

Float Away Stress



Imagine yourself effortlessly floating in water that's about 93.5°F—not too hot, not too cold. You're in total darkness. All is silent except for the comforting sounds of your own breathing. In this pleasurable and totally stress-free environment, every muscle feels deeply relaxed. Your thoughts wander, but you don't really think about much of anything.

What you're experiencing is R.E.S.T. (Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy)—more commonly known as flotation therapy. In this stimulus-free setting, your heart and breathing slow down, muscle tension dissolves, and stressful feelings disappear. To achieve this state of bliss, all you have to do is sign up for a session in a float tank at a flotation center. The tank is slightly longer than a bathtub and contains very salty water that allows you to effortlessly float on your back. Some tanks have no lighting or sound; others are in a room that is dimly lit and has recorded music of your choice piped in. Float sessions last for an hour or so.

Flotation has benefits other than reducing stress.

- Listening to instructional tapes while floating can sharpen learning skills.
- Flotation can help to control blood pressure.
- Regular flotation sessions can help to alleviate arthritic pain, other types of chronic pain, and nausea resulting from chemotherapy.

Note: Flotation may not be appropriate for everyone. Anyone who is being treated for a mental health problem should check with his or her therapist before considering flotation therapy.