

Floatation Tank

By Mallika Singh, Ph.D., Rene Alvarez, M.D., and Mikiko Murakami
June 2003

OVERVIEW

Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy, or REST, is a very effective intervention for working with stress related disorders, chronic pain, habit disorders, anxiety disorders, and personal enhancement programs. REST offers the benefits associated with relaxation training, hypnosis, meditation and biofeedback, both in the physiological and the cognitive dimension



There are two basic forms of REST, Flotation REST and Chamber REST. Dr. John Cunningham Lilly devised the floatation tank in 1954, at the National Institute of Mental Health. A floatation tank is a sensory deprivation tank with 10-inch deep box of water (93.5 degrees Fahrenheit), enriched by 800 pounds of Epsom salt. The weightlessness, temperature of the water, and sensory deprivation allows the brain to go into the Theta state, the 4-7Hz frequencies the brain experiences before falling asleep. Theta offers access to unconscious material, reverie, free association, sudden insight, and creative inspiration. Flotation offers a relatively stress-free environment where one can be free of the stressful external stimuli his/her system may be experiences, causing it to be in a state of chronic arousal, fatigue, stress, or tension.

The benefits of this experience range from physical to psychological. Floating resets the body's chemical and metabolic balance, strengthening resistance to the negative impact of stress, illness or injury alleviating the affects of a number of diseases from arthritis, blood pressure problems, to hormonal imbalance. Blood pressure and heart rates drop and oxygen and nutrients are transported to the cells while harmful chemicals are released. Beta-endorphins, the body's natural painkillers, are released. Olympic athletes, patients with chronic pain or addiction problems, as well as patients with cardiovascular or psychological conditions benefit from floatation tanks.

COMPLEMENTING SPECIFIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

Floating offers a therapeutic system that operates through the removal of environmental demands, rather than through the manipulation of environmental demands.

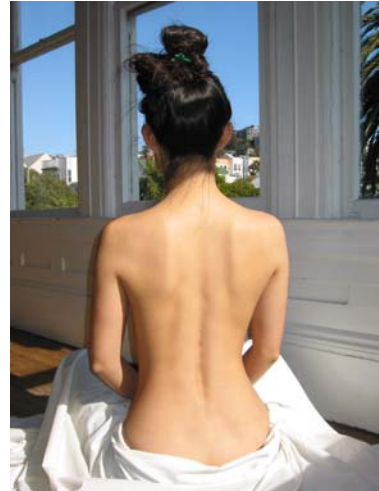
Promotion of Wellness <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addictions• Learning Disorders• Insomnia• Stress Management• Enhanced Immunity• Enhanced creativity	Musculo-skeletal and Neurological <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arthritis• Back pain• Tendonitis• Stiff Neck• Headache• Sprains
Chronic Symptoms	Internal



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain Management • Chronic Fatigue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypertension • Removal of lactic acids
Sports Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance/Coordination Improvement • Relaxation of Muscles • Detoxification of joints/muscles • Expedite healing 	Dermatological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acne • Bruises

WHAT TO EXPECT AS A PATIENT

After receiving a detailed explanation of the floatation tank, a patient showers and enters the tank, where he or she is free from sound and light. The patient enters the tank to re-experience the womb-state. After a float, most patients experience smells being stronger, colors being brighter, flavors being more defined, sounds being more conspicuous, and the effects can last two weeks after a session. Floaters also experience an increase in creativity and clarity and are able to approach problems from a new point of view. All tanks have a filtration system and are operated according to FDA regulations. Feeling claustrophobic inside the tank is unlikely as door opens manually from the inside and the enclosed space is approximately 4ft by 8ft.



STUDIES

Restricted Environmental Stimulation Theory (REST) is a treatment which has been developed and refined over the last forty years, which combines solitude and reduction of sensory input, both of which have been used for thousands of years by many different cultures to bring about healing and self-renewal. Below are studies that have been drawn from a meta-analysis done by Baylah, David, Ph.D. on REST.

1. **Behavioral:** “REST consistently has beneficial effects on medical, psychological, and behavioral health outcomes, particularly when used in conjunction with other therapies... Additional studies have shown REST to be effective in treating various eating disorders, in decreasing heavy drinking, and in treating a variety of other behavioral and mental health disorders.” In the twenty research studies that have been conducted for addictive disorders, 25% of REST subjects achieved long-term abstinence. When REST was combined with other cessation treatments, 50% achieved long-term abstinence. In three studies conducted for obesity, REST showed a continues weight loss over a 6 month period, and in another study for bulimia, there was 50% success rate for long-term control. ¹

2. **Additions:** The University of Arizona examined REST as a complementary relapse prevention technique with substance abusers enrolled in traditional outpatient substance abuse programs. At the end of 4 years of follow-up, 43% remained sober. None of the control group did so far for eight months of follow-up. ¹



3. **Muscular tension, hypertension, chronic pain:** A case study showed that a patient with an unexplained case of muscular tension, hypertension, neck pain, and generalized anxiety, was positively impacted by a REST session. The patient achieved normal blood pressure and a relief from the somatic symptoms that made medication no longer necessary, and he also reported a significant change in his outlook on life.¹
4. **Continued Studies:** Since their introduction, floatation tanks have been used in clinical laboratory conditions, and the effects of Restricted Environmental Stimulation Technique (R.E.S.T.) have been researched and documented at Stanford, Harvard, Yale and countless other universities, hospitals, and sports training facilities, on an international level. Research in regards to floatation tanks is coordinated by the International REST Investigators Society (IRIS) in New York.³

SAFETY

Patients who have hypertension, a history of seizures, a history of heart problems, epilepsy, suicidal tendencies, infectious diseases, or other conditions which may not allow him/her to relax and float safely must get a physician's permission to use a floatation tank. Because floating is non-invasive, there are no known adverse effects to the treatment.

REFERENCES

1. Baylah, David, Ph.D. "A Brief Overview of Research Regarding the Effectiveness of Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy as a Complementary Treatment for a Range of Behavioral Disorders." Arizona: Neurobehavioral Health Services, 1999. URL: www.njc.com/~seefloat/Baylah.html
2. Hutchinson, Michael. *Book of Floating: Exploring the Private Sea*. Harper Trade, 1995.
3. International Conference REST97. San Francisco, 1997. URL: <http://www.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/mhonarc/conferences/msg00071.html>
4. "Introduction to Floating." *Float Tank Australia*. URL: <http://www.floattank.com/what.html#science>

