

Laughter therapy finds its origins in the pioneering work of Dr. Madan Kataria, a physician from Mumbai, India. In March 1995, inspired by Dr. Lee Berk's research on the physiological benefits of laughter, Dr. Kataria decided to test the effects of laughter by creating a "laughter club" in a public park with a handful of participants.

Initially, volunteers told jokes to stimulate laughter, but Dr. Kataria quickly realized that humor could be perceived differently and potentially offensive. He then developed a unique approach: laughter for no reason. The idea was to simulate laughter as a group physical exercise, without resorting to jokes or humor. To his great surprise, simulated laughter quickly turned into genuine, contagious laughter.

Buoyed by this success, Dr. Kataria began to train other people to lead these laughter clubs and to develop specific exercises combining deep breathing, stretching, playing, and simulated laughter. The movement gained momentum, first in India and then internationally, with the creation of thousands of laughter clubs in over 100 countries.

In parallel, Dr. Kataria delved deeper into the scientific foundations of his method, collaborating with researchers to study the physiological and psychological effects of laughter. He also formalized "Laughter Yoga," a combination of laughter exercises and yoga techniques, and created a global network of certified professionals.

Laughter therapy has thus gradually structured itself as a stand-alone approach, used in various therapeutic, social, and professional contexts. Its success lies in its simplicity, accessibility, and ability to quickly generate a sense of well-being and human connection, regardless of cultural differences.

Today, laughter therapy continues to evolve and diversify, with many variations and applications. But it remains true to Dr. Kataria's original insight: laughter is a powerful tool for improving physical, mental, and emotional health, and it can be cultivated voluntarily and shared in groups to multiply its benefits.

Key takeaways:

- Laughter therapy was initiated in 1995 by Dr. Madan Kataria, an Indian physician, inspired by research on the benefits of laughter.

- The key concept is "laughter for no reason": simulating laughter as a group physical exercise, without resorting to humor, that triggers genuine, contagious laughter.

- Dr. Kataria developed specific exercises combining breathing, stretching, playing, and simulated laughter, and trained facilitators to spread his method.

- The movement spread worldwide with thousands of laughter clubs in over 100 countries.

- "Laughter Yoga" combines laughter exercises and yoga techniques.

- Laughter therapy is based on scientific foundations and is used in various therapeutic, social, and professional contexts.

- It quickly generates a sense of well-being and human connection, regardless of cultural differences.

- Laughter is a powerful tool for improving physical, mental, and emotional health, and can be voluntarily cultivated in groups to multiply its benefits.