

Employee Wellness Programmes

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Safe, Low-Cost, Easy To Learn And Implement

We will help your people achieve wellness through laughter workshops by:

- Low-impact aerobic exercise that works the mind and emotions in a physical way. Laughter gets the heart pumping more blood, and the lungs breathing more oxygen. Engaging in positive and life-affirming motions creates emotional and physical wellbeing.
- Neuroplasticity that restructures the neurons of the brain to be more positive and creative. This is fundamental in the prevention and cure of many diseases such as dementia.
- Connecting people regardless of age, race, or beliefs. It's all about creating a safe space to vocalize emotions and be in the moment. It's a form of joyful meditation.

Our workplace laughter interventions typically unfold in a smooth blend of action and relaxation, group interactions and introspection. Participants are taken on a fluid journey into the movements and behaviors of health, joy and connectedness, using whatever muscles are available to them. Sessions are filled with positive and life-affirming interactions. Laughter is the glue between all activities, and it is used as a form of elective exercise. There are no jokes or comedy. We simply choose to laugh, because we can. This is an activity that can be done standing or seated. No equipment or particular articles of clothing are required. The minimum recommended duration is 40 minutes. A typical intervention lasts one hour.

Stress is a normal expected component of any corporate environment.

Positive stress (called eu- stress) is conducive to employees:

Laughter is a form of good stress, known as eustress. (Eustress is a term coined by endocrinologist Hans Selye. It is defined as stress that is healthy, or gives one a feeling of fulfillment or other positive feelings.)

- Maintaining an optimum productive, motivated and competitive edge,
- Giving their personal best,
- Keeps them more healthy physically and mentally,
- Reduces absenteeism,
- Having a more positive mind set and attitude,
- Experiencing a win – win/can do atmosphere in the work place.

Negative stress (called dis-stress) on the other hand leads to employees :

- Being less productive and easier demoralized,
- Feeling overwhelmed and no longer meeting targets they are normally capable of,
- Being ill frequently (due to immune suppression by excess cortisol secretion), increased absenteeism and loss of income generating man hours,
- Having negative mindsets, unnecessary complaining and negative gossip increases,
- A defeatist victim atmosphere in the work place, which becomes a negative spiral affecting everyone.
- If left unchecked – chronic stress will eventually become traumatic for an individual.
- A negative state of mind with a cynical, sarcastic and critical outlook;
- Changes in sleep and appetite habits;
- Disillusionment;
- Headaches, neck and lower back pain;
- Irritability and lack of patience;
- Lack of energy;
- Lack of motivation;
- Lack of productivity and efficiency;
- Lack of satisfaction with one's own life and personal achievements;
- Loss of the ability to experience joy;
- Self-medication using food, alcohol and drugs to feel better or to not feel;
- The feeling of facing insurmountable barriers.

When the body is under deep stress, it releases a hormone called cortisol that has a profound impact on your health because it directly suppresses the immune system. This makes a stressed person more vulnerable to attack from bacteria and viruses and can cause anything from generally feeling run down to full-blown flu and heart attacks.

Using Laughter Therapy techniques to reduce (dis) stress.

Stress is a well-known slow killer, is rampant in our society, and is very expensive on all levels. Its mechanisms are complex. It impacts everybody differently, but its end-result is easy to observe and explain. It creates havoc in the human body, leads to depression, kills creativity, isolates people when they most need social connections and slowly destroys one's self-esteem. Stress cannot be ignored.

Here is a summary of the various ways discussed on **how** laughter impacts stress:

- **Laughter triggers the release of a cocktail of happy chemicals that boosts the immune responses**, particularly components related to anti-viral and anti-tumor defenses. This cocktail includes NK cells, endorphins, serotonin, growth hormone, interferon-gamma (IFN) and a host of other beneficial substances produced naturally every time we laugh heartily for extended periods.
- **Laughter diminishes the secretion of cortisol and epinephrine, while enhancing immune reactivity.**
- **Laughter boosts secretion of growth hormone**, an enhancer of key immune responses.

- **Laughing leads to the release of endorphins**, a self-manufactured natural opiate that has been scientifically shown to carry messages of attachment and bonding (the scientific terms for love), and to stimulate feelings of caring and forgiveness in addition to acting as a natural painkiller. Endorphins create a positive state of mind and boost optimism, self-confidence and feelings of self-worth.
- By enhancing the free flow of emotions, **laughter can help dislodge blocked emotions stored in the body**. Suppressed or blocked emotions can cause ongoing physical, mental and emotional problems and stress. Their release can be life-changing. Laughter provides an excellent non-violent method for emotional release and catharsis.
- **Laughter stimulates circulation and aids muscle relaxation**, both of which help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.
- **Expect to be far less tense and anxious after a Laughter Therapy session!** By increasing endorphins (hormones which assuage the sympathetic nervous system) laughter facilitates a state of peace in the body.
- Laughter is a natural antidote to many of the illness-causing effects of stress.

Laughter is nature's counter to bad stress

Laughter is the number 1 natural enemy of bad stress because they are physiological opposites. The predominance of one tends to prevent the other. A clue to this may be found in the body's typical actions after extreme stress of the fight or flight kind: deep panting (all relaxation response are exhalation based) and using laughter to make light of events that provoked fear. The predominance of one (deeper breathing and laughter) tends to prevent the other (fear).

Laughter helps improve the cardiac vagal tone, which **reflects how much your heart rate is influenced by your breathing**. It's an indication of your body's capacity to regain calm after you've been in a stressful situation. Low vagal tone has been linked to chronic inflammation throughout the body, which is a known risk factor for heart failure, stroke and diabetes. Research suggests that the more positive social connections people had over a nine week period, the more their vagal tone increased.

It's interesting to note that laughter has lasting effects:

“Our findings show that the physiological effects of a single one-hour session viewing a humorous video appear to last anywhere from 12 to 24 hours in different individuals. This leads us to believe that by seeking out positive experiences that make us laugh we can do a lot with our physiology to stay well.” — Lee Berk, DrPH, Assoc Res Pro Loma Linda School of Medicine

Life is all about the balance of tension and relaxation. We need tension to stand erect, move, do anything. If we didn't resist our own movement each time we drank a cup of water, the cup would crash into our face. Life, therefore, is also all about balance, or rather learning to be balanced in our thoughts and actions. Just like we must learn to fine-tune the push and pull forces in all of our movements to perform smooth actions, we must also learn to relax and

slow down (or engage and speed up, depending) in our daily life. If we don't, the tensions we naturally experience will escalate and create pain.

Therefore, pain, anxiety and stress have an important role to play in our lives. They are the voice of the body calling for attention, saying that something is out of balance. Sound therapeutic approaches to stress reduction such as Laughter Therapy reduces stress levels quickly and naturally and provides new ways of dealing with stress, which can lead to long-term stress reduction. By providing a new mental perspective, choosing to laugh often converts the perceptions of problems that were seen as huge to minor irritations.

"Anger and anxiety are energy-sapping emotions," explains humor expert Paul McGhee. "If your job causes you stress day after day, week after week, the anger, anxiety and depression you live with drains the energy you need to provide quality work. It also lowers your morale and job satisfaction, and sets you up for burnout."

Laughter on the other hand relieves tension and is a big revitalizer.

Physician Dr. Travis Stork confirms saying, *"Laughing can be one of the best and easiest ways to boost your energy throughout the day."*

Indeed. Laughter recharges your batteries by enriching the blood with ample supplies of oxygen, the lifeline of our biological system, and cutting through energy-sapping emotions and replacing them with positive emotions. It fights burnout by giving you back the energy you're supposed to have, and by making your life and work more enjoyable.

Laughter is an excellent natural way to provide violent-free emotional release through catharsis. It also provides new ways to deal with these strong emotions in a safe, healthy, non-violent and non-confrontational way.

Importance of the hypothalamus

The hypothalamus resides deep in center at base of the brain stem and is the interpreter that activates messages sent to the endocrine system from the nervous system. The hypothalamus is part of the brain not protected by the blood brain barrier. This allows it to monitor what is going on in the blood. It sends messages to the endocrine glands to regulate the activities of the organs and control such levels as hormone production hunger, thirst and temperature.

The hypothalamus is very affected by everything we consume both beneficial and toxic. The hypothalamus is also linked to emotions like anxiety and fear, and the effect of these emotions on blood pressure, heart rate and breathing. Continuous emotional stress may weaken the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus works very closely with the pituitary gland sending it messages that regulate hormone production.

Laughter is the best medicine for reducing stress hormones produced in the hypothalamus section of the brain, lowering blood pressure, reducing risk of heart attack and stroke. Significant reductions can occur in minutes and, as seen earlier, last for days. It affects the brain cognitively, increasing your intelligence, improving your memory and ability to process information.

Laughter as a coping mechanism and great neutralizer

Laughter can be used as a coping mechanism when one is upset, angry or sad. Nothing works faster or more dependably to bring your mind and body back into balance than a good laugh. Laughter lightens your burdens, inspires hopes, connects you to others, and keeps you grounded, focused, and alert. It may also be a good way for people to relax because muscle tension is reduced after laughing.

Being a great neutralizer, laughter can dissipate frustrations and help you reframe a situation, thus fostering a more positive outlook. In times of difficulty, laughter counteracts negative feelings of anger, frustration, or helplessness. It is shown that it actually breaks the pain cycle, gives comfort, restores energy, and can give you hope to keep fighting if you are battling an illness or depression. Laughter can be a great coping mechanism or temporary escape.

In the book **Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life**, Dacher Keltner, professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, describes research that he and George Bonanno, professor of education and psychology at Columbia University in New York City, conducted to answer the question, **“What allows people to adjust to life-altering traumas?”**

They interviewed 45 adults who had watched their spouses die six months earlier. Keltner and Bonanno wanted to determine which emotions predicted a healthy adjustment to loss in these survivors. They assessed anxiety, depression and protracted grief in the months and years following the loss. As Keltner describes in his book, he and Bonanno found the widows and widowers who smiled and laughed when they talked about their deceased spouses during the initial interviews experienced less grief six, 14 and 25 months later.

Keltner and Bonanno also checked for a correlation with elevated heart rates, a sign of emotional arousal, in their grieving subjects during interviews about their dead spouses. Both laughers and non-laughers had higher heart rates. The non-laughers, though, also displayed increased emotional distress, while the laughers’ heart rate elevations weren’t linked to emotional distress. This led Keltner and Bonanno to conclude that laughter gave these people a brief “vacation” from mourning, helping them separate the emotional and physiological components of grief. “What it’s telling us,” says Keltner, “is that laughter is this little trap door that allows you to escape from the toxic stress.”

Laughter also helps to release unhealthy inhibitions. It brings you to a place where you can set aside your fear of holding back. Choose to laugh at a situation now instead of years down the road. In many instances it is only the passage of time that makes something turn from unpleasant or embarrassing to instant release of negative emotions.

The Economics of Workplace Laughter, Boosts Morale, Positivity, Productivity

Our society is facing a major challenge. We live in a sedentary age where repeated exposure to stress, unhealthy lifestyle, food and damaging habits such as the excessive use of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs, all negatively affect life at home and at work and are exposing people to major lifestyle diseases, including hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. This is happening on a global scale at a very high cost.

Laughter is a valid part of the solution. Everybody knows laughter feels good, but few realize it has a long documented list of positive, quantifiable physiological and psychological benefits that can be easily harnessed for better health, productivity and peak performance.

Studies that raise the alarm:

Our world is struggling with the negative health effects of stress, unhealthy lifestyles, food and other damaging habits:

- Stress has been called the “Health Epidemic of the 21st Century” by the World Health Organization¹. 40% of job turnover is due to stress². Healthcare expenditures are nearly 50% greater for workers who report high levels of stress³. Insurance data indicates insurance claims for stress related industrial accidents cost nearly twice as much as non-stress related industrial accidents⁴.
- The annual cost of chronic pain in the USA is estimated to be \$560-635 billion, including healthcare expenses and lost productivity⁵.
- Depression is a major cause of disability, absenteeism, presenteeism (act of attending work while sick), and productivity loss among working-age adults⁶. The estimated cost of depression in the USA is \$5,415 per treated employee, per year⁷.
- The US Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 7 out of 10 deaths among Americans each year are from chronic diseases⁸. Heart disease, cancer and stroke account for more than 50% of all deaths each year.
- Research suggests that lack of exercise causes as many as 1 in 10 premature deaths around the world each year — roughly as many as smoking⁹.

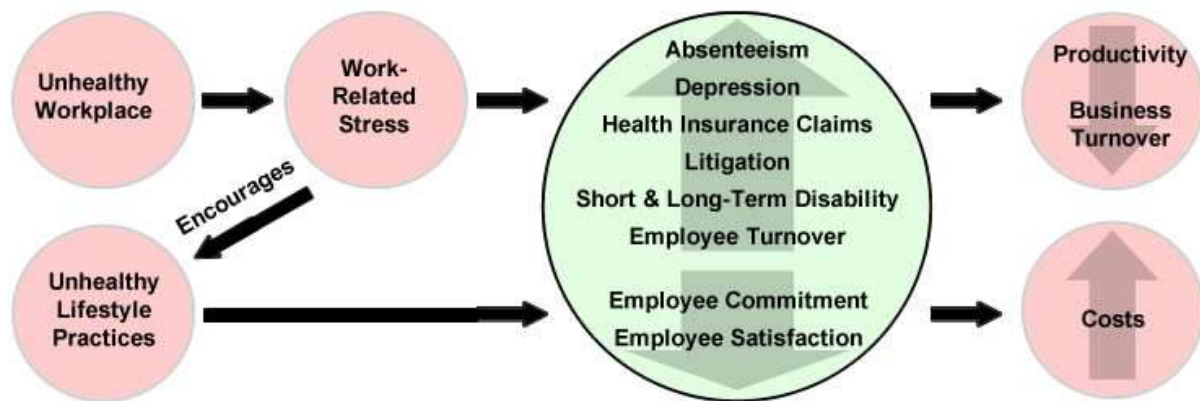
Actively disengaged employees erode an organization’s bottom line while breaking the spirit of colleagues in the process. The cost in the US is estimated to be more than \$300 billion in lost productivity alone.

Gallup.com, Q12 Meta-Analysis

75% of healthcare costs are directly related to lifestyle and therefore, preventable.

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

Here is how the negative health effects of stress affect businesses:



www.thelaughterconsultants.com

Laughter Therapy is a new, unique methodology that shows how laughter can be used to promote wellness and wellbeing throughout people's lifespan. It's unique and thoroughly documented process offers a series of simple, safe and fun steps that help to heal the body, mind and spirit. It is based on the findings of published clinical researches.

Laughter positively affects all aspects of being. Studies show that it is a legitimate and powerful form of preventive (lifestyle) medicine, and a complementary option to other established therapeutic strategies for physiological, mental, and emotional health, and more.

- Physiological benefits: laughter is a therapeutic ally in healing and a valuable form of preventive and complementary medicine. It provides important natural defenses against illness.
- Mental benefits: laughter diffuses bad stress, enhances problem-solving skills, and creates a new perspective.
- Emotional benefits: laughter elevates moods, counteracts depression symptoms.
- Social benefits: laughter fosters better communication, and improves cooperation and empathy between people. It is a significant lubricant of human communication and relationships.
- Spiritual wellbeing: choosing to laugh and be positive teaches us to choose to live and be at peace with others, with our self and with our environment in our current situation. It helps us build resilience to stress and find meaning in life. The essence of what Laughter Wellness teaches is summarized in the following question: "What can I do now to improve my life/work/situation with a positive attitude?"

Benefits Compare to Aerobic Activity, But Without the Aches and Pains

Physical fitness stemming from laughter is a benefit known to few. Laughter is a recognized form of low-impact cardiovascular exercise. It jogs our internal organs and is particularly important for people who lead a sedentary life, seniors as well as bedridden or wheelchair-bound people (not to say that it also makes working out fun, not tedious!)

“The magnitude of change we saw in the endothelium is similar to the benefit we might see with aerobic activity, but without the aches, pains and muscle tension associated with exercise. We don’t recommend that you laugh and not exercise, but we do recommend that you try to laugh on a regular basis. Thirty minutes of exercise three times a week, and 15 minutes of laughter on a daily basis is probably good for the vascular system.” — Michael Miller, M.D. (Director of Preventive Cardiology at the University of Maryland Medical Center).

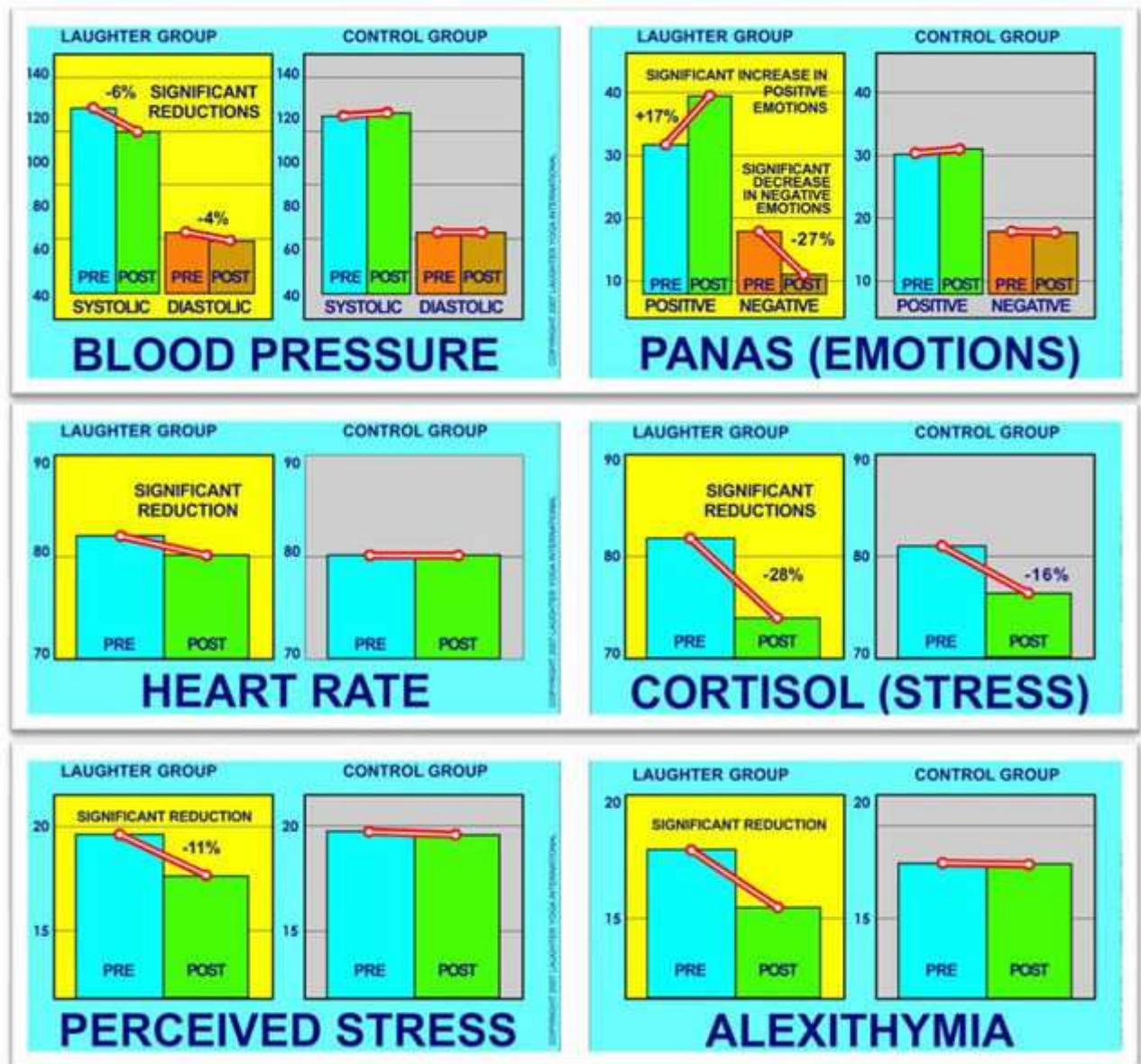
Why workplace laughter makes business sense

There is one common sentence that business people (should) ask themselves when they are looking to purchase any sorts of goods or services and here it is: “how much money will this cost and/or make me?” Businesses talk in dollars so we’ve made it simple for you and matched the proven benefits that our laughter-based programs provide with money “Workplace laughter is a realistic, sustainable, and generalizable intervention that enhances employees’ morale, resilience, and personal efficacy beliefs”.

Beckman, H., Regier, N., & Young, J. (2007), Effect of workplace laughter groups on personal efficacy beliefs. The Journal of Primary Prevention, 28, 167-182.



A 2006 workplace laughter research with 50 IT professionals in India found a significant reduction in stress levels as shown by reduction in cortisol levels in saliva and blood samples.



A 2009 one-month research in an Australian business found workplace laughter to be an effective intervention to increase general psychological wellbeing. Noteworthy: “Participants felt immediately better.” (After one session.)



A workplace laughter group can appeal to a diverse range of employees, can be effective with minimal investment of time, and may have sustained positive effects on self-beliefs that have been shown to correlate with positive workplace behaviors. Heidi Beckman, Ph.D., UWHC-Health Psychology

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- Connecting people regardless of age, race, or beliefs. It's all about creating a safe space to vocalize emotions and be in the moment. It's a form of joyful expression and a safe way of releasing stress.

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Experience and learn with leading experts

We are leading experts in the laughter coaching field with over nine years of hands-on experience teaching in Southern Africa and offer keynotes, seminars, workshops and specialist trainings worldwide..

Introduction to Team Building:

Team building is all about understanding, appreciating, maximising and developing the people you work with everyday.

We are a leader in delivering team building programs in Southern Africa, for all kinds and sizes of groups including small to large businesses, schools, sporting teams, clubs, associations, government departments and not-for-profit organisations.

Our team building events are fun and, importantly, tailored to the objectives, time frame and budget of our clients, with an overall aim to improve team performance and enhance workplace culture.

We have specialized Laughter Coaching team building programs that can be held indoors and outdoors, during the day , in less than an hour to half-a-day, for groups of under 30 people to over 500, and in any location of South Africa and abroad. We normally come to your workplace and all we need is an open space to facilitate the workshops in.

Results

We have designed our team building programs to be able to develop participants in...

- **Teamwork**
- **Communication**
- **Leadership**
- **Bonding**
- **Confidence**
- **Responsibility**
- **Trust**
- **Morale**
- **Respect**
- **Having fun**

Our commitment to you

- To deliver a tailored and personal service for our clients.
- To provide a fun and engaging event for all participants.
- To develop teamwork with a focus on communication, planning, time management and trust.
- To foster a positive cultural environment.
- To provide value-for-money while delivering a unique event experience.
- For participants to realise their individual and collective importance to the company.
- For participants to learn about and appreciate each other in a non-threatening environment.
- For the group as a whole to work together more effectively.
- For the group to give back to the community by positively influencing and impacting others.
- To deliver an event within budget, on time and beyond expectations.

Our Locations

We deliver team building programs and corporate team building activities all over Southern Africa:

Introduction to Conferences & Events

Conferences and corporate events are a vital part of any business and industry. The professional organisation and delivery of an event can impact significantly on reputation and overall business results. As a professional conference and event laughter facilitator, I am a specialist in the delivery of laughter coaching workshops to conferences, business events, staff events and community events.

Whether it is a small business function for 20 staff or a large conference for over 1,000 delegates, we have the expertise to create and execute a personalised and unique life-changing experience like no other.

We can provide Laughter coaching services that you may require for your delegates that will enhance your event. If your event is only days or a few weeks away, providing a life-changing experience beyond your expectations.

Business Events

- Conferences
- Product Launches
- Networking Functions
- Workshops & Meetings

Staff Events

- Award Presentations
- Christmas Parties
- Corporate Retreats
- Family Fun Days
- Incentive Programs
- Wellness days

You are welcome to contact Heinrich Visser at 0625495481 or email him at hvisserclyt@gmail.com for bookings or more information regarding his life-changing laughter workshops.