



# RILEY'S RAINFOREST

"Send down ... from the clouds of Thy mercy the rains of Thy healing..." —Bahá'u'lláh

## Laughter IS Good Medicine

**D**on't you love a good laugh? Humor does more than just tickle your funny bone—it may be seriously good for you. Some scientists say a hearty belly laugh can boost your immune system, help you handle pain, and maybe even keep your heart healthy.

The study of laughter and its impact on our bodies is called *gelotology* (from the Greek word *gelos*, which means "laughter"). Research in this field shows that laughter has a positive effect on the body. Some studies find that when we chuckle, more immune cells are made. And stress chemicals, which can weaken the immune system when stress is constant, are decreased. So laughing can help your body's defenses.

Sometimes you might laugh until your sides ache—but laughing can actually *lessen* pain. Some researchers believe that exerting stomach muscles during laughter



causes a rush of endorphins—the same feel-good chemicals our bodies release during exercise—which helps to ease pain.

Laughter may also protect your heart. In one study, people with heart disease were 40% less likely to laugh in funny situations than people with healthy hearts. Those findings suggest a link between laughter and heart health. Another study showed that laughter appears to cause blood vessels to expand, allowing more blood flow, which may help to ward off heart disease.

So chuckle, chortle, and guffaw to your heart's content. Laughter might really be the best medicine!

## Explore & Soar: Get the Giggles

**B**e silly with your friends, and add more laughter to your life.

- Make funny faces or sound effects with a friend.
- How long can you stare into a friend's eyes *without* laughing?

- Share jokes with friends and make up new jokes together.
- 77 benevolent elephants! Try out some tongue twisters.
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## Canopy of Questions

**W**hat do you want to know about staying healthy and happy? Health can involve your body, mind, emotions, and spirit. Send your questions to [brilliant@usbnc.org](mailto:brilliant@usbnc.org). Responses are given by a health professional.

**“What should you do when your friends are being mean to you and leaving you out of activities?”**

—William, age 8

Dear William,

Your question is about a serious problem for many kids. Our hearts are like gardens, and it's up to us to choose what grows there. You can plant sweet-smelling flowers of love, compassion, and service. Bullies create scary gardens of weeds and thorns, and they get a kick out of destroying the gardens of others.

Bullying is unacceptable. No one should get away with being physically intimidating, excluding others, spreading rumors, or making fun of people. If you're being bullied:

- Say "stop" directly, confidently, and calmly. Then walk away.
- Use humor. Laugh it off, if possible.
- Find an adult to stop the bullying, and tell your parents about it.
- Spend time with caring friends. Stopping bullies often takes teamwork, and bullies are less likely to pick on kids who are part of supportive groups.
- Be an example of how to treat everyone with kindness and respect.

*Wishing you joy,*

*Keyvan Geula*

*Licensed Family Therapist*