



LAUGHING IS NO JOKE

By Ulrico Grech-Cumbo
Director, Acappella Productions

We all know that laughter makes us feel good, but while losing ourselves in our hysterical escape, we often forget that there is a science behind it. Luckily, over the years, researchers and medical doctors have done studies for us to better understand the mechanics of the laugh:

- An increase in T-Cell activity (very important in the treatment of AIDS) is experienced during laughter; it helps these cells to “turn it up a notch”[†]
- On average, you will laugh 100 times during a *Comedy Twist* night. Laughing 100 times roughly equals 15 minutes on an exercise bike, which burns 40 calories and melts away 4 pounds over a year if done daily^{*}
- 20 minutes of sustained laughter is the cardiovascular equivalent to 3 minutes of strenuous rowing, and increases blood flow by up to 22%[‡]
- Vigorous laughter increases the heart rate, deepens the breathing rate, and uses muscles in the face, stomach, and diaphragm, making it excellent for asthmatics or anyone with a lung disorder.
- Aside from improving our moods, laughter helps fight infection and reduce pain. In a study published in the *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, patients were told one-liners after surgery and before painful medication was administered. Those exposed to humor perceived less pain when compared to patients who didn't get a dose of humor as part of their therapy.
- Laughter can lower blood pressure, and is very good for people with diabetes.
- The levels of two stress hormones, *cortisol* and *epinephrine*, which suppress the body's immune system by constricting blood vessels, will actually drop after a dose of laughter[†]
- Eustress, or good stress, is created by laughter. The effects of Eustress are felt up to 45 minutes after the last laugh[‡]

* Study conducted by Maciej S. Buchowski, PhD, and his colleagues, using a whole-room indirect calorimeter at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee

† Proven by Dr. Lee Berk, Loma Linda University, California

- Laughter causes positive changes in brain chemistry by releasing *endorphins*, and it brings more oxygen into the body with the deeper inhalations.
- The chemical *dopamine*, which is released during the “fight or flight” response that Dr. Hans Selye discovered in the 1960’s, increases with laughter.
- Laughter releases anger, fear, guilt, anxiety and tension.
- Laughter encourages concentration on "right" attitudes rather than "wrong"attitudes[§].
- Higher levels of an antibody (*salivary immunoglobulin A*) that fights infectious organisms entering the respiratory tract were found in the saliva of people who watched humorous videos or experienced good moods[†].
- Researchers found after watching an hour-long video of slapstick comedy that the "natural killer cells," which seek out and destroy malignant and cancerous cells, more actively attacked tumor cells in test tubes. And these effects lasted up to 12 hours[§].
- *Comedy Twist* jokes are designed to provoke laughter at your, and our society’s insecurities and hang-ups in cheerful environment, allowing you to adopt a higher level of self-acceptance and freeing your mind to think clearly towards solutions, according to famed psychologist, Og Mandino.
- Laughter is the most inexpensive medicine. For a R50 night out at *Comedy Twist*, you’ve bought your entire week’s medication and a chance to make it a team-building/social gathering experience in the middle of a stressful week.

According to Dr. Lee Berk, we used to laugh 20 minutes out of every day in the 1950’s. Now we laugh for 6 minutes out of every day. Something has changed between then and now. How do you measure up with laughter? How do you plan to address it?

Get your weekly dosage every Wednesday night at *Comedy Twist*.

Place: Tanz Café, River Road (off Bryanston Drive), Bryanston

Time: 20h30

Tickets: R50 at the door

Table bookings: (011) 463 3128

[‡] Proven by Michael Miller, MD, Director of Preventive Cardiology at the University of Maryland Medical Center

[§] Provided by Dr. Standley, MD, author and holistic radio personality

Full bar and a la carte menu available
Email info: kathy@acappella.co.za