

# Laugh Away or Go on and Cry It's Good for You

By Loraine Fick

We've all heard that laughter is the best medicine — and as it turns out, crying might be just as good. Both deliver key health benefits, from strengthening the heart to reducing stress.

## Have a Good Laugh

Laughter eases stress by increasing endorphins and reducing stress hormones, which can lower immunity, raise blood pressure and impair thinking. Laughter also lowers blood pressure, increases blood flow to the heart and pumps more oxygen into the blood.

Some experts think laughter helps most as a social activity; it connects us to others. A good joke can defuse anger and anxiety. (And a bad one can do just the opposite.)

## Have a Good Cry

Crying releases endorphins, the body's natural painkillers, creating a sense of well-being. (Most people report a sense of relief after doing it.) Some experts suspect emotional tears cleanse the body of harmful stress chemicals, which may help explain why men — who weep significantly less — develop more stress-related illness.

Welling up at work has long been considered a no-no, but that view is changing. Many employees in their 20s and 30s think hiding emotions is old-fashioned and tearing up is not a sign of weakness.

Note: Frequent crying and feelings of sadness and hopelessness can be symptoms of depression. If you think you may be depressed, contact your health-care provider.

Sources: [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), [msnbc.com](http://msnbc.com), [umm.edu](http://umm.edu), [web-japan.org](http://web-japan.org)

### Punch Lines

- Laughter's positive effects last up to 45 minutes.
- Babies first laugh at 3 to 4 months.
- Kids ages 5 or 6 do it more than any other age group.
- Women laugh 126 percent more often than men.

### Tearjerkers

- Crying is unique to humans. Darwin called it the "special expression of man."
- Emotional tears have a different chemical composition than tears caused by an irritant, like onions.
- Crying in public was considered normal until the Industrial Revolution, when machines required workers who were less emotional.
- In Japan, books and TV shows specifically designed to cause weeping are very popular.

