

Laugh Now!

The Chief Happiness Officer, Alexander Kjerulf (positivesharing.com) is calling today (January 24) **Global Belly Laugh Day** (www.bellylaughday.com) I read a little more about the Chief Happiness Officer and found out that he is a certified laughter (yoga) instructor. I read more about this and discovered laughter yoga.

At first glance, I find this whole thing (laughter yoga) a little nutty and sad - that in order to laugh we have to get together in groups to laugh about nothing. Have our lives become that depressing?

On the other hand, this completely reminds me of an incident with my Uncle years ago that leads me to think there is some merit to the premise behind laughter yoga.

Here is what happened.

My Aunt and Uncle lived about 30 miles away from us. I was around 13 years old and lived with my Mom. Mom and I were pretty down because Mom and Dad had just gotten divorced. Mom and I were trying to eek out an existence on our own. We had also just moved to this town (for Dad's new job) and lived in a new subdivision on the outskirts of town. We were only the third family to buy a house there, so it was a fairly isolated house. We had made very few local contacts or friends. My Aunt and Uncle were also down in the dumps. My Aunt recently had a miscarriage, and it seemed like it was going to be very difficult for them to have children.

My Aunt and Uncle were amazingly supportive during those post-divorce years. Over the years, I've lost touch with them which is a shame, because we had a lot of fun together. They would come over almost every weekend or we'd go to their house. We'd usually play board games or BBQ. We had much fun, often at Mom's expense (as will happen when a little brother is around his big sister).

One night we were all especially down. Usually one of us would be in a positive mood and successfully rally the troops, but not this time. We didn't feel like playing any games. We were all too poor to go out to a movie. We weren't especially hungry. I remember sitting at the kitchen table, the four of us wallowing around in self pity like little piggies in a mudbath. The atmosphere was just thick and murky. I don't think we were even talking, just sort of staring at each other.

My Uncle suddenly lept up from his chair. (Let me give you a visual. My Uncle is very silly and has a boyish personality. He is pretty loud. He is maybe about 6'4" and 230 pounds - like a mid-sized hockey player. He has dark boyish hair and sparkly eyes. Off and on he has a mustache or beard, but otherwise he has always looked younger than he actually is. A lot of his humor is accompanied with physicality - think Chevy Chase. When he leaps up...you feel it.) He said, "Everyone, just start laughing. Ha ha ha! I mean it! Everyone stand up!" We stood up. "Everyone do this - Ha Ha Ha! - Ho Ho Ho! - Hee Hee Hee." He tossed his head back in mock hilarity and threw his hands up in the air. We looked at him like he was crazy (a look we often gave him - even his wife was regularly caught offguard by his whimsical ideas). For some reason, though, we would always do whatever stupid thing he suggested. I guess he had charisma or we figured we couldn't possibly look more foolish than this big, hockey player of a man *pretending* to laugh, so we did it. We started out timidly, "Hee, Ha, Ho..." Soon, we started to actually giggle - partly because my Uncle was making silly laugh sounds and making fun of my Mom. He'd say stuff like, "This is how your Mom laughs when she's drunk - teeheeheeeeee," his voice high and shrill, flipping his hair in an exaggerated imitation of Mom, or he'd say "This is how she laughs when she is constipated - hoooo, hoooo, hoooooo," his voice low and grunty.

Pretty soon, we were hysterical. Seriously. I still have a very clear mental picture of myself at this point. In my mind's eye, I am sitting in the tiny dining nook, at the dark walnut table, head down on the table over my folded arms. I am laughing so hard that I have actually started crying. Tears are streaming down my cheeks and my laughter has turned into something more like a "heeeeeee, heeeeeeee" mewling type sound. My chest and stomach muscles hurt soooo much. I can barely take a breath I am so hysterical and I'm starting to feel dizzy. I am faintly aware of my Aunt standing to my left laughing just as hysterically. Mom is standing on my right, laugh-crying.

We couldn't stop. We'd finally all get it together. Then, someone would say something and we'd collapse back into hysteria. Finally, through a series of hand-signals and grunts, my Uncle directed each of us to a separate bedroom where we could calm down without the influence of the others around us.

This was a typical ranch style house where a long hallway had outlets to 4 bedrooms that were situated across from each other, two on each side of the hallway. I went into the guest room and smothered my face with a pillow until I could finally breathe again. Then I slowly opened the door. At just about the same time, the other three people were also cracking open their doors. I recall that my Aunt also had a pillow in her hands. The four of us opened our respective doors, took one step into the hallway, looked at each other, burst into laughter, went back into our "private" rooms, and closed the doors. This happened no less than 3 times before we finally could look at each other and not lose complete control.

At that point, my Aunt and Uncle said good-night and headed back home. It was exhausting. We must have laughed for an hour straight. Think of how much stress we'd each built up in order for us to become that hysterical. It felt amazing! I remember just feeling completely spent and relieved and peaceful. I'll never forget it.

So, maybe laughter yoga has some merit to it. I haven't tried it since that day when I was 13. Part of me suspects my Uncle has to be around to make it work. However, the next time I'm really in despair and desperate to feel happy, I think I'll try it. Maybe I'll call my Uncle and say "Hey, stand up and go HA HA HA." I bet it will help!

[Replies to Laugh Now!](#)

This entry was posted on Wednesday, January 24th, 2007 at 12:54 pm

E.H. of Belly Laugh Day says:

It is Belly Laugh Day, January 24 8:24 p.m. I am the organizer of Belly Laugh Day. I am so moved reading this story. You see one of my intentions for Belly Laugh Day is to celebrate and remember past laughter. You have shared such a memorable laughter event from the past - a laugh from the past. Thank you so much for sharing.

the author of Laugh Now! says on January 24th, 2007 at 9:41 pm

E.H., Thanks so much for creating Belly Laugh Day and your fabulous website. Your goal worked, because I haven't thought about that crazy night with my Uncle in ages. When I read about Belly Laugh Day, I remembered it instantly. Thinking about it makes me smile every time!