

Imagine living with dementia, in need of someone to share, laugh and smile with - *That's the Magic of Laughter*. Imagine a 'miserable day' where everything feels strained, and you feel frazzled - *That's where the Magic of Laughter comes in*. Humour and laughter are often used interchangeably, yet they have slightly different definitions. Humour refers to a stimulus, such as a joke, that arouses laughter. Laughter is a physical reaction represented by facial expressions, sounds, and the tightening of muscle groups: therefore, becoming a form of exercise. There are many different types of laughter.

Laughter Exercising may not sound very appealing, and you may think it's not for you! Laughter exercises are not about jokes or funny movies, which makes it an ideal strategy for people who can't comprehend humour due to loss of cognitive ability. They involve a process that allows you to laugh, without the use of jokes, comedy, or humour. These exercises can also involve the person living with dementia.

***You will probably feel awkward at first but understand this is exercise and not comedy.***

*Take a minute and think back to your favourite flavour of ice cream. Since childhood chocolate has always been your favourite, and you're not about to change it at this point in your life.*

*I'm offering you a new flavour, one that you have never tried before, one that you think you really don't want to even try.*

***Something to Ponder*** - *until you try it, how do you know that you won't like it: it may even become one of your favourites. Apply this to laughter exercises*

### Simple Types of Laughter Exercises

- *Yawning Laughter*: yawn and incorporate a laugh into the yawn.
- *Age Laughter*: Imagine you are 100 years of age: what would it sound like? What was your laughter like when you were 20 years younger, and how did you laugh as a child?
- *30 Second Laughter*: Laugh non-stop for 30 seconds.
- *1 meter laugh* – how long does it take to laugh 1 metre?
- *Fake Laughter* - Any type of laugh when you don't feel like laughing.
- *Doing the Dishes* - While doing things like sweeping or doing the dishes, try gently giggling, then say and repeat "haaaaaa haaaaaa haaaaaa" for as long as necessary.
- *Singing Laughter* - Sing old songs or songs that are familiar to you together, and if you can't remember the words use "Ha, ha, ha instead.
- *Raising Hands Laughter* - Is it easier to laugh with your hands up or down?

## Your Laughter Exercise Program

*Warming up* - Start by clapping and chanting 'ho, ho, ho' and 'ha, ha, ha.' Animated clapping and humming may stimulate the diaphragm and build positive energy.

*Ha' mantra for stress* - During periods of increased anxiety or stress, use the mantra 'ha ha ha' slowly to help reduce the stress.

*Smiling with the eyes* - While standing in front of a mirror, use your hands to cover your mouth and nose, now smile with only the eyes visible and keep this expression for 5–10 seconds. Repeat a few times throughout the day, without the need of the mirror.

Laughter exercises can also be combined with breathing exercises.

Try walking and laughing which is a great workout.

## A Simple Program for Beginners

- Smile, then slowly try to move into a gentle laugh quietly at first and building in volume.
- Be fully aware that your attention is directed at what you are feeling at that moment, accepting and letting go.
- After a minute or two close your eyes and continue to laugh for a few more seconds before stopping the laughter and focus on your breathing.
- Whatever you are feeling, notice it, acknowledge it and accept it.

## What Have You Gained from Your Laughter Exercises?

- A release of endorphins providing a feel-good experience
- Completed an internal exercise program
- Unleashed inhibitions
- Reduced tension
- Developing a form of resilience: building the ability to bounce back from adversity or move forward despite forces disrupting our lives.

Close your eyes and remember a time when you couldn't stop laughing. While you hold that memory, feel yourself relax, and allow those feelings to take over your mindset.