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ALIGNING POLICY AND EXERCISE MEDICINE AS AN INVESTMENT TOWARDS COMBATTING NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES
Laughter Promotes Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

In modern society, high levels of stress are caused by fierce competition and socioeconomic stressors. As this stress has a negative impact on self-esteem, which affects quality of life and personal motivation, it increases depression and leads to a harmful influence on a person’s mental health.

Laughter therapy, as a non-pharmacological, alternative treatment, has a positive effect on the mental health and the immune system. In addition, laughter therapy does not require specialized preparations, such as suitable facilities and equipment, and it is easily accessible and acceptable. Laughter decreases serum levels of cortisol, epinephrine, growth hormone, and 3,4-dihydroxyphenylacetic acid (a major dopamine catabolite), indicating a reversal of the stress response (Berk et al. 1989a). Depression is a mental health problem, where neurotransmitters in the brain, such as norepinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin, are reduced, and there is something wrong in the mood control circuit of the brain. Laughter can alter dopamine and serotonin activity. Furthermore, endorphins secreted by laughter can help when people are uncomfortable or in a depressed mood.

As for the mental effects of the laughter therapy, it helps reduce unpleasant feelings such as tension, anxiety, hatred, and anger, alleviates stress and depression, aids better interpersonal relationships, and improves insomnia, memory failure, and dementia (Bains et al., 2015; Ko & Youn, 2011; Takeda et al., 2010).

Laughter Yoga, developed by physician, Madan Kataria in Mumbai (2002), is based on the idea that making ourselves laugh is beneficial for our health. It is a combination of breathing techniques, simple movements, and simulated laughter. A study with brain scans revealed that our brains respond to another person’s laughter. The steps of conducting Laughter Yoga will be defined and benefits of Laughter Yoga will be explained. Final part of this talk will be a practical sharing session.

REFERENCES


