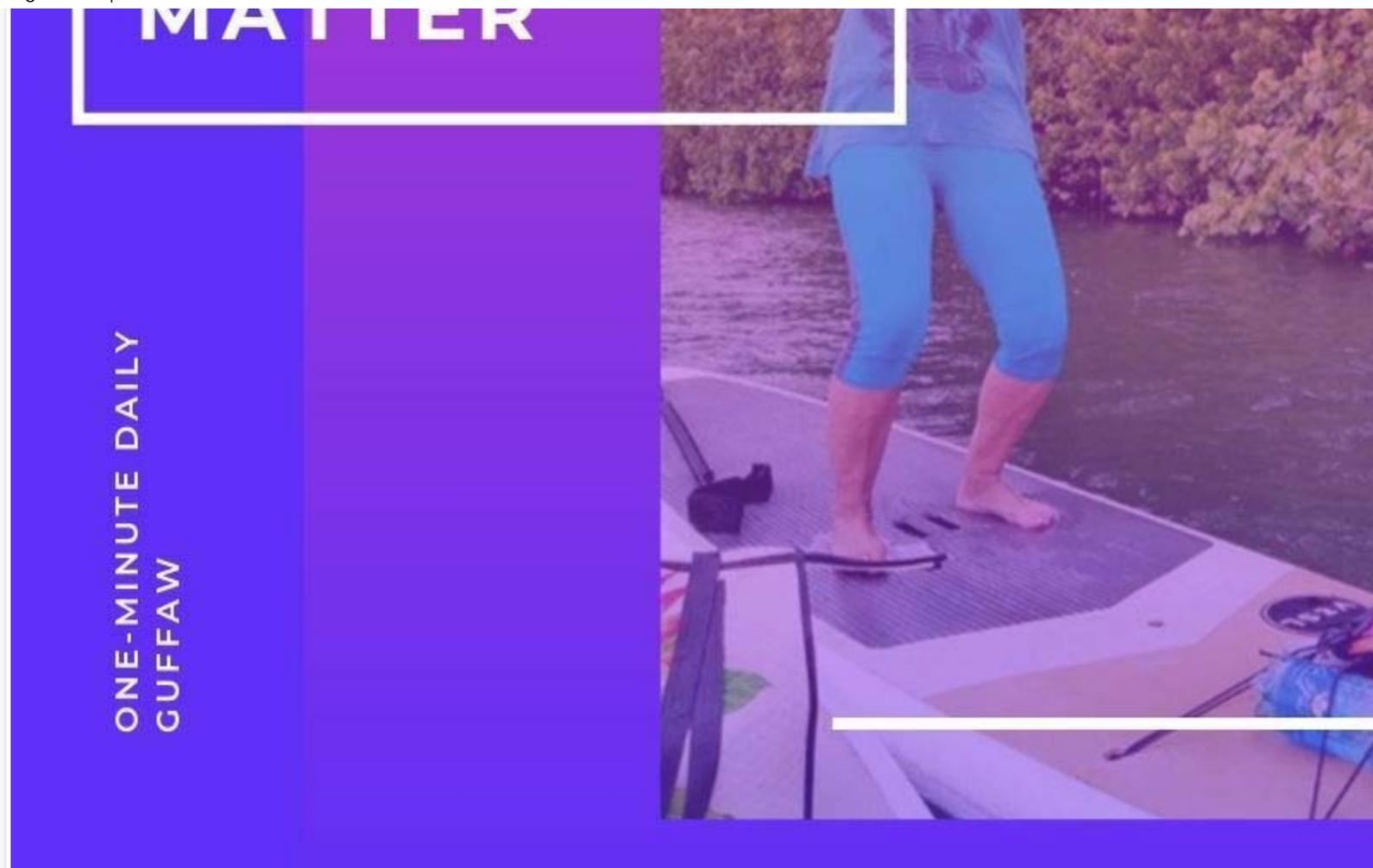




Health Is A Laughing Matter By Pamela Rand

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Forget the gym, all you really need is a one-minute daily guffaw and you'll get the same benefits as a 45 minute workout according to German Gelotologist, Professor Gunther Siekl's 2005 study – and he should know as Gelotology is the study of laughter and humor and their effect on the human body. As a result of his and related studies we know laughter can boost your immune system, strengthen your heart, release endorphins, help reduce pain, improve mental health and well being.

Norman Cousins, author of "Anatomy of an Illness" (and 10 other books) wrote about how he cured himself of Ankylosing Spondylitis, a debilitating form of arthritis that primarily affects the spine – in his case, it rendered him immobile and unable to move his jaw. Among other medications, his doctor prescribed 38 aspirins daily. Fearing internal bleeding, he made the decision to stop the medicines and only take high dosages of Vitamin C for his compromised adrenal glands. To combat his increasing and unbearable pain, he self-prescribed laughter. Cousins would watch Marx Brothers films, old episodes of Candid Camera TV shows, read humor anthologies, etc. several times a day. He documented that ten minutes of belly laughs afforded him 2 hours of pain free sleep.

Laughter makes you more resilient and better able to cope when things don't go your way. "Lightening up" can actually lengthen your life span. The Japanese have an 800-year old custom called Waraiko – based on an ancient ritual of gratitude dedicating laughter to the gods. There are festivals in several shrines throughout Japan where 3,000 people gather each year led by Shinto priests, all laughing together for twenty minutes straight as blessings for people's happiness.

Why is it children laugh an average of 400 times daily while adults laugh a meager 17 times a day?

It's time to take laughter more seriously. Find an easy formula that works for you. Surely you can fit in a few guffaws in your daily routine.

Here's a Suggested Starter list:

Create opportunities to laugh.

Discover what tickles your funny bone the most. Indulge yourself each day in watching a fave sitcom, YouTube clips, bloopers, listening to comical radio shows/podcasts, etc.

Seek out funny people.

Laugh at yourself – instead of "being embarrassed."

Post reminders to yourself to "lighten up" on the frig or your computer monitor, add a funny screensaver, put up posters or pictures that make you smile.

Smiling is contagious and often leads to laughter. The late comedian Victor Borge left us with this insight: "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people."

Take a "laughter therapy" or "laughter yoga" class, or join a morning phone laughter call-in club.

Warning: laughter may be hazardous to a bad mood.

And here's another one: "Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face." Merci to you, Monsieur Victor Hugo...!

*(Pamela Rand, Past Primetime Productions, produces "Adventures in Feeling Young," the name of the free YouTube channel featuring "ladies-of-a-certain age" taking on the world. She and her fellow youthful septuagenarian, Ellen Brooks, seasoned actresses and comediennes, rollick their way through lighthearted, under-5-minute sketches in battering away at the creaky myths of aging – laugh-out-loud joy for audiences both young and old. **Learn more:** www.AdventuresInFeelingYoung.com.)*



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