



Focused Laughter Programming/Laughter Therapy

Administrator:

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Laughter has been shown by studies to have health benefits such as enhanced oxygen intake, releasing endorphins, stimulating the creative and social bonding centers of the brain and a vast number of other benefits. Once a week we will sit in a circle or semi-circle and complete three rounds of "Fake it till you make it", mock laughter exercises. In-between the three sets, we share jokes we know or jokes we gathered from the internet. The leader of the group always has planned material but residents are often eager to share their own. In addition to the once a week group we offer more laughter by tailoring it to other activities, like telling jokes with our snack cart. We didn't create laughter but we absolutely make space for it to thrive!

Increased laughter exercises will stimulate a sense of wellbeing amongst residents, like a pot on high heat; it steeps the pot to prevent boiling over. This effect spreads through care givers, family and staff. Since we know that perception is reality to the person perceiving it, laughter groups helps promote positivity in the care environment and changes the outlook of all involved to be more positive. To find out more on the wellness benefits of laughter, google the topic, see for yourselves all the wonderful things that laughter therapy and increased laughter programming can do for your residents. My favorite study came from, Cancer Treatment Centers of America.

Having more laughter on the unit reduces the stress on staff and resident alike and affects the entire unit towards a more positive day. Happy staff, happy residents, joyful workplace, reduced staff turnover, a feeling of accomplishment when your joke is read or shared, endless possibilities for a more productive and healthy environment.

I have personally been involved in studying and conducting laughter therapy since 2006 and in 2011 I generated a "How To" DVD as a joint effort with my church, so that that we could freely pass it out to different organizations. I have trained several Activities Directors/Marketers and been a consultant to more than a few companies outside my employer. Laughter works! It is our natural healer! After all, quality of life is what we are in the business to ensure, to sustain that is our prime goal and the only way ensure this is happening is to schedule it on the calendar and make an environment that is welcoming.