

# Floating - Peace At Last

Imagine that you are floating in an ocean. You cannot sink. It is pitch black. There is no sound apart from your heartbeat and the thoughts that are making noises in your mind. The voices dissipate and you feel yourself falling into another space and time. You are in control and can take this experience anywhere you want to go.



When I heard that Thailand was to receive their first floatation room the only image I had in my mind was from the 1980 movie "Altered States" starring William Hurt as someone who turns feral during several sessions in an isolation tank.

Although the movie would be considered pretty tame nowadays, the opening scene of

The floatation tank (also known as the sensory deprivation or isolation) was devised in 1953-54 by Dr. John Cunningham Lilly, at the National Institute of Mental Health (Bethesda, Maryland). Floating in a 10-inch deep box of water, enriched by 800 pounds of dissolved magnesium sulphate (Epsom salts), Lilly's original goal was to explore how solitude affected the mind, and the neurophysiology of consciousness.

As it worked out the tank was to have many and varied uses. The military even experimented with it for a while to see if they could develop brainwashing techniques using the tank.

*So how does it work and what happens?*

The idea is to shut down, as far as possible, as many senses as you can to allow the brain a chance to have front running so to speak.

If you have ever had that "I can't think for all the motorbikes screaming around outside, crying kids, music blaring out everywhere, and the wafting of durian or other odours through the house" feeling, then this is the place for you.

The only float room (I use the word room because that is exactly what it is - the smaller tanks of yesteryear gave a feeling of foreboding even before you got into them, which really doesn't help in the relaxation process.) in Thailand has arrived in Phuket and is set up at Float Haven on Rat-U-Thit 200 Pee Rd in South Patong.

The float chamber is set up at the rear of a beauty salon; this comes into play as well with packages incorporating, float, massage, and beauty treatment for that all round feeling of wellbeing.

Once you are in the float room, with all the facilities of shower, towels etc., you dim the lights before you step into the float chamber.

This chamber has a soft light inside so you can position yourself before turning it off. It doesn't go out right away, more a dimming down to nothing. When you are finished, you press it again and it comes on the same way, thus bringing you back to reality slowly.

You float in water fortified with salt, which makes it impossible to sink. Not that you would sink very far in ten inches of water. It is designed to be at body temperature so you don't feel the difference between the half of your body that is submerged and the half that isn't. Music plays for the first ten minutes through underwater speakers to put you right in the mood and then will cut out and start again about ten minutes before the end to remind you your hour is up.

The first time I tried it, the recycling pumps started up and it scared the living bejesus out of me. Until then, I was in an extremely relaxed state of mind. But that was just a minor glitch and never happened on subsequent floats.

Once out of the float room you have another shower and then go and relax for another ten minutes or so in the 'chill out' (my wording, not theirs) room. This gives you a little time to reflect and not think immediately about what is next on the agenda or what has to be done.



someone locked away in a tank where the only sound is of your own heartbeat, made the hairs on my neck stand up.

Luckily, since the eighties the concept has been developed and today floatation tanks are larger and recognized as being a very therapeutic tool in all manner of things from relaxation to motivation to healing and even super learning.

*Continued Page 11*