

## L . O . L . TO MANAGE STRESS...

**“While it’s true that you can’t always change the situation you find yourself in, you can always change your response to it...”**

*Betty Hart, Laughceuticals*

**Just as there are many sources of stress in our lives, there are many coping tools and strategies to manage its impact and keep us from tipping into overload. One powerful tool that may go overlooked is laughter. PEN hopes to encourage our youth, families and community to play intentionally and laugh vigorously on behalf of their own health and well-being. Below are some points supporting our *Drive to Thrive: Laughter!***

The physical response of laughter is very fast:

Something “funny” happens ●●●

Electric current runs through nervous system to cerebral cortex ●●●

Left hemisphere takes analytic approach, creative Right hemisphere “gets it” ●●●

Visual center forms an image of the humorous idea ●●●

Emotional (limbic) system releases chemicals ●●●

Motor functioning makes us laugh, smile, or double over !!!

**Gelotology** from the Greek γέλωσ *gelos* "laughter" the study of laughter and its psychological & physiological effects on the body ... pioneered by William F. Fry of Stanford University.

### **Laughter impacts different aspects of wellness:**

- **physical** – boosts blood circulation, increases oxygenation, boosts immune system function stimulates organs, exercises our laughing muscles (imagine an internal body jog) and relaxes tense muscles,

- **bio-chemical** – **increases** endorphins, serotonin, dopamine, NK cells, growth hormone and interferon-gamma and **decreases** release of cortisol and adrenaline

- **social-emotional** – connects & bonds humans with one another, improves communication and empathy, releases unhealthy inhibitions

- **mental** – improves personal satisfaction, optimism and mood, breaks cycle of psychological negativity, activates emotional release

- **cognitive** – bolsters creativity, memory and recall

Laughter appears to cause all the reciprocal, or opposite, effects of stress... Think of laughter as the yin to stress’s yang.  
*Dr. Lee Berk, Associate Professor, Loma Linda*

Laughter is this little trap door that allows you to escape from the toxic stress. *Dr. Dacher Keltner, Prof. of Psychology, UC Berkeley*

## **Laugh long, hard, and often!**

This topic fits within the overarching **PEN Speaks** theme of **Stress and Anxiety in Today’s Youth and Families**. Throughout the year we will explore other areas that support resilience in the face of this pervasive challenge.

**Go to the PEN website [penbv.org](http://penbv.org) for more information on upcoming events or connect with us at <http://www.parentengagementnetwork.org/contact-pen>**

Stress is experienced at every age, and at every age individuals try to cope with it.  
*Susan Folkman, editor, Oxford Handbook on Stress, Health & Coping*

