



Greater Good in Education

SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

SHARE A LAUGH

"Laughter is an instant vacation."

—Milton Berle

OVERVIEW

School staff and faculty take a moment to laugh either alone or together as a way to help promote health and greater well being.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Whenever you are stressed
- Whenever you need a laugh
- During a break between classes
- At the start of a meeting to encourage connection among staff
- After a long day

TIME REQUIRED

- ≤ 15 minutes

LEVEL

- Adult

MATERIALS

- Device that can play audio from the internet

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

School leaders will:

- Encourage others to laugh as a way to help promote health and greater well being
- Reflect on the experience of laughing

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- Making Practices Culturally Responsive
- Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Humor
- Humility
- Joy

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Management
- Social Awareness

MINDFULNESS COMPONENTS

- Open Awareness
- Non-Judgment

How to Do It

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Think about the last time you had a good laugh. What caused it? What was the experience like? Have you ever smiled simply because you overheard others laughing or laughed even after someone shared a joke? What was that experience like?

INSTRUCTIONS

You can engage in this practice alone or as a group.

Alone:

Encourage faculty and staff at your school to laugh. Send them an email with this short message:

Have you ever heard people laughing and couldn't help but smile, even if you didn't know what they were laughing about? Or laughed so hard with a friend that you couldn't stop, even after the joke had passed? Maybe you've heard a laugh track on your favorite sitcom. It turns out that laughter is contagious. In other words, we instinctively mimic each other's laughter even when we don't know what's funny. This practice takes advantage of that, so all you have to do is listen to people laughing—and you may find yourself in stitches, too. If it sounds a little contrived, try suspending your skepticism for a moment. You may find it's hard to keep a straight face when you hear all those snickers and guffaws.

Here's an [audio clip](#) for you to listen to if you are in need of a laugh! Remember laughter not only feels good, but it can promote our long-term [health](#)!

In a group:

You might choose to bring some levity to a meeting by opening it with this practice.

- Start by introducing the practice:

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It turns out that laughter is contagious. In other words, we instinctively mimic each other's laughter even when we don't know what's funny. This practice takes advantage of that, so all you have to do is listen to people laughing—and you may find yourself in stitches, too.

If it sounds a little contrived, try suspending your skepticism for a moment. You may find it's hard to keep a straight face when you hear all those snickers and guffaws. Remember laughter not only feels good, but it can promote our long-term [health](#)!

- Play the following [audio](#).
- Ask a few people to share their experience with the practice. Thank everyone for engaging with the practice.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- Did you laugh when hearing the clip?

- How did it feel to hear others laughing?
- Did you notice a difference in your own mood? As relevant, did you notice a difference in the mood of others and the overall dynamic of the meeting?
- How can you encourage more laughter at work?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

In one [study](#), students listened to an 18-second audio recording of laughter. Over 85% of the students smiled the first time they heard it, while nearly half laughed.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Quite simply, laughter feels good. It can also promote our long-term [health](#), producing [soothing effects](#) on our respiratory, cardiovascular, and nervous systems.

However, if you've been spending lots of time alone, you might not be laughing very often. In fact, laughter occurs [30 times more frequently](#) in social situations than in solitude. And laughter isn't something you can just generate on command, the way you might write a [gratitude letter](#) or [meditate](#)—at least not genuine, side-clutching giggles. Research suggests that simply hearing a recording of people laughing will almost certainly give you the urge to smile, and may even make you chuckle along with them.

When you spend a lot of time with others, laughter can also help strengthen your sense of connection. Researchers believe that laughter is analogous to “play vocalizations” in rats, dogs, chimpanzees, and other animals. In other words, laughter is a [signal to others](#) that we are being playful and our intentions are kind and cooperative, not threatening or aggressive. Laughter is meant to make us and the people around us feel good and safe.

Laughter also [produces](#) endogenous opioid activity in the brain, which goes along with the pleasurable sensation it creates and may encourage us to bond with the people we're laughing with. Thus, laughing with colleagues can be a fun way to build a greater sense of community.

SOURCE

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