

Read the text and answer the questions that follow.

LEARN TO LAUGH

The expression “Laughter is the best medicine” has been shown to be at least partly true. Laughter stimulates production of brain chemicals that relieve pain and elevate mood. It also lowers blood pressure, and reduces stress.

Laughter is also something that we don’t get enough of. That’s partly because we generally only laugh *at* something since it’s difficult to *make ourselves* laugh. However, according to Indian physician Dr Madan Kataria, everyone can learn this skill. And he says that this type of laughter is as beneficial as the spontaneous act of laughing at something.

Dr Kataria, also known as the Giggling Guru, is the founder of Laughter Yoga. Since 1995, he’s taught his methods to people who have established over 500 Laughter Clubs in 40 countries.

In Laughter Yoga, breathing exercises are combined with “laughter exercises”. These include things such as imitating animals, jumping or crawling while making laughing sounds (like “ha-ha-ha” or “ho-ho-ho”). It’s not long before everyone begins to laugh for real. Many participants report that they are eventually able to make themselves laugh alone.

Laughter Yoga is even catching on with companies and government agencies in several countries. High-tech firms, for instance, have found that Laughter Yoga is a great way for people with demanding jobs to reduce stress. In the US, there are laughing clubs for worried families of soldiers. And workers in a post office in Seoul, South Korea, have attended laughing classes as part of an effort to provide friendlier customer service.

Once people master the art of laughing, could crying be next? After all, there are also health benefits associated with the emotional release of crying, and it’s something that, like laughing, many people are unable to do easily. The owners of the two first-known “cry bars”, both in China, have already spotted this potential trend. The entry fees include foods such as red peppers and onions, which cause tears in many people. And of course, tissues are provided.

1 Choose the best meaning for each word or phrase.

- relieve (line 2)
 - ignore
 - increase
 - lessen
- physician (line 5)
 - physics expert
 - medical doctor
 - scientist
- spontaneous (line 7)
 - carefully planned
 - sudden and unplanned
 - genuine
- crawling (line 11)
 - walking
 - running
 - moving on hands and knees
- catching on (line 14)
 - becoming popular
 - being used
 - being discussed

2 Complete the sentences.

- Production of pain-relieving and mood-elevating brain chemicals.....
- Since 1995, more than 500 Laughter Clubs

3 Answer the questions, according to information given in the text. Use your own words as far as possible.

- For what different reasons are laughing classes becoming popular in some companies and government agencies?
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.....
- In what ways are laughing and crying similar?
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4 Write a composition of about 100-120 words. Choose one option.

- Describe a funny scene in a book, film or television programme, and explain why it made you laugh.
- Write a formal letter to a school suggesting the idea of forming a Laughter Club. Explain why you think it would be a good idea.