be the reason for creating more smiles today. Laugh & Play Every Day!

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