



# #TREbit - Laughter IS the best medicine!

## Short-term benefits

A good laugh has great short-term effects. When you start to laugh, it doesn't just lighten your load mentally, it actually induces physical changes in your body. Laughter can:

**Stimulate many organs.** Laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain.

**Activate and relieve your stress response.** A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response, and it can increase your heart rate and blood pressure. The result? A good, relaxed feeling.

**Soothe tension.** Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which can help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.

## Long-term effects

Laughter isn't just a quick pick-me-up, though. It's also good for you over the long term. Laughter may:

**Improve your immune system.** Negative thoughts manifest into chemical reactions that can affect your body by bringing more stress into your system and decreasing your immunity. In contrast, positive thoughts can release neuropeptides that help fight stress and potentially more-serious illnesses.

**Relieve pain.** Laughter may ease pain by causing the body to produce its own natural painkillers.

**Increase personal satisfaction.** Laughter can also make it easier to cope with difficult situations. It also helps you connect with other people.

**Improve your mood.** Many people experience depression, sometimes due to chronic illnesses. Laughter can help lessen your depression and anxiety and may make you feel happier.

## Three Funny Things

What makes you laugh? Laughing can be stress relieving, and there's quite a bit of research out there to back it up (Craun & Bourke, 2014). List three funny things you can remember that made you laugh out loud. You can refer back to this list during more difficult times.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Pay attention for a day to how much humor and laughter is in your life

- How many times do you have a good laugh? Is it enough?
- How often do you make others laugh?
- Do you make family members and friends laugh?
- Who makes you laugh?

## Humor and Trauma

Humor can be used to increase trauma survivors' threshold of tolerance. Research shows that the appropriate therapeutic application of experiencing humor favorably affects mental and physical health by increasing pain tolerance, resilience, and immunity to pathology in addition to other hormonal, physiological, and psychological benefits.

