

Laugh Your Way to Enlightenment

By Pragito Dove

As I sat in a restaurant one Sunday evening enjoying my pasta salad and the company of some friends, the sounds of giggles and laughter drifted over from the next table. We turned



to see a family with two teenage daughters who had a bad case of the giggles. The father, obviously not in a good mood, became more and more exasperated with the girls' inability to contain their laughter. Finally, with a very serious straight face, he said, "That's enough laughing for the weekend, Julia."

I had to turn away so he wouldn't see my grin. Julia, meanwhile, tried to talk her father into starting on Monday's quota of laughter. Her rationale was that she would be at school and wouldn't be able to laugh as much as on a Sunday.

The absurdity of being given a ration of laughter each day reminded me of the way I was raised. Until then, I hadn't really thought much about how serious my upbringing had been. My laughter had been largely repressed. Giggling and laughing were definitely frowned upon at school, church and other childhood places.

I wasn't aware of just how much it had been repressed until I started practicing The Mystic Rose Meditation. This technique has three stages: Laughter, Tears, Sitting in Silence. The twentieth-century Indian mystic, Osho, developed this practice for Americans, and all people living in high tech societies, because we respond well to expressive forms of meditation. During the first stage, one spends a good deal of time just laughing and it is most effective in a group environment.

During my first experience, it felt strange to laugh for three hours, especially in the presence of other people; however, it didn't take long to get in the swing of it. After a while, my natural laughter just kept bubbling up to the surface.

We don't have to wait to be happy. The different laughter meditations I teach and practice are

a way to help us relax, loosen up and enjoy life. They provide opportunities for a playfulness, a reminder that life does not have to be a constant struggle.

Happiness is our essential nature.

Rather than waiting for external events to determine our happiness, we can find it deep inside ourselves. Perhaps we think we have to be relaxed and calm, or that all sorts of conditions must exist for us to be happy. This is not the case; happiness can exist for no reason. The more we practice smiling, laughing and enjoying ourselves for no reason, the more we will discover that we already have what we seek.

Many of us know that laughter is good for us, but we might feel that we have nothing to laugh about; we may feel more like crying. The second stage of The Mystic Rose can help us to release and heal old wounds, unburden sorrows and discover deep peace within.



So do some laughter techniques, but be kind and gentle with yourself. And remember: If you are in the midst of a difficult time in your life, commit an equal amount of time to allow your sadness to exist. The balanced awareness and expression of both of these energies will bring you to a deeper harmony and peace within yourself.

The Benefits

Laughter is good for us in every way as several studies have shown. See, for example, articles by N. Lehrman in Archives of Internal Medicine, April 26, 1993; by Lee Berk, Dr.P.H. in Loma Linda University School of Medicine News, March 11, 1999; by N.Silver in American Health, November 1986; by J. McCormick in Lancet, August 1994. Among these findings:

- ★ Laughter stimulates physical healing.
- ★ Laughter enhances our creativity.
- ★ Laughter is rejuvenating and regenerating.
- ★ Laughter is sexy.
- ★ Laughter is good for relationships.
- ★ Laughter opens the heart.
- ★ Laughter gives us a glimpse of freedom from the mind.

The Laughter Meditation

Stage One: Laughter

Raise both arms in the air, and shout "yahoo" several times. Then burst into laughter for absolutely no reason. Just start laughing. At the beginning it may seem weird and you may have to force it a little, saying 'Ha, Ha, Ha,' or 'Ho, Ho, Ho' to get the laughter energy moving. Soon spontaneous laughter arises at the sound of your attempts at laughing. Try it for thirty seconds, for one or two minutes, or for three or five minutes. Just laugh for no reason at all. Laugh for the sake of laughing. Try it again for five minutes when you go to bed, just before you go to sleep. Try it in the shower or while driving your car in traffic. Ha, Ha, Ha. Even to say those words out loud will start a transformation in your energy, in your mood.



At the beginning, it will take some effort; you might want to use the laughter track of a CD such as my Laughter and Tears CD to help you get started. After a little while, it starts to happen naturally. Your body gets used to it, starts to expect it.

Stage Two: Sit in Silence

The first thing to remember is not to get serious. Just because you are going to sit in silence with your eyes closed doesn't mean that you have to be serious. Sincere, yes, but not serious! Sit down and close your eyes. You might find, and many people do, that gales of laughter are still bubbling up from inside you. That's okay. Don't force or repress. After a while the laughter naturally comes to an end, and you feel yourself dropping down into a place of warm silence, stillness, and joy.

You can do this technique for any amount of time that you wish. For example two minutes of laughter followed by two minutes of silence. Do the same amount of time for each stage.



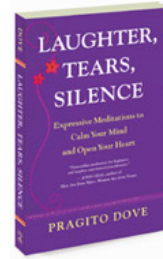
Laughter is one of the easiest ways to free yourself from the mind's constant thought process and find inner peace. It will make you more alive, more healthy, more creative, and more silent. Simply relax into the enjoyment. You will discover in yourself a tremendous natural talent for rejoicing in life. You may even laugh your way to enlightenment. Yes, it's that good. Remember to laugh a lot every day.

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About the Author

Pragito Dove is author of *Laughter, Tears, Silence: Expressive Meditations to Calm Your Mind and Open Your Heart* (2010) and a meditation master, keynote speaker, and trainer. Visit Pragito's website at www.pragito.com, email her at info@pragito.com or call 415.925.9533 for more information on books, cds, trainings, and workshops and to book her services.

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