

# The LAUGH-FEST ACTIVITY

We use this activity in weekly enrichment groups on both the independent and the assisted living units. The script below shows how I might introduce the activity the first time it is used, with occasional repetitions as needed or when a new member joins the group.

Laughing is *almost always* a good thing. We don't like laughing to ridicule a person, or laughing in sarcasm, or laughing to cover up a lie, but laughing in joy and delight—that's great fun! What do *you* think of laughing? Do you like to laugh?

(We discuss this.)

Laughing has been around forever. Nearly 3,000 years ago, the people of Israel were liberated from captivity in Babylon and they celebrated. Psalm 126:2 says, "We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy. And the other nations said, 'What amazing things the LORD has done for them.'" They were so happy that the people in the country next door noticed it!

Laughter benefits the body, mind, and spirit. You've heard the expression "Laughter is the best medicine." Reader's Digest magazine has had a page by that name for many decades. The idea comes from the Bible, which says, "A cheerful heart is good medicine" (Proverbs 17:22). Laughter boosts the immune system, benefits the heart and lungs, and relieves stress. Laughter releases endorphins, that stuff in the brain that makes your mood better.

Are you ready to be cheerful? Are you ready to laugh? You don't have to be happy to laugh; laughing can *make you* happy.

Let's try that out. Listen to this recording.

Then I play the Okeh Laughing Record CD. This invariably induces spontaneous laughter and I join in. My laughing encourages the quiet ones to laugh. From that catalyst, we move on to laughing exercises from the list below, generally in the sequence shown, so that we establish a routine.

## Other therapeutic laughter exercises:

Clap and bend at the waist as you laugh "ha, ha, ha, ho, ho, ho, hee, hee, hee."

Inhale deeply, then exhale and laugh.

Laugh without stopping for 30 seconds.

Open your mouth and laugh, laugh with your eyes too.

Raise and lower your arms while laughing. This engages both sides of your brain.

Do a belly laugh, like Santa might do, work your belly muscles.

Laugh like a cartoon character, like Woody Woodpecker.

Giggle like a small child.

Laugh while moving your hands from side to side. This engages both sides of your brain.

Laugh like a chimpanzee.

Make eye contact with a partner and laugh at each other.

End by giving each other a "high five" as you laugh.

Quit before fatigue begins to set in. Do what comedians do, "Leave 'em laughing."