6 ways Laughter can improve your team's well being

How working remotely impacts morale.

Remote working has been with us for a number of years, with employees enjoying the freedom of not being physically connected to a workplace. Reports have shown that productivity increases when staff work from home and set up their own routines to ensure tasks and projects are completed.

However, the current environment has forced homeworking on many people who have had no previous experience of managing their schedules in this way. Remote working can be difficult when you're used to a set routine of travelling to the same location every day. There is a feeling of normality and safeness that these routines offer. Long days spent at home can lead to feelings of isolation and disconnect, which often lead to a sharp drop in morale.

Morale is the driver for productivity and engagement. When morale is high, your company will be reaching its full potential. But when you are working remotely, this is something that has to be nurtured. You'll have to find new ways to keep your morale and productivity high, even when you're tired of staring at the same four walls.

Whilst remote working does have many benefits, without a physical presence in the office environment, it's possible after a while to find yourself disconnected from your targets and goals and before long, head deep in project work with little to no human interactions. With work flowing in left, right and centre, and no 'home time' rituals or timings, soon you may start to feel isolated and lonely.

By placing every effort in having the right structures in place, social disconnection can be alleviated, helping individuals feel like part of something bigger; a community. When we are happier, we are more productive and likely to put more effort in.

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1 Laughter connects people at a different level.

Have you ever been to a conference or work event where you don't know many people in attendance?

Unless we're super confident, we often enter the room in a low state of anxiety, conscious of how we look, how we feel and how we are coming across to others. We'll often skirt around the outside of the throng, hoping for someone to strike up a conversation and relieve the burden of silence.

Often at these events there will be one group who are laughing with each other, each one following up a funny line with a humorous remark of their own. These people have overcome their anxiety and have used humour and laughter to connect with each other. As an outsider to this group we can't help but feel that we are missing out; on the fun, the laughter and the deeper connection that these things bring us. The laughter this group shares suggests common values and experiences, a sense of togetherness. And we want to be part of that group so we can rid ourselves of our anxiety and feel part of something bigger.

Laughter is a great ice breaker and a great equaliser that can cut through many social, cultural, religious and economic barriers. Sharing a laugh shows that we are all human beings who can respond to the same stimulus as everyone else.

So the next time you're at one of these events, seek out the laughter group and join them. I can guarantee that within moments of sharing a laugh, your anxiety will disappear and you'll feel fantastic. Then take a moment to look around and see that most eyes will be on your little group.

Task!

One way that we connect with people is via the phone, Why not do the giggle phone.

Take your hand as if it was a phone and pretend it's the funniest thing you have heard all day, Laugh like you are laughing with a friend, reminiscing about a funny time in your lives.

Try and Laugh for at least 1 minute! Its not easy, but you will feel the benefits

Watch the video!

https://youtu.be/ChEZO4BJ6_U

2 Reduces stress and anxiety

It's a cliché that 'laughter is the best medicine' but, like most words of wisdom that are in common use, they're a cliché for a reason; because they're true!

Laughter is a strong medicine that triggers healthy physical and emotional changes in your body. When you laugh you lower your blood pressure and at the same time you reduce the level of cortisol, a hormone produced by your body during stressful times, that may be flowing around your system.

A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress and leaves your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes.

When you laugh you automatically trigger the release of endorphins, the natural chemical that makes us feel good, into your bloodstream. This is the same thing that happens when you exercise for a significant period. And we all know how good exercise is for us.

Anger, and the associated heightened levels of stress and anxiety, are reduced by laughter. It is physically impossible to laugh and be angry at the same time. Laughter overcomes the negative emotional cost that anger brings to our bodies and makes us feel calmer and more rational about the original problem. When you laugh, nothing feels as bad as you first thought so that insurmountable problem you thought you had, is soon reduced to something that can be resolved.

Laughing in the face of adversity is something we can all learn to do well. It you can laugh when life, as it invariably does, throws the odd curve ball your way, then you enhance your resilience to deal with problems in a more calm and controlled way. Resilience means that we don't give up when things get a little tough. If you can get in the habit of treating stress with laughter then your resilience levels with go through the roof and you'll find your stress levels naturally reduce.

Task!

Reach your arms out in front of you, hands facing upwards.

Take a deep breath in, as you bend your arms up towards your face. Hold your breath for a couple of seconds, and then breath out.

Repeat this process, Breath in, Hold, Hold, Hold – Now breath out a long ha ha ha ha ha, until you have no Laughter left.

Breath in, hold, hold, hold, and breath out.

Watch the video!

https://youtu.be/-eLfozTLEz4

3 Opens the creative side of your mind

Laughter can help people solve problems that require creative solutions by making it easier to think more freely and associate ideas more broadly. Research has shown that people in a light mood experience more eureka! moments and greater inspiration.

Consider those times when you need to think creatively to solve a problem. Individuals can brainstorm just as well as groups. The dynamic in a group setting can be influenced by laughter; when people are comfortable in each other's company then they relax and can be open with each other. This feeling of openness and relaxation can also be achieved by the individual when they indulge in laughter exercises.

Research has shown that when we listen to a joke or any kind of humour, we use every part of our brain to help us understand what is being said.

First the left hemisphere starts to process what is being said, then the frontal lobe, the centre of our emotional response, kicks in and then right after this the right hemisphere begins to process the data it is receiving. As your brain 'gets' the joke the centre of your brain begins to elicit the feeling of happiness as a reward, and finally laughter erupts. And all this can take place in a matter of milliseconds!

This is not what happens when the brain experiences other emotions. Instead of using the whole brain, typical emotions are confined to specific areas of the brain. Laughter literally gets your whole brain fizzing and working together. When both sides of your brain are stimulated, learning is enhanced.

So the next time you have a problem to solve, create a humorous environment and watch the ideas flood in!

Mental Floss

Take an imaginary piece of floss, similar to that you would clean your teeth with, thread the floss through your ears, grabbing each side of the floss (either side of your ears, then make a flossing motion with your arms, whilst laughing.

Try this for 1 minute, to really open your creative brain.

Watch the video!
https://youtu.be/O7iVnVdETYg

4 Boosts the immune system

We've already looked at how laughter can reduce stress and anxiety which in turn leads to better health, but research has also shown that laughter can help boost your immune system and keep your body healthy and less prone to catching common ailments such as cold and flu.

Negative thoughts manifest themselves as chemical reactions in your body which increases stress in your system and decreases your immunity.

Whereas positive thoughts help release chemicals that can fight stress and potentially more serious illnesses. The simple act of laughing, something we can all easily do, helps lift our spirits and banish negativity and the harmful side effects it can bring.

As well as making you feel great, the endorphins your body releases when you laugh can act as pain killers. It's no coincidence that nitrous oxide, often given to pregnant women to relieve pain, is nick-named 'laughing gas'.

When we laugh we actually change physiologically. We stretch muscles throughout our face and body, our pulse and blood pressure rise, and we breathe faster, sending more oxygen to our tissues. In fact, a good laughter session can act as a physical workout similar to a session in the gym. Just as with a usual workout, your body can be left aching after you've spent time laughing. But boy, is that a good ache!

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Task!

Breathing and Laughter Technique – Open Heart Laughter

With this exercise you will become more aware of your endorphins.

Hold your hands in a prayer prose, hands close to your heart.

Push your hands forward, breathe in, then open your arms fully to your side, while at the same time laughing your breath out.

Repeat the process twice more.

How do you feel right now.

Watch the video! https://youtu.be/-Ywh8H4a8ks

5 Lightens your mood

Laughter, a sense of humour and the ability to see the lighter side of situations are important free and easy to use tools that maintain and improve personal wellness. Laughter seems to be able to overcome the darkest of moods. As humans we are genetically inclined to laugh at situations that are often no laughing matter.

This ability to find happiness and joy at the darkest moments may come from early man and the constant threat that our ancestors came under from the many predators that surrounded them. After another restless night fighting off attacks, our ancestors realised the power of laughter and humour to make light of previous experiences. Laughter helps release tension and gives us a moment of peace, even if danger may never be far away.

Film makers and writers are aware of this and this is why that after an agonisingly tense scene, we're often given a humorous scene to help reduce the tension and prepare us for what might be coming next.

When we see someone laugh we are drawn to them, especially if we recognise that laughter might be missing from our lives, for whatever reason. We all feel down from time to time but seeing someone laugh can have a really beneficial reaction in our own bodies.

Happy people attract other happy people, so the happier you are, the more surrounded by friends and loved ones you'll be. When you're surrounded by happiness the mood is always going to be great. Just 10 to 15 minutes of laughter a day can significantly boost your mood, health and wellness and when you're happier, you're more likely to make healthy choices when it comes to your diet and lifestyle.

Task!

Meditation Breathing - Think of a balloon

Sit quietly, and close your eyes, breathe in deeply, thinking of your lungs being a balloon, expanding whilst you breathe in.

As you exhale, think of the balloon being let down.

Breathe in – Deeply, completely filling your balloon with your breath.

Exhale.

Repeat for 5 breaths.

What colour was your balloon?

Watch the video! https://youtu.be/ByAW-6T6FtE

6 Laughter is infectious

Some theorists suggest that laughter predates language; our ancestors used the positivity of laughter to express friendliness and human warmth. Laughter was a way to communicate that you meant another group no harm and that you wanted to belong. So even before we had language, laughter was being used to join groups together and to unite mankind. Even now, laughing is an important social tool that can build bonds between people. A laugh is a way to express and share common experiences.

'Laugh, and the whole world laughs with you', is an expression that shows us how infectious laughter can be.

Take a trip to the cinema (remember that!). If you're like me you'll find it nigh on impossible not to laugh if the rest of the audience finds something funny. If I was to watch the same thing at home, and not in a group, chances are I might raise a smile. Research has shown that laughter is 30 times more frequent in groups compared to private settings. That's not to say we don't find things funny when we're by ourselves, but we're more likely to smile or talk to ourselves than to roll on the floor laughing.

TV comedies (usually very unfunny ones) know this and is why they use a laughter track to 'help' us find something funny.

Further research shows that when we hear sounds a part of our brain readies itself to react to that sound. When subjects were played laughter their facial muscles reacted and they began to smile.

When you are surrounded by the positive sound of laughter it is very difficult not to react in a positive way. Laughter expresses our shared experiences of life and shows us, that despite our differences, we are all very similar animals.

Task!

Canned Laughter

Exercise: Listen to this audio track and laugh along for no reason, apart from laughters sake.

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So what next?

Laughter has so many positive and proven benefits that can support your team and your own wellbeing. Study after study show how laughter can connect you and your staff at a much deeper level.

Laughter has the ability to reduce levels of stress and anxiety, which is a major cause of employee absence, as well as boosting the immune system to ward off those bugs that can strike when you're not at your best. A regular dose of laughter also stimulates the creative side of your brain, helping you and your team with problem solving activities.

These are of course all positive traits that everyone would want to use in their business. Laughter is a relatively new phenomenon in the business world but many companies have taken that first step to embrace laughter and benefit from the positivity that laughter can engender in you and your staff. However, I do understand that you may still be a little apprehensive about whether or not laughter might work in your next team meeting.

That is the reason why I am offering you a totally complimentary fifteen minute discovery phone call where you will have the opportunity to ask me any questions or raise any concerns you have about laughter working for your own and your team's wellbeing.

I appreciate that laughter might not be for everyone: I really do get that. But with mental health issues costing businesses between £42-45 billion a year, can you really afford not to take a closer look?

The world is going through a really difficult time at the moment and no one really knows what 'normal' will look like in the coming weeks and months. Employees are feeling anxious about the future, unconnected from normal ways of working and motivation has gone through the floor.

You have the chance to make a difference to your team, an opportunity to being something fresh and creative into your next team meeting.

If you have noticed any of the negative feelings and emotions, below, from your team, then it is certainly worth a fifteen minute call to see if laughter could help you.

- **Anxiety about the future (will I still have a job?)**
- **Lack of enthusiasm**
- **Unmotivated**
- **Rising stress levels due to deadlines/workload**
- **Missing the office environment**

In the **fifteen minute completely complimentary call,** you can ask me anything about how laughter might be able to help with these negative feelings.

To book a complimentary discovery call today, just click this link:

https://calendly.com/cannedlaughter/laughter-discovery-call

Questions I have received in the past include;

How long is a session?

How long does it work?

Why should I try laughter?

Who is it suitable for?

When is the best time to have a laughter session?

What do we need to wear?

What if my team are reluctant to try laughter?

How much is a laughter session?

Where is the best place to hold a session?

Should I stand or sit during the session?

I am here to answer these, and any other questions you may have.