

MovementWorks has included a trial session of Laughter Yoga to help uplift our bodies and minds during these unprecedented times of social distancing and increased isolation.

Laughter Yoga is a beneficial physical practice; the human physiological system cannot distinguish between spontaneous and voluntary laughter and, as such, Laughter Yoga brings about all the physical and mental benefits of "real" laughter. In particular, it may lead to elevated mood and playfulness.

There are no yoga poses made in Laughter Yoga.

Laughter Yoga involves laughing voluntarily for a prolonged period of time. The laughter does not have to be for any humorous reason.

Sessions begin with gentle stretching and warm up exercises. Breathing exercises are used to prepare the respiratory system for laughing before and between the laughter exercises. These may include visualization techniques or acting.

Often, voluntary laughter leads to natural or contagious laughter. It is said that 20 minutes of laughter is enough to feel the full benefits of the practice.

Laughter Yoga can be good for anyone who wants to bring more joy and playfulness into their life. It also helps the body and mind feel more energized and healthy. Some studies suggest that laughter lowers stress hormone levels and may improve anxiety and relieve pain. Participants may leave their session feeling uplifted and peaceful.

All that is needed is a willingness to take part and comfortable clothes to move around and have fun in.

Contraindications

Laughter Yoga is not a substitute for medical consultation for physical, mental and psychological illnesses, but is a powerful, natural complementary form of healing. It is like any other aerobic exercise and may not be suitable for everyone as it involves some physical strain and a rise in intra-abdominal pressure.

Some people may have pre-existing medical conditions and one should take reasonable precaution before doing laughter exercises or indeed any form of exercise.

It is contraindicated for people suffering from:

- Any kind of hernia
- Heart disease with angina pain
- Persistent cough with breathlessness
- Uncontrolled high blood pressure
- Incontinence of urine
- Epilepsy
- Advanced (bleeding) piles and haemorrhoids or any bleeding tendencies in any part of the body
- Severe backache
- Any acute symptoms of cough, cold or fever

People who have undergone major surgery should wait at least three months before doing Laughter Yoga



Relative Contraindications

Those suffering from heart disease and high blood pressure but stable on medication and can take a brisk walk for 30 minutes can do Laughter Yoga with advice from medical specialists.

People who have undergone bypass surgery can also do Laughter Yoga after their stress test is normal.

Pregnancy is also a relative contraindication. Women with previous history of miscarriages and also those who are in advanced stage of pregnancy should take medical advice from specialists before doing laughter exercises.

People suffering from minor and major psychiatric disorders can participate in a laughter session except those who are not in touch with reality e.g. schizophrenia, hyper mania (manic part of bipolar depression)

Laughter Yoga is like any other aerobic exercise. Should you experience any discomfort, please discontinue and get medical advice.