

What are you willing to do to be happy? Man close to Oprah Winfrey learns to laugh to drop stress

OPRAH.com Are you truly happy? The biggest complainer Oprah knows is her makeup artist Reggie Wells. After a recent "Oprah Show," he agreed to take Pastor Will Bowen's complaint-free challenge. Reggie wears a purple wristband, and every time he utters a complaint, he has to change the wrist he wears it on.



GEORGE BURNS/COURTESY OF THE OPRAH WINFREY SHOW
Oprah Winfrey and her makeup artist Reggie Wells share some laughter. --- Reggie laugh-dances with his Laughter Teacher Jeffrey Briar

How did he do? Oprah says Reggie "complained so much that he was getting whiplash from changing [wrists]." For some extra help in looking on the bright side, Oprah sent him to a class in "Laughter Yoga."

First developed in India, Laughter Yoga is now practiced in 53 countries around the world. Reggie's instructor, **Jeffrey Briar** -- one of several certified Laughter Yoga instructors in the United States -- says Laughter Yoga's positive effects are no joke. "Laughter relieves all the negative effects of stress," he says. "It strengthens the abdominal organs and helps us get those six-pack abs we're all looking for. Laughter oxygenates the bloodstream and releases endorphins, the body's natural painkillers."

The class starts cold, and Reggie remains cynical. "We're going to start with nothing and laugh for no reason, and you'll feel better," Jeffrey says. But as they move on to more advanced moves -- like Lion Laughter, Naughty-Naughty, and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde -- Reggie really starts to catch the laughing bug.

Reggie works up a sweat, but can he change his complaining ways? Reggie says that before his Laughter Yoga class, he was depressed. It was the Saturday before Easter, he was lonely and he doubted the class would do much to change that. "It was very goofy in the beginning ... but you can't fake a laugh," he says. "Once you get into it ... the stress lifted from my soul, it lifted from my body."

Dr. Robert Holden, author of "Happiness Now" says chronic complainers like Reggie actually live in fear of happiness. Their condition -- which he dubs "happy-chondria" -- is based on a belief that any happiness carries an eventual fall and price.

"Rather than have everything be perfect and full, I'll have it be quite good and complain," he says. "Reggie's got to dare to let life be great and trust that happiness can happen and that it can last."

"It's never too late to be happy," Dr. Holden says.