

THE *best* MEDICINE

Laughter has nothing to do with one's sense of humour.

BY JIM CAMPBELL



It is enough to make you laugh. There seems to be no end of silly things the experts will count and measure in all their surveys and polls. For example, did you catch the recent radio news item on laughter? European researchers did an extensive survey on it. Apparently the average Italian laughs three times as much each day as a German does. The report said that some in Germany, embarrassed at being at the bottom of the "laughter poll," are joining laughter clubs! There they hope to learn how to lighten up, how to laugh more, and how to take themselves less seriously. Now that's funny.

And yet, when you think about it, it sounds like a great idea. Most of us could

lighten up, laugh more and take ourselves less seriously.

It's fun to have a good laugh, the kind when your whole body gets involved, a fall-down, tears-in-your-eyes, red-faced, uncontrolled laughter. A good laugh is a great tonic, it probably does more good for your body and your spiritual and mental health than anything else around. Remember the last time you had a great laugh? It felt good didn't it? After, you probably said, "I needed that."

There is evidence that laughter is nature's way of releasing tension. It certainly gets the blood circulating, shakes up our spirits and helps us to see things in

new ways. People who study such things find evidence that those who laugh a lot manage their problems, pains and losses quicker and with less strain than those who don't.

We all enjoy laughing, yet a lot of us go through days when we don't laugh at all.

It's strange. Laughter is a basic, natural thing. Babies in their cribs, all by themselves, laugh for no apparent reason. Small children love to laugh and they do a lot of it. Sometimes all you need to do is to look at them to get a bout of laughter started. They laugh and laugh simply because it feels good.

We were all children once. We used to laugh a lot. We still love to laugh. So why don't we laugh more than we do? We seem to have trained ourselves not to laugh, to be serious, and to go about with long sour faces. Why?

You know how it goes. When you laugh, someone invariably asks, "What's so funny?" We're embarrassed because it's hard to give a reason. Laughter is an unreasonable, illogical, irrational activity. There doesn't need to be a reason to laugh. Why is laughter contagious? Why do people laugh because someone else laughs? The only reason is that laughing, by itself, makes them feel good. So when someone asks "What's so funny?" laugh even more at such a silly question.

There is also the notion that you need a "good" sense of humour to laugh a lot and if you've a "poor" sense you don't laugh much. Laughter has nothing to do with one's sense of humour. It is a natural phe-

nomenon, part of our regular issue of human equipment. All jokes and comedians do is create a time when it is permissible to let our laughter out.

A lot of people are waiting to laugh when they're happy. They're holding back for a moment of true happiness so they can laugh. In this world, that's a hard moment to spot. You don't have to be happy to laugh. Actually, laughter can do a lot to make you happy. Laughter releases tension, lifts our spirits and refreshes our bodies.

Do you want to test this out? You'd probably want to try it alone at first. Start to

laugh, begin with "tee-hee," progress to "ha-ha's," and in a few seconds real laughter kicks in, your diaphragm starts pumping air into your lungs, and your face gets red. You feel good, bet-

ter, happier. It works!

At the end of a lecture in a huge classroom the speaker invited us to laugh. "Fake it to make it," he said. He started, a few began to giggle, then in a minute or so the room was filled with laughter! We left the room laughing, relaxed, smiling. Passersby in the corridor asked, "What happened in there?" We said, "Nothing!" and laughed some more.

No one else is at home. I'm going to test it out again.

Man that felt good. It is like a tonic, Mother Nature's best medicine. I've just got to laugh more. Maybe I'll start a laughter club. 🌟

All that jokes and comedians do is create a time when it is permissible to let our laughter out.

■ *Jim Campbell writes and chuckles in Oakville, Ont.*