

RESILIENCE RX

HUG THERAPY

Giving is good for the giver in that a hug benefits both ourselves and others. A hug is a free, easy, and—at 20 seconds—a quick way to trigger endorphins, foster connections and show appreciation.

BENEFITS OF HUG THERAPY:

Almost 70 percent of communication is nonverbal. Hugging is an excellent method of expressing yourself nonverbally to another human or animal. Not only can they feel the love and care in your embrace, but they can actually be receptive enough to pay it back. And it's free every time we hug, cradle a child, cherish a dog or cat, slow dance, or simply hold the shoulders of a friend.

A sincere embrace triggers the brain to release the love hormone known as oxytocin. This substance has many benefits. A natural tranquilizer that's released during childbirth, oxytocin is powerful enough to help mothers forget about the labor they endured and fall immediately in love with their newborn. It's not just for new mothers, though. Oxytocin helps everyone to relax and feel safe. It also calms our fears and anxiety. A neurotransmitter that acts on the brain's emotional center, oxytocin is known to promote contentment, reduce anxiety, lower our heart rate and our cortisol level, a stress hormone.

HELPFUL TIP

Research shows that a hug lasting at least 20 seconds has a therapeutic effect on the body and mind. Hug someone or something for at least 20 seconds every day.

HUGS ALSO . . .

Affection also has a direct response on the reduction of stress which prevents many diseases. Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine has carried out more than 100 studies on the power of touch, and discovered evidence of improved immune system, reduced pain and more.

- ✓ Hugs apply gentle pressure on the sternum which stimulates the thymus gland, which regulates the production of white blood cells, which keep you healthy.
- ✓ Hugs stimulate the brain to release the pleasure hormone dopamine, which helps to negate sadness.
- ✓ Hugging also releases serotonin levels, elevating mood and creating happiness.
- ✓ Skin contains a network of tiny pressure centers that sense touch and notify the brain through the vagus nerve. The skin response of someone receiving and giving a hug shows a change in skin conductance which suggests a more balanced state in the parasympathetic nervous system.

So go ahead . . . hug it out!