

I'm in the hospital at Duke in North Carolina with my daughter. I live on the bathroom floor of her room, which my sister has helped me to transform into what looks like a colorful college dorm room with fish on the shower curtain and big colorful polka dots on the futon chair where we play, and I sleep at night in between the beeps and other hospital noises that remind me we're not at home. My husband is hours away, in Athens, GA with the other girls, but he's come to visit for the weekend. I breathe a little easier, knowing I'm not the only one juggling everything for a few days. He's holding my daughter in his lap. He's identifying all the different objects in the room for her and she pays close attention, more to make sure he's right than to satisfy her curiosity. At this point, she is quite familiar with and comforted by the objects that surround her. One of her favorite things is a bright-colored poster with the words: I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH. My husband points to the poster and then hugs her when he gets to the word 'YOU'. The two of them squeal with laughter. I can't help but laugh, too. Their gleeful giggles are contagious! To this day, those peals of laughter fill my heart with pure delight.



It was in those few moments that something changed for me. When I allowed myself to join in the experience of their shared laughter, I discovered for the first time the magic of laughter to transform even an extremely critical situation into a moment holding the utmost joy. I already knew about staying optimistic and positive. I was often the one to share my outlook with others. I would not discover Laughter Yoga till years later, but this is the moment that I knew in every cell of my body that laughter can transform you. That it is, as

Milton Berle says, 'an instant vacation', and that it can cleanse you, as the Yiddish Proverb says, 'What soap is to the body, laughter is to the soul.' I share Laughter Yoga with anyone I can because despite life's many challenges that each of us faces, I want to inspire others to find the joy that laughter offers and weave it into their lives for increased health and a more optimistic outlook. I learned that day from my daughter, that when you laugh, shift happens, and it really can be the best medicine, with the only side effect that you feel better. Laughter cannot change the specific circumstances, but it can profoundly change your life. I hope you will join me to discover the magic for yourself.

