

SEANKELLY

Lowe, Jaime. "The Healing Powers of Laughter Yoga." *The New York Times*, November 5, 2016.

The New York Times

The Healing Powers of Laughter Yoga



My photography is about separation — about a piece of glass separating me from a person or from the world. But then, several months ago, I was confronted with my limitations. I had a sort of mini-meltdown and started doing this made-up form of meditation. At one point when I was in Finland, as squirrels were eating nuts out of my hand, I was meditating on a rock and had this total, I-am-one-with-the-universe feeling, and it went against everything I believed. I knew I couldn't look at my work in the same way after Finland, and I just wanted to keep figuring out what that feeling I experienced there was. I'd always wanted to visit India, but I never wanted to photograph there. I'm not good with the exotic, and I didn't want to fall into cliché. But I had heard about this laughter yoga that sounded incredible — a type of meditation developed by a doctor named Madan Kataria, who had the idea that laughing for no reason can make life better. Your body can't tell the difference between real and fake laughter. In India, because of the sensory overload, you just feel like the country — the place, everything around you — is going into you. Kataria talks about India as this smorgasbord of spiritual matters. So I went, and all of a sudden I was open to sitting in a circle, to looking in people's eyes, to laughing.

– AS TOLD TO JAIME LOWE



Dr. Madan Kataria, the creator of laughter yoga, doing a breathing exercise. "He does this between laughter."



“The women and men were separated into two groups in a park in Patna. Led by Dr. Kataria, the members of the laughing club were ready to roll with laughter.”



“I had a sense that Rie Sakamoto, a workshop participant, could go to a place very quickly that I just cannot access. She’s very active in laughter clubs in Japan.”



“I was bummed to be photographing and not participating. I’m sad I missed out on what it’s like to have your head on someone’s belly while they’re laughing.”



Costumed man from a parade in Bangalore.



"A drummer just after a parade that sprang up outside Bangalore."



"I spent a lot of time looking at his face and his dark eyes, and I just loved looking at his head. I'm fascinated by the way identity and self is located inside the head."



Dr. Kataria's wife, Madhuri Kataria.



Picture pillow of the Katarias.



The photographer, Alec Soth, practicing laughter yoga: "My room was a little cell, and this was laughter meditation. I knew this was going to be an important thing for me."

"It's an incredibly thin line between laughter and crying. It just spontaneously happened then — it doesn't happen anymore. I was just cracking open a new channel and other stuff pours out."

Alec Soth is a member of the Magnum photo agency. His exhibition "Gathered Leaves" opens in February at Fotomuseum in Antwerp, Belgium.

Jaime Lowe is a freelance writer living in Brooklyn