



**LAUGHTER  
IS A MUST IN  
MARRIAGE**

**UK** Cooperative  
Extension Service

**HFD-DAW.100**

# Laughter is a Must in Marriage

**David Weisenhorn, Ph.D.**

Senior Parenting and Child Development Specialist

At different points throughout a marriage, couples may find the romance and connection that was once vibrant is now lacking and search for ways to retrieve it. It may be easier to retrieve than you think and cost you very little. As a matter of fact, it may be laughable. Gelotology is the study of laughter and its effects on the body from both the psychological and physiological perspective. Research shows that laughter serves as a powerful tool for building and maintaining a healthy, happy marriage. It cultivates a positive atmosphere, strengthens emotional bonds, and helps couples navigate the challenges of married life with resilience and grace.

## Health of Laughter

A good belly laugh has both short-term and long-term effects. In the short-term, laughter stimulates your heart, lungs, and muscles and increases the natural pain relievers your brain releases. A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress, leaving your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes. The benefits do not stop there. Don't get rid of your gym membership just yet, but one study found that laughing for 10 to 15 minutes a day can burn approximately 40 calories. That could be enough to lose 3 or 4 pounds over the course of a year. In the long term, laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and



**MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT**

Cooperative Extension Service | Agriculture and Natural Resources | Family and Consumer Sciences | 4-H Youth Development | Community and Economic Development

infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease. Laughing may even help you live longer. A study in Norway found that people with a strong sense of humor outlived those who don't laugh as much. The difference was particularly notable for those battling cancer.

## Bonding

It is common for couples who have been together for a long time to begin to feel as if their relationship lacks spark. Sharing laughter creates shared experiences and inside jokes, strengthening the emotional bond between partners. Oxytocin, often called the love drug, is a hormone released during laughter that helps the neurochemical part of human social bonding. It fosters a sense of connection and intimacy, helping couples feel closer to each other. Laughing together can add excitement and spontaneity to a relationship, keeping the romance alive. Sharing playful banter and humor can reignite passion and attraction between partners, creating a dynamic and fulfilling relationship.

## When Laughter is Absent

Laughter is more likely to occur when people feel safe and secure. If you find that laughter is not a part of your daily routine with your partner, perhaps it means there are other issues. For instance, it may be a sign of distrust or disrespect in the relationship. When you lose trust or respect for your partner, you can easily feel guarded. That leaves you less likely to be fun-loving and jovial. Laughing is often a sign of agreement and understanding, which may not be possible if disrespect is present and trust is not.

Time may also be the culprit when laughter is not present, because fun takes time. Everyone can attest to the overbearing demands of life with raising children, work obligations, family commitments, and social expectations. However, without making

intentional time to spend with each other, you may struggle to find the time to enjoy your interactions. After all, playfulness arises when you have downtime and stress levels are low.

Maintaining low levels of stress is also important. When you feel stress, your attention and focus center on the source of the pressure which can leave you feeling tense and not playful. While it is common for stress to arise at different times throughout the lifespan, it takes intention and diligence to reduce unnecessary stress in your life. Learning to navigate stressful situations takes time and effort, so avoiding those situations when you can is key.

Your habits and routines can also be part of the problem. Regardless of being "good" or "bad," habits can keep you from connecting with one another. Research shows that healthy couples make intentional time to spend together doing what they agree on to be fun. Without prioritizing fun and carving out time in your schedules, it is easy to let the daily routines stand in your way.

## Getting Laughter Back

One of the first steps to getting laughter back in your relationship is to be intentional. Without intention, your everyday monotony will erode your joy. Research says that people are prone to fixating on negative mindsets and behaviors. Therefore, it is important to recognize fun as a healthy aspect of any relationship and choose activities which will increase the chances of a good time. It could be as easy as laughing at yourself the next time you make a mistake rather than being upset.

People's personalities make them all a little different when it comes to trying something new. However, plenty of marital advice recommends putting your fears aside and being adventurous. Being adventurous can mean a lot of different things. No need to cliff jump or swim with sharks, but being willing to step out of your comfort zone can be both

fun and rewarding. Trying something new together with your spouse is a great way to introduce fun and laughter back into your relationship.

Adopting a playful attitude is yet another way to increase your laughter. Focusing your minds on finding fun helps temper how you view mistakes or disappointments throughout your day. Choosing to laugh when you spill your morning coffee or smile when someone cuts you off in traffic can leave you feeling light even when your daily load is heavy. Committing to a playful mindset allows you to avoid unnecessary stress and extend grace to yourself and others when mistakes happen. Learning to laugh at yourself is a great way to add laughter back into your life.

## Conclusion

Laughter is a powerful tool for building and maintaining a healthy, happy marriage. It is free and good for you. Make it a point to laugh at least once a day because just one minute of laughter can boost your mood and strengthen your relational bonds. If you cannot find something funny to laugh at, just look in the mirror.

## For Further Enjoyment

Scott, S. (2015). Why we laugh. *YouTube.com/TEDx*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxLRv0FEndM>

Addyman, C. (2017). Why babies laugh. *YouTube.com/TEDxBatavia*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mymMye4purU>

Gentry, S. (2017). Choose to laugh -It's good for you. *YouTube.com/TEDxManhattanBeach*.  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/sebastian\\_gentry\\_sebastian\\_gendry\\_choose\\_to\\_laugh\\_it\\_s\\_good\\_for\\_you](https://www.ted.com/talks/sebastian_gentry_sebastian_gendry_choose_to_laugh_it_s_good_for_you)

## References

- Create joy and satisfaction. *Mental Health America*. Retrieved from <https://www.mhanational.org/create-joy-and-satisfaction>. Accessed April 23, 2024.
- Louie, D., Brook, K., & Frates, E. (2016). The laughter prescription: A tool for lifestyle medicine. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, 10(4) p.262-267. doi: 10.1177/1559827614550279.
- McGhee, P. (2010). Humor as survival training for a stressed-out world: The 7 humor habits program. AuthorHouse Publisher.
- Scott, S. K., Lavan, N., Chen, S., & McGettigan, C. (2014). The social life of laughter. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 18(12) p.618-620.
- Seaward, B.L. (2021). Comic relief: The healing power of humor. In: *Essentials of Managing Stress*. 5th ed. Jones & Bartlett Learning.
- Stress relief from laughter? It's no joke. *Mayo Clinic*. Retrieved from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-relief/art-20044456>. Accessed April 23, 2024.