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LAUGHTER YOGA (Appendix K)



When: at the end of class or reading time, anytime you transition, when students are feeling anxious and need a fresh start to relieve tension

Time frame: 30 seconds to 1 minute

Steps:

1. Stand up and spread out.
2. Begin by clapping rhythmically 1-2, 1-2-3.
3. Add in the sounds “ho-ho, ha-ha-ha” as you clap.
4. Pick up the pace as you go.
5. Drop the clapping and just make the sounds “ho-ho, ha-ha-ha.” Possibly add in other gestures like hands up and down.
6. Let yourself smile, move, make eye contact, and connect with one another.
7. A more spontaneous laughter will likely occur. Let that happen.
8. End with a closing routine, such as getting quieter with our voices and doing a long exhalation, before sitting back down.

“Scientific studies have shown that there is an increase in serotonin and dopamine with laughter yoga.”

(Laughter Yoga International:
Laughteryoga.org)

Tips:

- According to Langer (2024), joy is a way to create regulation in our bodies. When students are joyfully laughing, they are not just reducing anxiety but also creating regulated nervous systems. If students are feeling grumpy, discouraged, and anxious, consider a laughter yoga exercise. Or be proactive and start with one before the period begins.
- Laughing releases endorphins and “happy” hormones like dopamine and serotonin. The release of these hormones is a safe way to help students regulate. And by doing the laughter together, you are co-regulating off of one another. If you have a particularly silly class, you can harness their need for laughter with an intentional exercise.
- Don’t assume students (of any age) will know how to transition from laughter yoga to the next activity. For this reason, choose laughter yoga after reading as a way to recharge and begin the next learning experience. Teach them how to end the laughing session with a routine that clearly shows you are moving on to the next part of the day. Some ideas for endings include high five a neighbor, sit and feel, or big exhale and jump. After the final action students can practice sitting and being ready to learn again.

SOME VARIATIONS OF LAUGHTER YOGA (KANIGEL, 2021)

Lion laughter: Stick out your tongue, open your eyes wide, and stretch your hands out like claws while laughing.

Humming laughter: Laugh with the mouth closed and hum.

Silent laughter: Open your mouth wide and laugh without making a sound.

Gradient laughter: Start by smiling and then slowly begin to chuckle softly. Increase the intensity of the laugh until you’ve achieved a hearty laugh. Then gradually bring the laugh down to a smile again. Bonus: this can be an opportunity to teach some vocabulary words if you put the words up on the board as you guide students through the gradient.

