

20-MINUTE TIMEOUT

laugh your way to a good day

By Elyse Russo

If laughter is the best medicine, then laughter yoga is an excellent prescription.

Laughter yoga, or the combination of unconditional laughter with yogic breathing increases oxygen flow in the body. This may lessen pain and relieve tension, says **Lynda Tourloukis**, a certified laughter yoga teacher in Park Ridge.

“It’s about becoming playful, enjoying yourself and forgetting the rest of the world,” she says.

While laughter yoga is best enjoyed in groups, Tourloukis says there are a few exercises you can try on your own. Or, grab a few friends or your kids, and laugh away the stress of the day.

Try this routine when you first wake up in the morning:

1. While you’re still in bed, inhale through your nose. Then, slowly exhale a “ha ha ha” while stretching your right arm and shaking your hand. Repeat with other arm and legs.
2. Once you are up, stand with your hands on your hips, with feet shoulder width apart. Lean forward, breathing in through your nose, then lean back and breath out through your mouth. On your third lean back, breath out with “ha ha ha.” Repeat several times breathing out “ha ha ha.”
3. Try the “Calcutta laugh”: Take a step and flick your hands out to the right twice while saying “ha ha.” Take another step, and flick your hands to the left while saying “ho ho.” Repeat several times.

4. Cover your ears and scream! Allow the end of the scream to turn to laughter.



If you’d like to try laughter yoga in a group, find a Laughter Club near you at followthelaughter.com/clubs.htm. Tourloukis’s laughter club, the **Park Ridge Hysterical Society**, meets every Tuesday. Or, chuckle with others around the world on the Laughter Line at 712-432-3900, with the pin 6071292#. It’s free!

