

# Workplace Laughter Groups

## Summary of Study

*Just Published in the Journal of Primary Prevention 2007*

*The complete Study can be found at [www.laughterlinks.com](http://www.laughterlinks.com)*

*This is the first study to be published measuring the benefits of laughter without using humor to induce that laughter, and to our knowledge it is the first study to be published measuring the benefits of laughter in the workplace.*

Here are a few brief excerpts, for the full authors' text click [here](#).

*(page 2)*

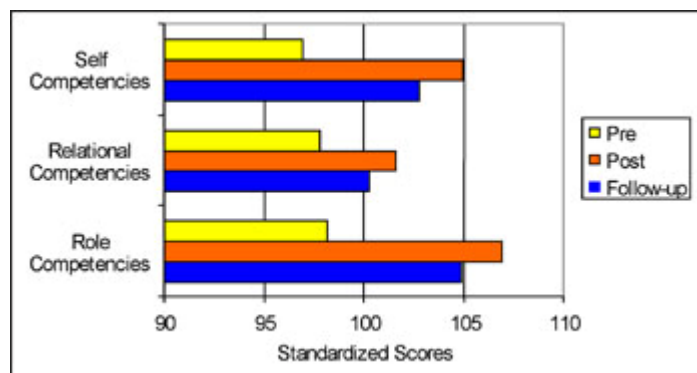
This study measured the impact of a *purposeful aerobic laughter* intervention on employees' sense of self-efficacy in the workplace. Employees demonstrated a **significant increase** in several different aspects of self-efficacy, including **self-regulation, optimism, positive emotions**, and **social identification**, and they maintained these gains at follow-up. Purposeful laughter is a realistic, sustainable, and generalizable intervention that **enhances employees' morale, resilience, and personal efficacy beliefs**.

*(Purpose, page 5)*

The study is unique in that the intervention consisted of **“laughter without humor;”** that is, participants engaged in exercises designed to evoke the physiological act of laughter without relying on humorous stimuli. In this way, laughter was isolated as a pure independent variable, not confounded by the cognitive effects of humor.

*(Figure 1. Page 22 )*

**Self, Relational, and Role-Competency Sub Scales before, after, and 90 days following Laughter Links**



**Self-Competencies**

How we feel about ourselves. Do they feel better about themselves after only three weeks of just 15-minutes a day of purposeful aerobic laughter? Yes, they most assuredly do. And did they maintain that positive attitude 90-days later? Indeed they did.

### **Relational Competencies**

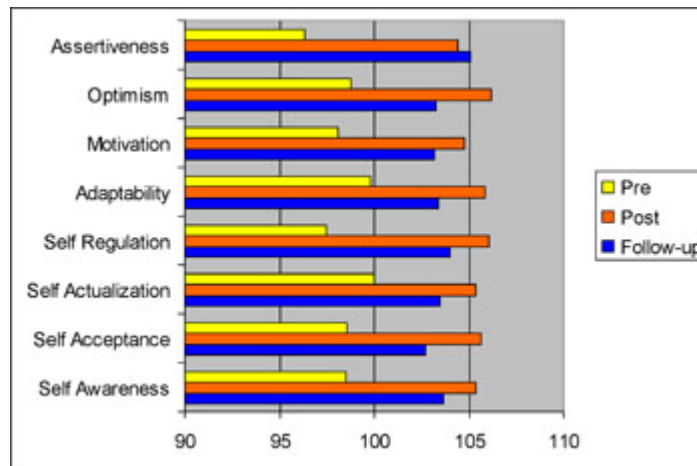
How we feel about our relationships with others. Do they feel better about their relationships after only three weeks of just 15-minutes a day of purposeful aerobic laughter? Yes, they do. And did they maintain that positive attitude 90-days later? Indeed they did.

### **Role Competencies**

How we feel about our ability to comply with rules and expectations of daily life and work. Do they feel better about the rules and expectations after only three weeks of just 15-minutes a day of purposeful aerobic laughter? Yes, they do. And did they maintain that positive attitude 90-days later? Indeed they did.

(Figure 2, page 23)

### **Self-Competency Sub Scales before, after, and 90 days following Laughter Links**



**Significant** increases in:

**Assertiveness:** Ability to express thoughts and feelings in a nondestructive manner.

**Optimism:** Ability to be positive and hopeful about the future in the face of stress, setbacks, or disappointments.

**Motivation:** Ability to begin and sustain behaviors to accomplish goals.

**Adaptability:** Ability to solve problems by being flexible, creative, and translating ideas into action.

**Self-Regulation:** Ability to control one's thoughts and feelings in times of stress and remain calm under pressure.

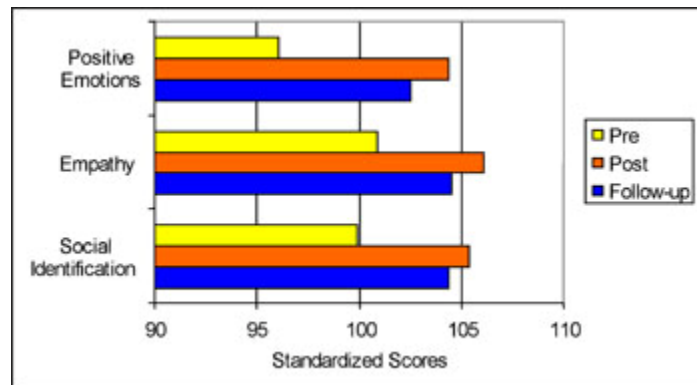
**Self-Actualization:** Ability to live up to potential through the pursuit of challenging goals, setting high personal standards, pursuing tasks outside one's comfort zone.

**Self-Acceptance:** Ability to accept both positive and negative aspects of one's self.

**Self-awareness:** Ability to be aware of one's beliefs, values, expectations, needs and feelings.

(Figure 3, page 23)

### Relational Competency Sub Scales before, after, and 90 days following Laughter Links



**Positive Emotions:** Ability to experience, sustain, and express positive emotions. Don't you wish more of your employees had this kind of increase in positive emotions everyday?

**Empathy:** Ability to be aware of, sensitive to, and appreciate others' thoughts and feelings and to respond in an understanding manner. Don't you wish the last customer service representative you had to deal with on the telephone had this kind of empathy for you and your problem? Well, so do your customers. Something so simple that can change our perspective so dramatically.

**Social Identification:** Ability to feel connected with others, to give and receive social support. Our need to connect is why we have so much gossip in the workplace. In the same amount of time as a normal coffee break people can engage in deep purposeful aerobic laughter creating a bond with quality social interaction. Less time gossiping --more time being productive. We trust people we feel connected to. Build morale and loyalty throughout your organization by leading your staff in deep purposeful aerobic laughter in the absence of humor.

(Self-efficacy and the Workplace, page 6-7)

**Self-efficacy** is the belief in one's ability to organize and carry out the courses of action necessary to achieve a goal or manage a situation (Bandura, 1986). Individuals experience greater self-efficacy when they are successful in taking small steps toward their goals (i.e., mastery experiences). Second, vicarious experiences can increase self-efficacy when individuals observe the achievements of others who are similar to themselves. Third, verbal persuasion can increase self-efficacy when significant others express faith in an individual's capabilities and these positive appraisals lead to self-affirming beliefs. (All of which were demonstrated and measured in this study.)

**Self-efficacy beliefs affect performance in the workplace.** When workers perceive a high sense of self-efficacy, they activate sufficient effort to get the task done well, and they likely produce successful outcomes.

Expectations of personal efficacy influence workers' resilience. **They engage in problem-solving coping and determine ways to restructure their work situations or manage their job demands better** (Bandura, 1997). Organizational managers can improve the performance of their employees in an efficient and relatively inexpensive manner by enhancing employees' personal efficacy beliefs.

*(Laughter and Self-efficacy, page 7-9)*

In the workplace laughter groups we designed, participants would complete a series of exercises that built upon each other and took small steps toward the goals of experiencing and sustaining laughter. We posited that as coworkers began to relate to each other in a new and somewhat unconventional manner, they would strengthen their connections with each other.

**The act of vigorous laughter energizes our physiology in much the same way that aerobic exercise does, increasing heart and respiration rate and activating various muscle groups.**

Since laughter creates a positive emotional state and increases perceived control, it follows that individuals who engage in workplace laughter groups would be better able to interrupt ruminative thinking patterns that sustain negative emotions and to form more positive self-efficacy judgments than individuals who do not.

*(Discussion, page 14-15)*

**Finding that a daily, 15-minute intervention could produce such significant positive changes in key areas of self-efficacy without changing any other environmental factors is encouraging for the field of occupational health.** It was surprising to find a significant increase in role compliance: individuals' belief in their capabilities to comply with the rules and regulations of their work. The laughter program was a simple and effective way to enhance compliance with organizational regulations and provided a refreshing adjunct to the punitive and labor-intensive efforts typically employed. This is significant as it relates to organizational wellness in terms of helping people build resilience against burnout, set healthier boundaries, and focus on self-care.

**For example**, one social worker commented that during the second week of the program, she began noticing a different attitude toward the piles of paperwork on her desk and found the motivation to begin a methodical effort to complete the work. A nurse who participated in the study was taken off all of his blood pressure medication during the third week of the program, and, one year later, he is still managing his blood pressure by daily use of the laughter exercises on his way to work.

*(page 17)*

**The positive outcomes seen in this study lead to the preliminary conclusion that a workplace laughter group can appeal to a diverse range of employees, can be effective with minimal investment of time, and may have sustained positive**

**effects on self-beliefs that have been shown to correlate with positive workplace behaviors.**

We are so pleased to be published in The Journal of Primary Prevention. Please note the following reference:

Article reference: Beckman, H., Regier, N., & Young, J. (2007), Effect of workplace laughter groups on personal efficacy beliefs, The Journal of Primary Prevention, 28, 167-182. The original publication is available at <http://www.springerlink.com/home/main.mpx>