



Healing With Laughter

It is scientifically proven that laughter really is good medicine. When we laugh it engenders the calming and relaxing activity of the parasympathetic nervous system. We breathe more deeply and fully. Thus, it promotes better respiration which brings more oxygen to the heart, brain, and all organs. Deep belly laughter is healthy for the mind, body, and soul. It allows us to let go of worry and stress.

In the face of grief, loss, and death, it is sometimes hard to imagine how to laugh but if we cannot laugh in the face of adversity we are lost to ourselves and those we hold dear.

Allen Klein of the Whole Mirth Catalogue writes:

ALL OF US ARE AWARE of the inevitability of life's final process, yet most of us have difficulty lightening up about it. We believe that death is "serious business" and therefore seldom see any place for humor in it. Humor, however, can: provide relief for our anxieties about death, help us cope with the death of others, and ease the stress that often surrounds grief.

The amazing part for me is that when a loved one dies, we often sit around and tell stories about their lives and our encounters with them. As I listen to folks tell their stories a lot of them involve laughter. It comes either from the memory because is a funny one or comes associated with the memory because it involved a quirk or habit of the loved one that might have been more serious when the person was alive but seems funny now.

In order for happiness to find us, we must let go of those thoughts that pull us down and find ways to laugh and have fun. The next page will list some activities that are free in the Houston area and could be the ticket for some fun-filled times.

By J. Sita Lewi, LCSW, ACSW
Bereavement Coordinator
Altus Hospice

Live , Love, Laugh

Melodic
music &
laughter
are
two great
healers

Play
is good
for
the
body,
mind,
and
soul.

Laughter gives us distance. It
allows us to step back from an
event, deal with it and then
move on.
Bob Newhart

Free-Fun Events around Houston, TX

Visit a museum. [The Menil Collection](#) (near Rothko Chapel at Sul Ross and Mindell) contains approximately 15,000 paintings, sculptures, photos and books, including works by Jackson Pollock, Max Ernst, Pablo Picasso and Andy Warhol). [Rothko Chapel](#) is a serene place to meditate. The non-denominational chapel exhibits modern art. You can also pack a picnic and sit on the grounds and enjoy – pets on leashes welcome!

[The Art Car Museum](#) is the only place in town to find an antennae and wing-cloaked Roachster or the Honda motorcycle that has been transformed into a shiny red rolling stiletto art car (located on Heights Blvd near I-10).

[Heritage Society Museum](#) inside Sam Houston Park is Houston's only interactive, outdoor museum.

Play at a park. [Discovery Green Park](#) is a 12-acre park downtown. In the spring and fall, listen to local musicians perform in the amphitheater. In the winter, ice skate on Kinder Lake.

Listen to a concert. [Miller Outdoor Theatre](#) hosts a range of performances including classical music, ballet, dance, film, and Shakespeare from March through November. The theater, set inside Hermann Park, also allows patrons to bring in picnics – BYOB. No glass containers, please. [The Japanese Gardens](#) in Hermann Park, a symbol of friendship between the U.S. and Japan, provide a quiet place to sit, meditate and watch the Koi fish swimming in the pond. (Main Street and Sunset Boulevard). [The Houston Zoo](#) is free the 1st Tuesday of every month (located near Hermann Park).

Go skating. The [Lee and Joe Jamail Skatepark](#) is a \$2.2 million state-of-the-art skate park that contains one of the largest cradles in the world.



Go for a walk or bike ride. The [Houston Arboretum and Nature Center](#) is a 155-acre nature sanctuary (near Memorial Park) with five miles of trails and interactive exhibits. Dogs on leashes are welcome. Allen Parkway has 5.3 miles of trails for walking or biking.

Take a break. [The Water Wall](#) is a 64-foot-tall fountain—built to look like a "horseshoe of running water"—sits among several oak trees at the base of the 64-story Williams Tower (near (Richmond & the 610 loop - close to the Galleria).

Go sailing. The [Port of Houston Sail](#) is a free, 90-minute tour of the Port of Houston. Learn about the history of the seaport as you watch ocean freighters and barges navigate the 50-mile channel. The tour is free, but reservations are required.

Fun Events Continued

Visit Sylvan Beach in La Porte, TX (off of Hwy 146) – closer than Galveston and it has a large play-ground and a small skateboard park. Pack a picnic lunch or visit their concession stand and enjoy!

Get a guide. The Houston Greeter Program provides volunteer hosts for up to four hours to introduce visitors to local attractions. The service is free, and METRO Rail provides free passes for visitors and greeters.

Play at The Children's Museum. This museum is all new and now twice as big and rated a 5–star nationwide! The Museum is packed with 90,000 square feet of innovative, interactive bilingual exhibits for kids, age's birth to 12 years, Free Family Nights are offered every Thursday from 5 to 8 p.m (located on Binz Street near the Medical Center).

Fun learning at The Health Museum. The most visited health museum in the country features three-dimensional anatomy models and interactive exhibits. They have interactive health and science educational experiences to promote an understanding of the human body. This museum is very modern and fun to visit. The museum offers free admission on Thursdays 2–5 p.m. (located on Binz Street near the Medical Center).

Plan a game night at your home or at a club room for family and friends. Have people bring board games, card and dice games and bring snacks to share. Fun for the whole family and for singles too.

Go to: www.familyfunhouston.com and find events in your area.



Sam Houston Racetrack - the Dacshunds race.

A good laugh heals a lot of hurts
— Madeleine L'Engle

Laughter is good for your health

Laughter relaxes the whole body. A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress, leaving your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after.

Laughter boosts the immune system. Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease.

Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.

Laughter protects the heart. Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, which can help protect you against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

Altus Hospice

11233 Shadow Creek Pkwy
Suite 123
Pearland, TX 77584
281-493-9744

1525 Lake Front Circle
Suite 1
Woodlands, TX 77380
281-583-5455

www.altushospicecare.com



Quotes: from varied Cultures

He that is of a merry heart has a continual feast. — Proverbs 15:15

From there to here, from here to there, funny things are everywhere.
— Dr. Seuss

Everyone is so afraid of death, but the real Sufis just laugh: nothing tyrannizes their hearts. What strikes the oyster shell does not damage the pearl.”
— Mevlana Rumi

As soap is to the body, so laughter is to the soul. – A Jewish Proverb

He deserves Paradise who makes his companions laugh. — Koran

The greatest prayer you could ever pray is to laugh everyday. — Ramtha

Laughter and breathing of laughter yoga brings you totally in the present moment, as you can't laugh and breathe in the past or future. Dr. Madan Kataria

A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book.
-- Irish Proverb