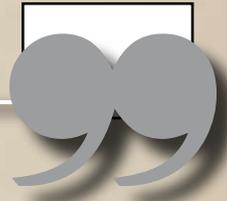


# cris popp

chief laughing officer,  
laughter australia



Cris Popp has worked in a number of diverse roles – care assistant, ABC journalist, Looksmart editor, public sector online project manager, innovation facilitator and conflict resolution consultant – but now he laughs for a living. And given the chance, he'll get you laughing too.

Laughter is an exercise. It's quite easy to control your body, but much more difficult to control your thoughts. A good way to access your thoughts is through your body. When you smile (make sure you're smiling with your eyes), your blood pressure and heart rate drop, your T-cell count goes up, growth hormone levels increase by about 20 percent and serotonin levels increase 80 percent. So it has nothing to do with humour. It's about exercise that is good for you.

When you're stressed, your field of focus narrows. Stress is great for responding to a crisis – sabre-toothed tiger jumps in front of you, competitor launches a new product, breakdown in the production chain – you focus right in. It's really bad, though, for coming up with new solutions. Laughter helps you relax and opens your field of vision.

It's been shown that people learn better when the experience is full of colour and humour. A school in Melbourne brought a dog into the maths class and everybody's grades went up. Danish computer company, Four Systems, achieved a 40 percent increase in sales and 75 percent reduction in stress after introducing laughter as a stress-buster.

Ask entrepreneurs when they get their best ideas and they'll say in the shower, or waking up in the morning, or on their way home from holidays – all those times when you turn away from your normal focus, because it lets your brain break from its usual pattern and put information together in a new way. You should practise laughing and strive for a better work/life balance because you'll actually run a better business in the long-term.

Laughing is a fantastic team-builder. I think this is because you have to make yourself a little bit vulnerable. In any relationship, the way you learn to trust somebody is to expose yourself, bit by bit. We give corporate teams a great excuse to open up and trust each other.

Engaging in a laughter session sends the message to employees that it's okay to have some fun. You're knowledge workers – we're valuing you for your capacity to be creative, not for your capacity to crunch numbers or create widgets.

[www.laughterclubs.com.au](http://www.laughterclubs.com.au)