

Laughter Is Good Medicine

As you read the beginning of this informational article, you can apply some of the strategies that you just learned. Notice the underlined phrases and sentences. They contain details that support the main idea in each heading. Can you tell what the topic of this article is? (Read the title for a hint.)

How many times a day do you laugh? Ten times a day? Five times? Or are you such a sad sack that you never laugh? If that's true, you need to lighten up. Scientists now say that laughing is good for your health.

Adults Laugh Less than Children Do

An adult laughs about 15 times a day. But most children laugh 50 times a day. Why? Because children spend much of their time having fun and doing silly things. They play—and they laugh.

Adults, though, are loaded down with real-life duties. They work all day. They pay bills and keep the car running. They have to do laundry and get the kids to school on time. In short, adults are busy. When do they have time to laugh?

Doctors say that adults should *make* time for fun. These experts have studied how feelings can change a person's health. They know that having fun is important. But getting patients to enjoy life is not easy, say the doctors. Adults don't place much value on play. Too often, having fun is seen as a waste of time.

Laughter as Treatment

In 1979, Norman Cousins wrote a book called *The Anatomy of an Illness*. It was about Cousins's fight with a deadly **disease**. He didn't want to stay in bed and feel sorry for himself. Instead, he tried to look on the bright side. He made **laughter** a part of his daily treatment.

Cousins's idea seemed to work. His health improved, and he felt better. He lived 12 years after he had first become ill. Other sick people followed his lead. They, too, tried to laugh through their pain. They hoped that a happy frame of mind *would* help heal an **ailing** body.

Proof that Laughter Heals

The claim that laughter can heal is not new. Some doctors held that belief as early as the 1300s. They saw a link between the health of the mind and that of the body. One such doctor was Henri de Mondeville. He thought that joy in his patients' lives would improve their health. He told the family and friends of his patients to "cheer them" and "tell them jokes."

Why is the **healing power** of laughter once again new today? We now have proof that laughter is good for the body! Until a few years ago, that idea was just a hunch. Thanks to Norman Cousins, doctors now have some hard facts about laughter. Cousins spent his last years studying laughter as medicine. He worked with doctors at the UCLA Medical Center to research humor. Together, Cousins and the doctors learned more about *how* laughter heals.

Doctors found that laughing gives more strength to the body's immune system. This system helps the body fight disease. The immune system contains "killer" cells. These cells try to kill harmful cells that enter the body. Laughter makes the job of the killer cells easier. When a person laughs, the body reacts. This reaction sends special chemicals all through the body. That action, in turn, readies the immune system to fight off **germs**.

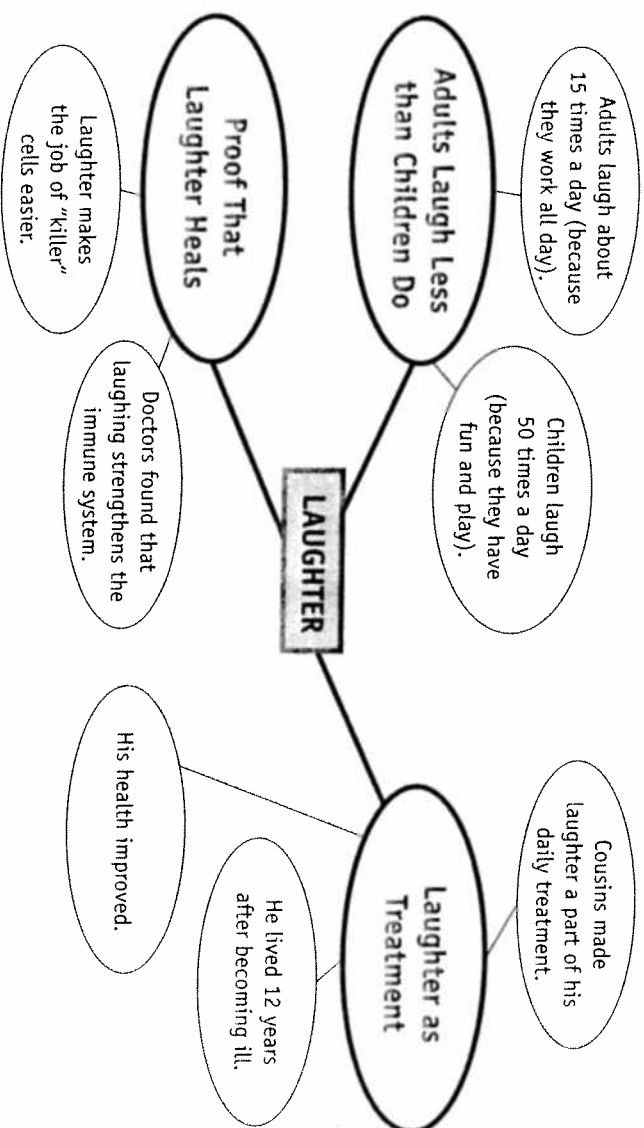


Stop here for the Strategy Break.

Strategy Break

If you were to create a concept map for the first part of this article, it might look like this:

Laughter Is Good Medicine



As you continue reading, keep looking for the main ideas and supporting details. At the end of this article, you will use some of them to create a concept map of your own.