

FAMILY

Giggle Your Way to Feeling Great

Cabin fever got you down? Try laughter yoga. “It can transform a blue mood in minutes by releasing the feel-good chemicals serotonin and endorphins into your brain,” says Robert Rivest, a laughter yoga master trainer in Springfield, MA. It’s a combo of laughing, breathing, and moving that engages core muscles and reduces stress. In laughter clubs and classes, participants have found that initial simulated laughter usually leads to the real deal, in part because laughter is so contagious.

BY MARY GILES AND BRYAN MCCREARY

LAUGHTER YOGA

Stand in a circle and try one or all of these ideas to crack yourselves up.

- Laugh your snort laugh.
- Laugh like some favorite animals: elephant, chimpanzee, hyena, horse, snake.
- Laugh like you’re bursting with laughter.
- Laugh like Tarzan.
- Laugh a nervous, rapid laugh.
- Laugh an uncontrollable laugh.
- Laugh like Woody Woodpecker.
- Tell a story in gibberish.
- Laugh your silliest laugh.
- Have a funny-faces contest.
- Milk imaginary cows.
- Blow up pretend balloons, then pretend to stomp on them.



WINDING DOWN

Finish with a few breathing exercises. “They leave you feeling calm, so it’s a good way to balance your energy and make sure kids don’t end up too high-spirited when stuck indoors,” says Rivest.

BALLOON BREATH: Breathe in deeply to inflate yourself like a balloon, then breathe out slowly, wiggling gently and deflating just like a balloon.

TAI CHI WAVE: Breathe in and raise one elbow, then hand, to shoulder height, then the other elbow and hand. Breathe out; drop one elbow and hand slowly back to your side, then the other.

To learn more and to follow along with Rivest’s laughter yoga exercises, visit robertrivest.com.

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