



“Thoroughly enjoyed by all! ...Would strongly recommend!”

Coca Cola's staff experienced one of our 'thoroughly enjoyable' team building laughter workshops for the first time! They wanted a team building exercises and activities that were...see more details below.

# LAUGHTER FOR TEAM BUILDING

Founded in 2009 by Laughing John Hipkiss

[www.teambuildinglaugh.co.uk](http://www.teambuildinglaugh.co.uk)  
[www.laughtertherapy.org.uk](http://www.laughtertherapy.org.uk)

“The real proof is that 3 months on the team are still talking and laughing about it! A unique leveller!”

HR Director, United Biscuits.

## Endorsed by:

Laughter For Teambuilding really WORKS! Don't just take our word for it...

“It went well thanks John! I've not heard anything negative!  
It was really good!”

Senior Manager - Invoicing & Securities, HSBC

“Consensus was really positive, with everyone I spoke to  
saying they enjoyed it. A fantastic start to the day!”

HR Director, Vivergo Fuels – BP

“A unique levelling team builder! Was executed very well  
overcoming initial scepticism. 3 months on the team are  
still talking and laughing about it! Great to relieve stress!  
Recommended!”

HR Director, United Biscuits

“It went very well! The team enjoyed it very much! You did  
a great job”

Team Manager, Shell

“Thoroughly enjoyed by all! A really great hour! Would  
strongly recommend!”

Team Leader, Coca-Cola

“Very funny & enjoyable! Team were fully engaged. Would strongly recommend more of these! Good instructor!”

Team Feedback, General Electric

“A great workshop! Different, fun and effective! Would recommend.”

Team Leader, Kraft Foods

‘It was a great session and end to the conference!  
Delegates found it excellent and enjoyed taking part!’

RCN Conference.

‘It went very well thank you. It was well attended and very well received!’

Imperial College, London

# LAUGHTER THERAPY – AND WHY TEAMS NEED IT!

Human beings love to laugh, and the average adult laughs 17 times a day (USA) - in GB it's 1 time a day and in Jamaica it's 2787978 times a day. Humans love to laugh so much that there are actually industries built around laughter. Jokes, sitcoms and comedians are all designed to get us laughing, because laughing feels good. For us it seems so natural, but the funny thing is that humans are one of the only species that laughs. Laughter is actually a complex response that involves many of the same skills used in solving problems.

Laughter is a great thing -- that's why we've all heard the saying, "Laughter is the best medicine." There is strong evidence that laughter can actually improve health and help fight disease. We'll look at laughter -- what it is, what happens in our brains when we laugh, what makes us laugh and how it can make us healthier and happier. You'll also learn that there's a tremendous amount that no one understands yet.

## What is Laughter?

Laughter is not the same as humour. Laughter is the physiological response to humour. Laughter consists of two parts -- a set of gestures and the production of a sound. When we laugh, the brain pressures us to conduct both those activities simultaneously. When we laugh heartily, changes occur in many parts of the body, even the arm, leg and trunk muscles

Under certain conditions, our bodies perform what the Encyclopedia Britannica describes as "rhythmic, vocalized, expiratory and involuntary actions" -- better known as laughter.

Fifteen facial muscles contract and stimulation of the zygomatic major muscle (the main lifting mechanism of your upper lip) occurs. Meanwhile, the respiratory system is upset by the epiglottis half-closing the larynx, so that air intake occurs irregularly, making you gasp. In extreme circumstances, the tear ducts are activated, so that while the mouth is opening and closing and the struggle for oxygen intake continues, the face

becomes moist and often red (or purple). The noises that usually accompany this bizarre behaviour range from sedate giggles to boisterous guffaws.

Behavioural neurobiologist and laughter researcher Robert Provine jokes that he has encountered one major problem in his study of laughter. The problem is that laughter disappears just when he is ready to observe it -- especially in the laboratory. One of his studies looked at the sonic structure of laughter. He discovered that all human laughter consists of variations on a basic form that consists of short, vowel-like notes repeated every 210 milliseconds – (laughter yoga invented by Dr Kataria goes along with this idea) Laughter can be of the "ha-ha-ha" variety or the "ho-ho-ho" type but not a mixture of both, he says. Provine also suggests that humans have a "detector" that responds to laughter by triggering other neural circuits in the brain, which, in turn, generates more laughter. This explains why laughter is contagious.

## **Why Do We Laugh?**

Philosopher John Morreall believes that the first human laughter may have begun as a gesture of shared relief at the passing of danger. And since the relaxation that results from a bout of laughter inhibits the biological fight-or-flight response, laughter may indicate trust in one's companions.

Many researchers believe that the purpose of laughter is related to making and strengthening human connections. "Laughter occurs when people are comfortable with one another, when they feel open and free. And the more laughter [there is], the more bonding [occurs] within the group," says cultural anthropologist Mahadev Apte. This feedback "loop" of bonding-laughter-more bonding, combined with the common desire not to be singled out from the group, may be another reason why laughter is often contagious.

Studies have also found that dominant individuals -- the boss, the tribal chief or the family patriarch -- use humour more than their subordinates. If you've often thought that everyone in the office laughs when the boss laughs, you're very perceptive. In such cases, Morreall says, controlling the laughter of a group becomes a way of exercising power by controlling the emotional climate of the group.

So laughter, like much human behaviour, must have evolved to change the behaviour of others, Provine says. For example, in an embarrassing or threatening situation, laughter may serve as a conciliatory gesture or as a way to deflect anger. If the threatening person joins the laughter, the risk of confrontation may lessen.

Provine is among only a few people who are studying laughter much as an animal behaviorist might study a dog's bark or a bird's song. He believes that laughter, like the bird's song, functions as a kind of social signal. Other studies have confirmed that theory by proving that people are 30 times more likely to laugh in social settings than when they are alone – which proves how powerful a group laughter therapy session can be! (and without pseudo-social stimuli like television). Even nitrous oxide, or laughing gas, loses much of its oomph when taken in solitude, according to German psychologist Willibald Ruch.

So when coaching laughter 1-1 maybe discuss with the client:

- Ask 'what makes you laugh and discuss opportunities to do it (or read it or watch it) more often.
- Surround yourself with funny people -- be with them every chance you get. This should help create a positive atmosphere to help enable more laughter.
- Develop your own sense of humour. Maybe even take a class to learn how to be a comic, go to a laughter session, feel free to experiment - be funny every chance you get -- as long as it's not at someone else's expense! A lot of us take life too seriously at times!

## **Laughter on the Brain**

The physiological study of laughter has its own name -- gelotology. And we know that certain parts of the brain are responsible for certain human functions. For example, emotional responses are the function of the brain's largest region, the frontal lobe which becomes very active through laughter! Dopamine is released – a neurotransmitter that helps control the brains reward and pleasure principles. Dopamine also helps regulate movement and emotional responses, and it enables us not only to see rewards, but to

take action to move toward them. People with low dopamine activity may be more prone to addiction. The presence of a certain kind of dopamine receptor is also associated with sensation-seeking. (Psychology Today) But researchers have learned that the production of laughter is involved with various regions of the brain. While the relationship between laughter and the brain is not fully understood, researchers are making some progress.

## **Age and humour making us laugh!**

Experts say that several obvious differences in people affect what they find humorous. The most significant seems to be age.

## **Laughter and health**

Laughter reduces levels of certain stress hormones. In doing this, laughter provides a safety valve that shuts off the flow of stress hormones and the fight-or-flight compounds that swing into action in our bodies when we experience stress, anger or hostility. These stress hormones suppress the immune system, increase the number of blood platelets (which can cause obstructions in arteries) and raise blood pressure. When we're laughing, natural killer cells that destroy tumors and viruses increase, as do Gamma-interferon (a disease-fighting protein), T-cells, which are a major part of the immune response, and B-cells, which make disease-destroying antibodies. Endorphins – feel good chemicals are released.

Laughing 100 times is equal to 10 minutes on the rowing machine. Laughing can be a total body workout! Blood pressure is lowered, and there is an increase in vascular blood flow and in oxygenation of the blood, which further assists healing. Laughter also gives your diaphragm and abdominal, respiratory, facial, leg and back muscles a workout. (another benefit of having a 'laughter session')

The psychological benefits of humour are amazing. People often store negative emotions, such as anger, sadness and fear, rather than expressing them. Laughter provides a way for these emotions to be harmlessly released. Laughter is cathartic. That's why some people who are upset or stressed out go to a funny movie or a comedy club or a laughter session, so they can laugh the negative emotions away (these

negative emotions, when held inside, can cause biochemical changes that can affect our bodies – stress etc).

To conclude mental health professionals are suggesting "laughter therapy," which teaches people how to laugh -- openly -- at things that aren't usually funny and to cope in difficult situations by using more humour and fun!

See below for links to my websites and more information:

<http://www.laughtertherapy.org.uk/>





<http://www.teambuildinglaugh.co.uk/>

Reduce stress, improve relationships and boost morale in your workplace.  
A simple solution for managers and team leaders .

Since 2009 we have helped hundreds of UK businesses and organisations to build stronger, happier and more motivated teams, using the amazing power of laughter. We would love to do the same for your workplace. Laughter team building sessions are designed to bond, relax and de-stress your staff in a supportive, positive atmosphere. They are mix of laughter yoga exercises, fun team building games, breathing and meditations. Above all, the sessions are about people not taking themselves so seriously, letting go of their egos, which is great for breaking down barriers and helping people to connect.

**“A unique levelling team builder. Well executed, overcoming initial scepticism. Three months on, the team are still talking and laughing about it! Recommended.”**

HR Director, United Biscuits

Loosen up with laughter and watch how it helps your team to bond. You might think a “laughter team building session” sounds weird and way out. Perhaps you’re sceptical about whether it would work for your team. We have worked with a wide range of businesses and organisations, including some individuals who are naturally more reserved. Almost without exception, even the most uptight team members have quickly got into the mood. They’ve been amazed how much better they feel afterwards – about themselves, their colleagues and their jobs!

**“Thoroughly enjoyed by all! ...Would strongly recommend!”  
Team Leader - Coca Cola “Was fantastic, fresh and full of fun throughout. Surpassed expectation.”**

Sky UK

## Why is laughter so effective at bonding teams together?

Researchers have discovered laughter plays an important part in strengthening human relationships. Laughter occurs when people are comfortable with one another, when they feel open and free. The more laughter there is, the more bonding occurs within the group.

Most of the time in the workplace, we take ourselves far too seriously. But when we start laughing, it's infectious and does amazingly positive things to our sense of well-being and relationships.

Hundreds of businesses and organisations around the UK have already proved this to be true, by taking part in our laughter team building sessions. Your team could experience the benefits too!

**“Response was very positive and we are all still laughing.”**

WH Smith

Is it time to lighten the mood in your workplace?

Our clients include large corporations, universities and colleges, councils and local government, community organisations – anyone who is involved in work responsibilities that can sometimes seem heavy. They need something different and “fun” to lighten the mood occasionally.

We can come to you anywhere in the UK. All we need is a spacious room. Sessions can last from 20 minutes up to a full day. The most popular option is between one and two hours

Please quote LFT15 for a 15% discount! See [www.teambuildinglaugh.co.uk](http://www.teambuildinglaugh.co.uk)  
Email [info@teambuildinglaugh.co.uk](mailto:info@teambuildinglaugh.co.uk)

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The below interview helps outline more about me and how it works:

John Hipkiss (Laughing John) explains how laughter therapy can relieve stress while boosting team motivation.

## **What is laughter therapy?**

Usually carried out in a group or team session, laughter therapy is a way of playing with laughter sounds and expressions to boost general health and wellbeing. The basic idea of laughing together playfully in a group is contagious and connecting as well as stress-relieving.

## **What are it's origins?**

The therapeutic effects of laughter have been studied since the 1970s, but an Indian physician, Dr Madan Kataria – who developed laughter yoga in Mumbai – is credited with bringing laughter therapy to a wider audience. Kataria set up the first laughter club in 1995, and there are now more than 5,000 of them throughout the world.

## **Why did you take it up?**

I was stressed myself at the time, so taking up laughter therapy was a great release. I also love laughing, humour and meeting all kinds of people and teams from all sorts of different backgrounds. Coca-Cola, Shell and United Biscuits are just some of the clients with whom I have worked in the past.

## **What did your training involve?**

I was trained by a local laughter therapist, who lived near me. After that, I did some trial sessions for local companies and got great feedback, so it soon became a full time love of mine.

## **What usually happens in a session?**

Laughter therapy is generally done in group sessions. These start off with some fun warm-ups and improvisation games, followed by breathing and relaxation techniques. No one is put on the spot or forced to laugh. Participants are just encouraged to let go and relax.

## **How many sessions are necessary?**

For some teams, just one session can make a big difference. It can be an eye-opener for them to let go of stress and the over-seriousness that can often make stress and work performance worse. It can also increase their confidence with others as the sessions are a great leveller with no egos:

I think it went well; it was a bit of a leveller. Some things amazed me! The reserved threw themselves into it. I believe it helped gel the group together well. Thank you!  
Inclusion & Development Manager, Vale of Glamorgan Council

## **What things is Laughter for Team Building best for?**

It is ideal for alleviating stress and pressure. Anyone who feels depressed or low in confidence will also benefit. It is good, too, for people who already laugh a lot, as it shows them how to chuckle in a new way. In addition, it is great for bonding. It helps groups or teams to get to know each other in a really fun, positive manner.

## **What are it's main benefits?**

There are many. It releases endorphins, the body's own feel-good hormones; is a good exercise; helps to break down communication barriers; encourages positive thinking and creativity as well as relaxing the whole body by reducing stress and tension. Laughter really is the best medicine.

## **Is it suitable for everyone?**

Yes, anyone can benefit from laughter as a team therapy, although many therapists work within the healthcare profession or in office situations, where laughter can be used as a means of relieving stress. It is thought to be especially beneficial for elderly groups, young people in care and mental health patients.

## What do you like most about your work?

Spreading laughter to people who really benefit from it. Seeing someone who has been going through a tough time laugh is so rewarding. It is great to hear people saying they have not laughed so much in ages and that they feel really positive after a session.

3 months on the team are still talking and laughing about it! Great to relieve stress! Recommended!

HR Director, United Biscuits

## Summary

So if you would like to try a Laughter Team Building Workshop for:

- Something fun to break up a training day
- Something new and different to energise all at a conference
- Something to de-stress, raise morale and bond new team members

Any number of people, any length, anywhere!

We can come to you anywhere in the UK.....all we need is a spacious room. Sessions from ...15 mins – up to a full day! The most popular option is between 1 and 2 hours.

Please quote LFT15 for a 15% discount! See [www.teambuildinglaugh.co.uk](http://www.teambuildinglaugh.co.uk)  
Email [info@teambuildinglaugh.co.uk](mailto:info@teambuildinglaugh.co.uk)

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# Shell and Coca-Cola experience the benefits!



A team of about 10 staff in London experienced a laughter therapy workshop as a new team building activity to try something new and fun that would break up their meeting day agenda!

They really enjoyed it and felt great after!

So if your looking for a fun activity a part of your team building event or meeting day this could be just the tonic!

*'It went very well, the team enjoyed it very much. You did a great job!'*

Alice Acuna, Global Account Manager



Coca Cola's staff experienced one of our 'thoroughly enjoyable' team building laughter therapy workshops for the first time!

They wanted a team building exercise that was fun, new and would get everyone feeling great which it sure did! The session lasted an hour. At first the staff seemed intrigued about what was going to happen!

We started with ice breakers, then in to some laughter therapy exercises, a marsh mallow team building contest and some deep breathing/laughter meditation to finish with. Plenty of laughter was experienced throughout the session.

A great atmosphere was created where everyone could de-stress and get to know each other in a fun way. Some said after it was interesting and great to see management in a different way as all took to it so well!

After the Team Leader commented,

“We all thoroughly enjoyed it and would recommend it to other teams! Although we were slightly out of comfort zones it made us very feel very relaxed after as it encouraged really positive interaction between different members of the team. Fascinating!

Everyone is still talking and laughing about it. Thank you!”