

# LAUGHING MEDITATION WORKSHOP ~ Stephanie Nash

00:00:00 I'm pumped, and then you'll see me cupped in.

00:00:12 What I didn't get a chance to do last time, because we were in the Zen Do, and it was

00:00:17 a formal meditation, so I didn't get a chance to really introduce this, or give some exercises,

00:00:23 or a certain way of kind of working with it, practically.

00:00:27 So I wanted to take advantage of this to do that.

00:00:32 Laughing as you know, is like a universal language, it doesn't matter where in the world

00:00:36 you are, everybody knows what that is.

00:00:39 We all share that, as human beings.

00:00:42 And laughing muscles, by the way, it's the same as crying, right?

00:00:46 It uses the diaphragm the same way.

00:00:47 And I'll talk about that in a second.

00:00:48 And oh, see, I have my whole iPad, but then it goes off, and then I see my cute puppy

00:00:55 there.

00:00:56 And it's used, I mentioned, for therapy, when my mom got cancer, they told her to laugh.

00:01:02 I've used it with people who've been locked into depression, for you facilitators.

00:01:08 Especially any emotion, but especially depression, because anger and fear have an energy to them,

00:01:13 and depression doesn't, and there's a dynamic energy that can happen here, that can suddenly

00:01:19 shift a habit of this and go, oh, I see, my energy can go a different way.

00:01:24 So that's a practical use of it.

00:01:28 Physiologically, some people, body functionings get better, digestion, things like that.

00:01:33 You're massaging, right, all sorts of internal organs.

00:01:37 And of course, flow is better than a single digit integer, greater than one in my thought.

00:01:44 I thought I'd say it.

00:01:46 Okay, so it's something that we can practice, and just like concentration, sensory clarity,

00:01:52 and equanimity, we practice them here so that our lives get better, not so that we're really

00:01:57 good with our eyes closed, right?

00:01:59 So laughing is something that you can practice and stretch like a muscle, and then in your

00:02:04 life, there's more of a chance that things will be funnier, or it can literally open

00:02:10 muscles.

00:02:12 I'm going to talk about how actors work with their instrument, their bodies, their instrument.

00:02:18 And you want your instrument, you want it to be open to any possible choice of an impulse

00:02:24 that may happen in a moment.

00:02:25 So you have to stretch the body in certain ways.

00:02:28 And if you want to play the Queen of England, hanging out like this doesn't quite do it.

00:02:32 So you kind of got to work with that.

00:02:34 You got to play someone who's frightened all the time.

00:02:37 Just kind of bringing the body like this might help.

00:02:39 If you're playing somebody who laughs all the time, just kind of hanging out like this  
00:02:43 and looking around, it just kind of changes how you see the world.  
00:02:47 So you can just kind of play with how the body can affect your emotions.  
00:02:54 And that's something that I just want to mention, that laughter is a subset of this bigger category  
00:03:04 of the physicality of the body and how it can affect our mind and our emotions.  
00:03:11 And I just gave examples of ways to hold the body, but in acting, for example, there is  
00:03:17 a way if I want to create somebody who's fearful, I could just hold the body like this without  
00:03:24 any thinking and those feelings can come up.  
00:03:27 Right?  
00:03:28 If I want to be confident, I can do Wonder Woman, right?  
00:03:31 Or whatever.  
00:03:32 And those feelings.  
00:03:35 So I just want to mention this as an aside to meditators, because I first started teaching  
00:03:41 something called body unlocking, and laughing was a small part of it, but where people,  
00:03:46 I'd hear the reports at retreats of these great insights into, okay, let's use fear,  
00:03:52 of an insight into, oh, wow, I have that response.  
00:03:56 People really doing some deep processing and experiencing this freedom, and then they get  
00:04:01 up off the cushion and the body goes back into this.  
00:04:04 And they say, I don't know why, but I keep getting those fearful thoughts, or that those  
00:04:09 fearful feelings keep coming up, and I kind of want to say, well, that's kind of an engraved  
00:04:13 invitation.  
00:04:15 That's how we create them, as actors.  
00:04:18 Right?  
00:04:19 So I just want to throw that in, and that's what I do on the outside, is kind of this  
00:04:25 getting the body kind of, so that it's supportive to the internal process.  
00:04:30 Here we work with mental image and internal talk.  
00:04:33 We have the body posture in sitting practice or walking practice, but we don't really deal  
00:04:40 with this other part of it.  
00:04:41 So I just want to throw that in there, since laughter is a subset of that, although laughter  
00:04:46 is unique unto itself, because it is not just a way we hold the body, it's a dynamic expression  
00:04:55 of sensory feeling, and it uses breathing and breath in a very dynamic way.  
00:05:02 And I'm sorry I didn't wait for everybody, but I'm recording it, so you can always keep  
00:05:08 playing.  
00:05:09 Does that make sense, what I just said?  
00:05:12 Yeah.  
00:05:13 Cool.  
00:05:14 All right.  
00:05:15 So, oh, okay, that was all I had to say that I had notes for.  
00:05:19 All right, so what I wanted to do was mention two techniques that two master teachers, one  
00:05:26 an acting teacher, one a meditation teacher, have used to kind of help goose people into  
00:05:36 big laughter in a certain kind of way.  
00:05:38 And then when I do laughing meditation, I don't try to goose people into big laughter,

00:05:42 I just let whatever arises, arises, and just the sound of someone with a silly laugh can  
00:05:47 get you going, as we've discovered last time.  
00:05:51 But I wanted to use what they present as a kind of warm-up for us in that stretching,  
00:05:59 because it uses a dynamic use of breath.  
00:06:02 So first is a master acting teacher, when I was at the Yale School of Drama, and we  
00:06:06 had our check-off class, and everything you hear Shinzen say about Roshi kind of applies  
00:06:13 here.  
00:06:14 And someone would do something, he'd say, no, laugh!  
00:06:17 And she'd go, I thought I was laughing.  
00:06:19 And he'd say, no, and he'd slap his hand on the table, and he'd let all the air out of  
00:06:25 his body, and then make whatever sound was whatever left that sounded like the end of  
00:06:32 a big laugh, and then you had to gasp for air coming in, and then he would continue  
00:06:38 expanding and contracting in this uncontrollable laughter, as we just kind of stunned watched  
00:06:43 him and then realized later we were laughing too.  
00:06:48 His name is Earl Gister, and I do this today in honor of him, because right after I studied  
00:06:54 with him, he lost his voice and has a voice box with throat cancer.  
00:06:58 So this is in honor of sharing with other people who can't hear him anymore what he  
00:07:05 gave us.  
00:07:06 So I have to sit because he sat when he did it.  
00:07:10 But I will demonstrate what he did, and we can try it as an exercise for 30 seconds.  
00:07:16 He would slap this, let all the air out, and go.  
00:07:20 And I've been in silence, and I haven't done this in probably 15 years, 20, but we'll just  
00:07:26 see how it goes.  
00:07:27 Now that was a technical use of pushing out air, just letting whatever's out there.  
00:07:56 And I thought, just as an exercise, this isn't our laughing meditation, this is a warm up.  
00:08:08 So if you would like to try it with me now, you can feel free to slap if you'd like to.  
00:08:21 But, just try it.  
00:08:27 But, this is for spending, really.  
00:08:35 Breathe.  
00:08:37 That's good.  
00:08:40 What do you wanna do?  
00:08:48 So you get the feel of how that just kind of, right?  
00:08:55 You can see how you just get kind of warmed up and then you can't even talk anymore.  
00:09:02 Alright, so, Nicola Geiger. How many people here knew Nicola?  
00:09:07 Okay, for those who didn't, she was one of Shinzon's first teacher.  
00:09:13 And often refers to her as the first functioning bodhisattva that he ever knew  
00:09:18 because she welcomed mobsters and monks alike.  
00:09:23 And she would come to retreats, she's a big German woman,  
00:09:27 she went through Germany during a difficult time and was part of a white rose movement.  
00:09:34 She'd come to retreats and she'd have her cane and she had a laugh that would make Santa jealous.  
00:09:40 And she would say basically, and now my dear, it is time for a laughing meditation.  
00:09:46 You know, she would just kind of, does that kind of sound Nicola-esque?

00:09:50 Right, she'd say, hello my dear. Right?

00:09:55 And so she, we were talking, I was having a private session with her one time

00:10:04 and I didn't know about, I'd never seen her do a laughing meditation.

00:10:09 I told her how I was using laughing in performances and things.

00:10:13 I thought it shifted people's energy to always put it in.

00:10:16 And she'd say, I'm going to show you how to do a laughing meditation.

00:10:21 And then she had a very technical way of doing it.

00:10:25 Now once again, I'll kind of give you a little taste of what it is.

00:10:29 I cannot do Nicola's laugh. I just don't have the mechanics for that.

00:10:36 But I will give what she taught me.

00:10:39 I took notes. I haven't looked at them since she taught me, what, seven years ago or however long it was.

00:10:44 I don't know.

00:10:45 So she had, it went ho ho ha ha ha.

00:10:50 Okay?

00:10:51 And she would have us clap or she would use her cane.

00:10:55 But it would be ho ho ha ha ha. It would be like that.

00:11:00 And so she'd start, you'd get through about three of those before you go home.

00:11:05 So it would be something like, to do it without you guys makes it a little bit of a performance.

00:11:13 So I'm just really trying to do Nicola's laughing meditation.

00:11:16 I'm visually visioning her here.

00:11:18 So it would be, okay my dear.

00:11:22 Ho ho ha ha ha. Ho ho ha ha ha. Ho ho ha ha ha. Ho ho ho ho ho ho ho ho ha ha ha ha ha.

00:11:32 Ho ho ho ho ho ho ho.

00:11:34 And she'd do that whole big laugh.

00:11:36 Right?

00:11:37 And then we'd go off because just listening to her laugh once again made you,

00:11:42 I'm not a ho ho ha ha kind of, you know, I go more hee hee.

00:11:47 You can add a hee hee. Hee hee. Ha ha ho ho.

00:11:52 Okay?

00:11:53 So just in honor of Nicola, who is no longer with us, but today we honor her as well.

00:11:59 And you don't have to clap, but she insisted I do.

00:12:03 So you must clap, would be what she would say, something like that.

00:12:08 And then of course when you're done you ring the bell, you know.

00:12:13 Yes, she would do that. You wouldn't be able to do it without ringing the bell.

00:12:16 So we'll ring the bell.

00:12:18 Ding.

00:12:20 Ha.

00:12:26 Ready my dear?

00:12:29 Ho ho ha ha ha ho ho ho ha ha ho.

00:12:36 Ho ho ho ho ho ho ha ho ho.

00:12:40 Oh!

00:12:42 Oh!

00:12:44 Oh!  
00:12:46 Oh!  
00:12:48 Oh!  
00:12:50 Oh!  
00:12:52 Oh!  
00:12:54 Oh!  
00:12:56 Oh!  
00:12:58 Oh!  
00:13:00 Oh!  
00:13:02 Oh!  
00:13:04 Okay! Are we warmed up now?  
00:13:06 Okay, good.  
00:13:08 Are we warmed up?  
00:13:10 Okay.  
00:13:12 Yes, my down.  
00:13:14 So, that was Nikola.  
00:13:16 So, those of you who have heard her, that would sound familiar, right?  
00:13:18 Okay, let's do a laugh.  
00:13:20 Okay, and then,  
00:13:22 I don't know what's going to happen, because whenever we do a laugh in meditation,  
00:13:24 I don't know. It's usually,  
00:13:26 I'll do it at the end of a set.  
00:13:28 You know, the way people do meta.  
00:13:30 Maybe if  
00:13:32 we've gone through a lot of focus on  
00:13:34 feel into dark places,  
00:13:36 if I've guided something, it would change  
00:13:38 the whole energy in the room.  
00:13:40 I might do it before we, I want people to work with flow.  
00:13:42 Tune into your bodies  
00:13:44 right now, just from doing that.  
00:13:46 Feel any flow?  
00:13:48 Okay, that was less than  
00:13:50 60 seconds of laughing.  
00:13:52 Right?  
00:13:54 So, I'm now going to guide,  
00:13:56 oh, and so, when I guide,  
00:13:58 it's a nice closed practice.  
00:14:00 If you want to open your eyes,  
00:14:02 just like any practice, open or close as you will,  
00:14:04 but I find there's,  
00:14:06 actually, someone told me

00:14:08 that there's only so much real estate in consciousness.

00:14:10 And, you know,

00:14:12 and then he'll say

00:14:14 as emotions expand,

00:14:16 IQ contracts, but

00:14:18 what I'm going to say is,

00:14:20 it's like with eating meditation,

00:14:22 you close your eyes and you can taste more.

00:14:24 So, in the same way you close your eyes,

00:14:26 you can really tune into the feel

00:14:28 and the flow,

00:14:30 and it'll be a focus in, focus out,

00:14:32 focus on sound,

00:14:34 and some people

00:14:36 get a lot of image,

00:14:38 I get none.

00:14:40 It's just, it's a

00:14:42 total other thing for me, but,

00:14:44 you know, you now have

00:14:46 plenty of techniques.

00:14:48 So, go wild.

00:14:50 So, what we're going to do

00:14:52 is you're going to close your eyes

00:14:54 and I will guide it

00:14:56 in the air, okay?

00:15:02 So, we're now going to do a meditation.

00:15:31 A meditation called a laughing meditation.

00:15:38 And laughing is optional.

00:15:42 And feel free to jump in at any time,

00:15:45 but I will give some guidance.

00:15:51 Maybe I won't.

00:16:20 Feel free to slap your hand if you want.

00:16:49 Feel free to laugh.

00:17:04 Feel free to laugh.

00:17:23 Feel free to laugh.

00:17:38 Feel free to laugh.

00:17:53 Feel free to laugh.

00:18:08 Feel free to laugh.

00:18:27 And whether you're laughing or not,

00:18:30 you can tune in to expansion

00:18:32 and contraction,

00:18:35 and relaxation.

00:18:40 Feel, feel, feel.  
00:19:07 Feel, feel, feel.  
00:19:36 Feel, feel, feel.  
00:20:01 Feel, feel, feel.  
00:20:29 Feel, feel, feel.  
00:20:58 Feel, feel, feel.  
00:21:12 Feel, feel, feel.  
00:21:40 Feel, feel, feel.  
00:21:50 Feel, feel, feel.  
00:22:10 Feel, feel, feel.  
00:22:20 Feel, feel, feel.  
00:22:40 Feel, feel, feel.  
00:22:56 It's a good abdominal workout.  
00:23:00 Did you guys laugh?  
00:23:05 I did.  
00:23:08 Take a nice deep pleasure.  
00:23:10 We'll sigh every day.  
00:23:11 Big breath in.  
00:23:17 We need another one.  
00:23:18 Okay.  
00:23:19 Big breath in.  
00:23:30 That was 10 minutes.  
00:23:32 Okay.  
00:23:36 In honor of all laughing meditation people everywhere.  
00:23:43 Okay, so close your eyes and tune in to your body.  
00:23:45 What's going on?  
00:23:49 And if sounds happen,  
00:23:50 it's just like the laughter shocks, right?  
00:23:52 So, you know, if you have to laugh, laugh.  
00:23:56 But just really tune in and feel the flow.  
00:24:00 Where are you feeling?  
00:24:03 Anything that wants to spread, let it.  
00:24:09 Open to the massage from the inside through the body.  
00:24:17 What's the face feel like?  
00:24:22 Belly, hands, feet.  
00:24:51 It's very serious.  
00:24:54 Very serious.  
00:25:11 And hear the sounds of laughter.  
00:25:13 Other people's laughter, you can feel it on your body.  
00:25:44 Other people's laughter.  
00:26:28 No, spirit, stop it!  
00:26:32 ización

00:26:36 no

00:26:40 mi vida

00:26:43 yn bo frodo

00:26:45 I'm so sorry.

00:27:00 As much as it pains me to do this.

00:27:08 The next time she shoots it, it's a film.

00:27:11 Don't let me let you stop laughing.

00:27:15 And my prescription for life, if you do ten minutes of this a day, no problem.

00:27:23 You know, you can pepper your day.

00:27:30 You can stop, pause, go to nothing, and re-manifest with a...

00:27:35 Go to nothing and re-manifest with a...

00:27:41 You know?

00:27:42 Start over and die.

00:27:43 Why not?

00:27:46 I make my actors all learn to laugh on cue and they're not allowed to fake it.

00:27:51 And they have to laugh in a way that makes us all laugh.

00:27:55 And the first time someone does it, they go...

00:27:58 And I go, no.

00:27:59 And I go, Kevin. And Kevin will go...

00:28:01 You know, they'll just jump right into it.

00:28:05 So it's a great skill to develop.

00:28:07 And it's great at a party.

00:28:14 So thank you all for exploring this physicalizing of feel.

00:28:24 Expanding.

00:28:25 Thank you. Thank you.