

Code: PRE-6

2010 Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development: The Agenda
Pre- and Post- Conference Skills Training Workshop –

**Introduction to the Healing Benefits and
Clinical Applications of Laughter Yoga**

Time: 9:30 – 12:30
Date: 9 June, 2010 (Wednesday)
Fee: US\$50 / HK\$400
Venue: Duke of Windsor Social Service Building, 15 Hennessy Road, Hong Kong
Trainer: Fran Joseph

Workshop Description:

Unconditional laughter infused with yogic breathing can change lives.

Laughter Yoga is a revolutionary practice – simple, empowering, healing and profound. It is a body-mind system of gentle, aerobic exercise that promotes physical and emotional rebalancing and health, a sense of renewal and well-being, compassion toward ourselves and others. Its benefits are both preventive and therapeutic. It is also great fun.

Laughter Yoga is the practice of laughter as a form of exercise, based on the core premise that your body can and knows how to laugh, regardless of what your mind believes. You do not need to feel happy, rely on jokes, comedy or even need a sense of humor. Laughter Yoga is about choosing to laugh to improve your health.

There exists a substantial body of research supporting the assertion that laughter is, indeed, good medicine. Studies show that laughter enhances the immune system, reverses many of the negative effects of stress and improves cardiovascular health. Other benefits include relief of depression and anxiety, decreased sensation of pain, lower blood pressure and glucose levels, and better resistance to disease. Participants feel more connected, positive and joyful, and able to face life's challenges with greater clarity, calm and creativity.

Laughter Yoga was founded by Dr. Madan Kataria (a physician from India) with his wife Madhuri (a yoga teacher) in 1995, and developed and promoted in the USA as "therapeutic laughter" by psychologist Steve Wilson. Today, over 8,000 groups in 60 countries share in the practice of Laughter Yoga through free social laughter clubs.

In addition, Laughter Yoga is practiced worldwide in venues ranging from hospitals, community wellness programs, schools and corporations. Clinical studies have documented success working with cancer patients and the professionals who serve them, seniors coping with chronic pain and disabling illnesses, including Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease and post-stroke incapacities. School children have experienced reduced test anxiety, improved focus, attitudes, communication and interpersonal relationships. Within corporations around the world, employees and management are utilizing Laughter Yoga to improve worker relations, increase employee health and morale, and cultivate innovation and creativity.

In this workshop, we will review the history of laughter science and the physiology underpinning many of laughter yoga's benefits. We will engage in a full laughter yoga session of gentle movement, chanting and intentional laughter and breathing exercises. We will discuss clinical applications with various populations and draw upon case studies and research findings to enrich our conversation.

Wear comfortable clothing and shoes. No prior yoga experience or ability needed.

Trainer:

Fran Joseph has been offering Laughter Yoga in the Champlain Valley of Vermont since being trained as a Laughter Yoga Leader in September 2008. In May 2009, she trained with Dr. Kataria in Interlaken, Switzerland to become a Certified Laughter Yoga Teacher.

For the past 25 years, Ms. Joseph has worked to support seniors to “age in place” safely and with dignity. She has been a regional manager and consultant for the Massachusetts Elder Protective Services Program and has directed several non-profit organizations towards expansion of community based opportunities and programs for frail seniors and their family caregivers, as well as health care access for rural and underserved communities in northern Vermont.

Fran holds a bachelor’s degree in Psychology and Speech Pathology/Audiology from the State University of New York at Buffalo and a master’s degree in Audiology from Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts.