

Aches Away
Massage Specialists



Aches AwaySM

HOW TO RELAX 101 INFRARED & FLOAT THERAPIES

My wife is fond of saying to me: “You need to learn how to relax.” And, as with most things, she is absolutely right. I don’t know the first thing about relaxation.

I do know, however, that I am not alone.

It’s no wonder, of course. Relaxation is the opposite of something most of us understand all too well: stress.

We tend to soak up stress like a sponge. Stress weighs on us, drags us down, and can even contribute to making us sick. It is caused by our jobs, sometimes by our relationships, and definitely by that person in traffic who just won’t speed up a little.

The ability to relax — and it is an ability — is one that is becoming less practiced and even less understood in our modern society.

Hidden away in East Bloomington is a place where stress is not allowed to survive and relaxation is not only offered,

it is taught. That place is Aches Away Massage Specialists.

Squeezing the sponge

Aches Away headlines with myriad massage therapies: Swedish, deep tissue, aromatherapy, sports massage, neuromuscular therapy, myofascial, hot stone, prenatal/pregnancy massage, lymphatic reflexology, Reiki, and Himalayan salt stone massage. But Manager Danica Wilson says the hidden gems at Aches Away are not massage related at all.

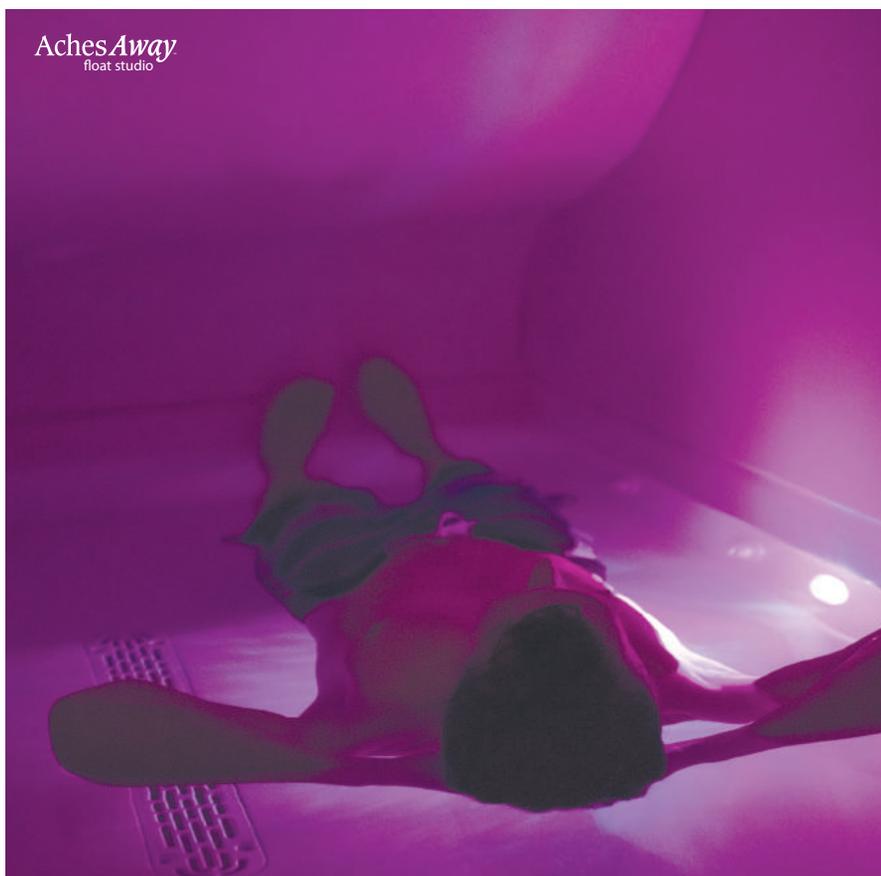
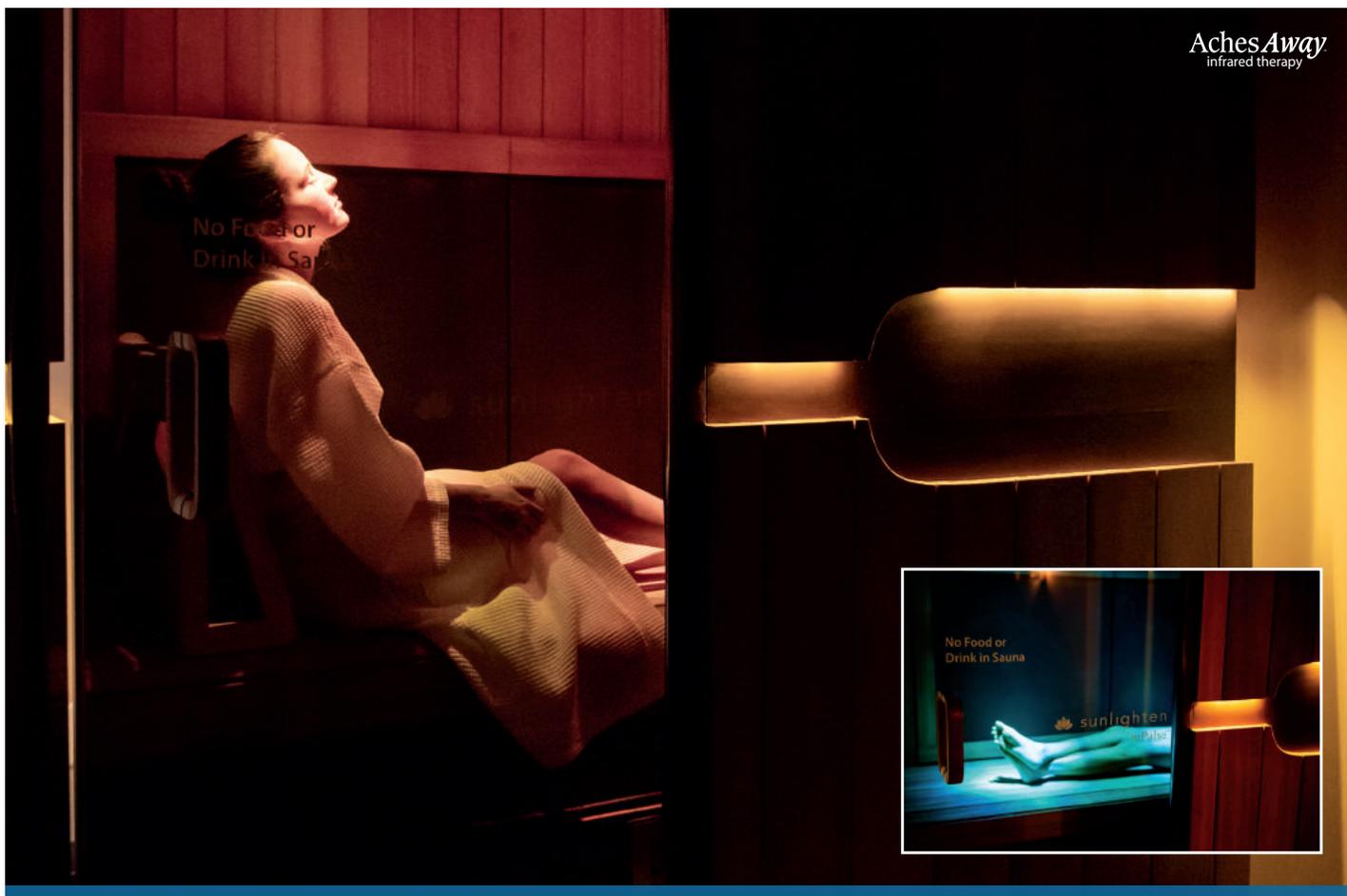
Two therapies gaining popularity with not only devotees of the relaxing art but also with physicians are Aches Away’s infrared sauna therapy and float therapy. Both offer benefits beyond mere relaxation.

“One of the main things people come in here for is detoxification,” Danica reveals. The infrared sauna has even been prescribed as a way for some physicians’ patients to detoxify.

“Fluoride, mercury, pollutants from the air, stuff we get from our deodorants, the food we eat, plastics,” Danica lists. “All of that gets stuck in us. So, when you’re in the sauna, you’re not only detoxifying through your sweat, it’s also helping your organs work more efficiently to get rid of toxins the natural way through the body’s other natural processes.”

Squeezing out those impurities is only part of it. By using infrared instead of the traditional steam, the sauna heats you up from the inside. “It increases your body’s temperature by about a degree. This tricks your body into thinking it has a fever, so it starts pushing out more white blood cells. That helps you fight off illness,” Danica explains. “We have clients who come in who have issues with low white blood cell counts and have been referred here by their physicians to help increase those numbers.”

Just as the infrared sauna is a new take on an old theme, float therapy is,



as Danica describes, “an Epsom salt bath on steroids.”

Epsom salt baths have been used for decades in order to help with muscle inflammation and sore muscles, but at Aches Away, the float tank is filled with about 1,200 pounds of Epsom salts, dissolved in about 10 inches of water that is kept at a very constant 93 degrees.

The result is a bath that can relieve sore muscles but can also improve your sleep, boost your immune system, reduce your stress, and even stimulate your creativity and problem-solving abilities.

Both therapies are designed to wring the wrongness of the world from your pores and leave you healthier. With that in mind, I had to try them for myself.

Not your mama’s sauna

Not knowing how to relax properly, I have never been a fan of traditional steam saunas. So, in my mind, an infrared sauna was just a 21st century version of something in which I did not hold much interest.

But in my quest to learn how to relax, I happened to learn far more beyond that.

Stepping into the cozy yet spacious-enough-for-two, wooden sauna booth, I was greeted by heat, of course, but not the humid,

heavy heat associated with steam saunas. Even though the gauge on the wall told me it was 145 degrees, I felt oddly comfortable, instantly relaxed and willing to crank up the thermostat even higher.

The Chromotherapy lighting shifted through the spectrum, adding to my already improving physical and emotional state. Proven to help with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), the lights were a welcome complement to the peaceful music lilting through the air. Forgotten completely were the ice and snow outside; I was instead in a Southwestern desert and loving every second of it.

Having donned my heart rate monitor in curiosity, I was pleasantly

closest approximation on earth to the weightlessness of space.

A similar experience is what Danica says awaits you in their float therapy. "The air and the water are kept at the same temperature as your skin," she states. "If you shut off the light and don't have any sound then you feel like you are floating in space, because you can't tell where the water ends and your body begins; everything is the same."

After a pre-float shower to rinse my body of any surface impurities (including the sweat from my wonderful infrared sauna experience), the lights in the float room switched off and I stepped into the float chamber.

doffed the lights, even stripped off my swim trunks for the full effect of the tank.

Danica's comparison to space was a well-founded one. With the lights off, I experienced a feeling of true weightlessness. In a direct contrast to my first few minutes in the tank, the slightest motion sent me drifting without the feel of any movement whatsoever. While "Waltz of the Flowers" from Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* played softly in the darkness, I laughed to myself as I bounced gently like a crazed balletic astronaut in outer space.

Although this was my first time in the float tank, I can't help but wonder what further benefits could be gleaned with repeated sessions. According to Danica, on average it takes about three sessions to adjust your mind to the experience. "We're so inundated with technology all the time now with everything in our faces that some people have a hard time being able to shut down in their first session," she says. "But by the third time your body is thinking, *I've done this before*, and your mind gets used to it. Some people fall asleep in there because it is so relaxing."

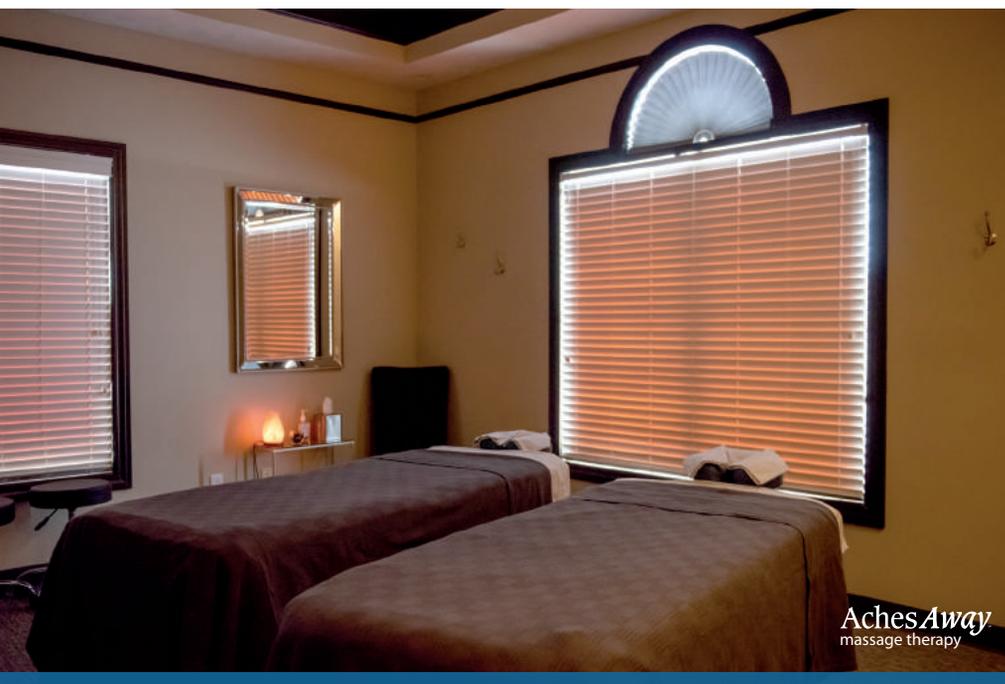
In the float tank, the brain can indeed achieve the theta state experienced while dreaming — the time when the body heals itself and when one attains the greatest level of rest.

Lasting relaxation

I cannot say enough about my experience at Aches Away. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of it all was the lasting calm that stayed with me even as I drove home and started writing.

My wife no longer needs to tell me I need to learn how to relax. One visit to Aches Away and I sauntered out, a man well-educated on the subject. And what a schooling it was. After all, Aches Away is the only "classroom" where falling asleep in it is not met with disapproval, it's actually a sign you're doing something right.

For more information, contact Aches Away Massage Specialists at 309-662-2900 or online at aches-away.com. Aches Away is locally owned by Don Thorpe and has been serving the community since 2001. Their new office is located at 3807 General Electric Road in Bloomington.



surprised to see my heart rate reach the brisk exercise range. I burned nearly 300 calories and all I did was sit, listen to music, and read through some emails on my phone.

All too soon, however, my 30-minute session came to an end and I found myself wishing for something I never thought I would have when it came to a sauna: more time in it.

I'm still not a fan of the old steam saunas, but I'd use an infrared sauna every day if I could.

Balletic astronaut

There's a very good reason why NASA trains its astronauts in big swimming pools: floating in water is the

Chromotherapy lighting similar to that in the sauna was controllable with a click of a button on the inside of the chamber, as was the volume for the classical music I requested to be played on the speakers in there.

Lowering myself into the water and closing my eyes, I almost instantly experienced a complete perception shift. For the first several minutes I felt as if I were drifting gently on an unseen current, only to open my eyes to find I had not moved a single inch.

As time slipped away, I endeavored to try every experience possible: I switched through the light selection, played with the music volume, used the neck-supporting float pillow provided,

By Alexander Germanis