

## NURSE FACES DOWN LIFE-THREATENING ILLNESS WITH HUMOR, ACHIEVES WELLNESS

Excerpt from “LONG IN THE TOOTH” by Florence Ditlow

In 1998, while I was grappling with the problems that resulted from my exposure to dental metals, faithful members of the AATH, Steve Wilson, a psychologist, and Dr. Dale Anderson, an internist, went to India to witness and learn about laughing groups, done in public places: Laughter Club International. These groups sprang up in Mumbai, India, in 1995, originated by Dr. Madan Kataria, a physician who felt that laughing could be created for groups in parks. He combined the uplifting quality of laughter with the power of yogic exercise. After inducing laughter with jokes and finding his repertoire depleted, he then decided to urge people to “laugh for no reason”. Necessity mothered a series of exercises whose goal was to keep the group laughing continuously for about fifteen minutes. The sequence starts with deep breaths, called pranayama in yoga. This is followed by frenetic clapping as they chant “HO HO, ha ha ha.”

Participants greeted each other while laughing. Laughter is performed first with the mouth closed, then open, a good facial workout.

“The key is eye contact,” Dr. Kataria told me, on his “World Laughter Tour”. It was the summer of '99 and I made it a point to witness his exercise routine, with a group of enthusiastic office workers in Queens, New York.

“If you think I'm crazy for laughing for no reason,” he told the group of a hundred, “and laugh at me, then my mission is accomplished!”

If one hasn't actually laughed hard by this time, the next process, argument laughter insures it. Dr. Kataria has a line of women, facing a line of men. They laugh while making eye contact and pointing their wagging index fingers at each other!

At the 1999 AATH convention, which I attended, Steve Wilson presented his Indian travel-laugh-log based on his visit to India, the previous year. For thirty minutes, we conventioners became a rendition of the Indian laughter club concept.

Despite my balance problem, I could do the exercises without difficulty, since the arms were more involved than legs, lungs more than arms! In one exercise, we shook hands with other “laugh lovers”, laughing as the arms pumped. Wow, I thought, would this be great to do with my group of veterans.

I returned to my humor groups of homeless veterans with an additional dose of laughter, thanks to the presentations of Steve Wilson and Dr. Kataria.

Here is a direct link to purchase the book at Amazon.com:

[http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0595247717/qid=1047618292/sr=8-1/ref=sr\\_8\\_1/103-3660163-8893465?v=glance&s=books&n=507846](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0595247717/qid=1047618292/sr=8-1/ref=sr_8_1/103-3660163-8893465?v=glance&s=books&n=507846)