

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO FLOAT AWAY?

I'm always interested in trying out different methods for improving my health. Sometimes I stick with things, and other times it's once and done. Out of curiosity, I tried cryotherapy — which involves standing in a chamber filled with super-cold air that is supposed to increase energy and metabolism. I tried hypnosis to help me overcome the craving for Diet Coke and sugar. The raw juice cleanse, purported to rid my body of impurities, was quite an adventure. Practices that have proven to be a permanent part of my quest for optimal health and wellness include yoga, meditation, massage therapy, and following a plant-based diet.

When I heard about float therapy, I immediately wanted to know more. I read about it and was a bit skeptical about all the benefits, which include reducing inflammation and pain, diminishing or even eliminating migraine headaches, helping muscles recover faster, alleviating stress and anxiety issues, increasing energy levels, improving sleep quality, and even enhancing problem-solving ability. I discovered that there is actually quite a bit of solid scientific evidence to back up these claims. I couldn't wait to give it a try!

When I arrived at Aches Away the day of my first float session, I was immediately struck by how quiet and peaceful the environment is. The staff did a wonderful job of explaining the

process of float therapy and answering my questions. If you're not familiar with float therapy, the idea is pretty simple. A windowless plastic tank is filled with 1,000 pounds of magnesium rich Epsom salts dissolved into water. The high concentration of salt forces the body to float in about 10 inches of water. It's not a little tank, and there's plenty of room. Even though I am prone to claustrophobia, I had no problems.

You enter the tank through a door, pool noodles and head rests are supplied to make things more comfortable, and then... you just float. Since the water and air is heated to the same temperature as your body, it's hard to tell where your skin ends and the water begins. It's incredibly easy to just float there and relax.

Although I didn't fall asleep while floating, I completely zoned out and lost all sense of time. I know I wasn't asleep, but I don't remember all my thoughts, either. It was just spacey and peaceful. At the same time, it was surprising how quickly my senses sharpened. I don't think I have ever been in such a state of total relaxation. "Float therapy offers you a sensory free experience for your mind, and a gravity free experience for your body."

After my hour was up, a post float nine-minute shower was required to remove all salt. Aches Away features a dressing room with a hair dryer and all

the other necessities to get you back to your day after your float session is complete. Was I magically transformed? Maybe that would be an exaggeration. I did have amazing energy for the rest of the day, and I can't remember when I've had a better night's sleep.

Float therapy is definitely worth trying — at least once. I was not in any sort of pain, so for me, it was a way to de-stress and get mentally recharged. For people who have pain issues, I think it would most certainly help. The benefits are reported to be better when it's done on a regular basis and I will absolutely be going back for another float. Next time, I may add on an infrared sauna therapy!

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. Don recently added float therapy and infrared sauna therapy as a service to compliment massage therapy in his practice. Their new office is located at 3807 General Electric Road Bloomington.

By Karen Tucker