

So what's it really like to run a *sensory-deprivation flotation tank?*

How did you get interested in flotation therapy?

I was a teenager in 1980 and watched the movie *Altered States*. Eventually, I was able to try floating in my 20s. I couldn't relax my brain and fought it the entire time. After my hour, though, I thought it was interesting and that I could do it again. Later, on my way to see a friend, my car broke down. It was so stressful, but I was completely calm. Floating had worked! I would not have known about the positive impact if something bad had not happened. Now I've been floating for 17 years to help with stress management. Floating is the lazy person's yoga. I know how to meditate without ever learning.

How does it work?

When you float, without any external stimuli present, your central nervous system's workload is reduced by up to 90 percent. Floating is great for jet lag and any type of exhaustion. It's also good for the grumpies or just being really upset. You can still have the issue in your life when you get out of the tank, but it'll be far more manageable because you've rested your brain. Back out in the world, you'll be happier and more chilled out.

People with pain issues, including those related to stress, also benefit by floating in our 1,000-pound medical-grade Epsom salt solution. Your body absorbs healing magnesium in a gravity-free environment, which can significantly reduce or banish pain.

One thing you probably won't experience is claustrophobia. It's extremely uncommon, and you can always open the tank door if you need to.

What kinds of people use flotation therapy?

When I first opened, I thought there would be a client profile. There really isn't. Businesspeople with families are the core part of the business. They have to find a way to cope

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LOCATION: Oakland, California

YEARS OPERATING: 8

RATES: \$75 per one-hour float for adults; \$65 for students, seniors, and veterans

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with all the demands of their lives and keep on going.

I find that people who come frequently have often been hurt in a deep emotional or physical way. It'll be big things like losing a partner or a parent, and they'll come twice a week to recover throughout that grieving process. I've personally used it during Mercury retrograde several times. Except for a skin condition, you can use floating for almost anything.



A model relaxes in one of the tanks at FLOAT.

How do you keep things clean and sanitary?

The tanks have a multilevel filtration system that uses ultraviolet lights and H₂O₂. We use all-natural chemicals to sanitize before and after every floater and regularly clean out the tanks. And floaters must shower beforehand to be 100 percent clean. You go in wearing nothing but earplugs, which are optional.

How did you decide to have an art gallery in the same space?

When I went other places to float, I never really liked the space. A gallery showcasing local artists was always part of my plan, since I'm an artist and collector. After floating, your senses are heightened. So we have art right there where you have your postfloat tea.

"Ask a Practitioner" explores the world of alternative therapies. Is there a practice you're curious about? Email editors@spiritualityhealth.com.

—BRITTANY SHOOT