

U LIFE

Life is But a Dream

YOU HAVE TWO EXAMS, A job, a paper to write and your car has the flu. Is it all too much? Just take a REST.

Restricted Environment Stimulation Therapy — or flotation — is simply floating in eight to 10 inches of warm salt water to relieve stress. Several schools — like Washington State U. and Ohio U. — are researching flotation tanks for their effects on relaxation. It's a tough job, but someone's gotta do it.

OFFBEAT

"It produces profound relaxation for most people," says Arreed Barbasz, professor of educational leadership, counseling and psychology, and director of the REST lab at Washington State U. Barbasz has done REST research for more than 10 years, including experiments on athletes.

Some participants say they haven't experienced this kind of peace since the womb, says Ernie Randolfi, assistant professor of health sciences at Ohio U. Randolfi operates OU's REST lab, where stu-



Whatever floats your boat.

dents can float in an 8 foot by 4 foot tank for a mere \$15 an hour.

Betsy McCormick, a grad student at the U. of Toledo, Ohio, says floating is like being in another world.

"Your body gets into a deep relaxation state," she says. "It's like an out-of-body experience."

"It was unusual at first," says Kevin Knowlton, a junior at OU who floated as part of a stress and tension control class. He says he was tense and didn't know what to do at first, but then he fell asleep.

Researchers say floating can produce the same effects as meditation — such as low arousal and deep relaxation — but more quickly. This state of mellowness can be reached in as few as four or five sessions.

REST also spells success for stressed-out students.

Learning how to relax during final exams can improve memory, attention and performance, says Thomas Fine, associate professor of psychiatry at the Medical College of Ohio.

Barbasz researched the basketball and tennis teams in the Pacific 10 conference and found that performance improves when players use REST. The Dallas Cow-

boys, five-time Super Bowl champions, have also used this technique to enhance their performance on the playing field.

But not all people benefit from flotation therapy. Claustrophobics and people taking drugs should not try to float. A small percentage of floaters might get anxious while trying to relax, Barbasz says.

However, if you like small, enclosed spaces, and you're not tripping, try RESTing for awhile. It might do the body (and brain) good.

By Erica Vonderheid, Ohio U. / Photo by Matt Sullivan, Ohio U.

WHEN HETTOR RAMIREZ, A junior at California State U., Northridge, opened his e-mail, what he saw was like a hand reaching through the screen and grabbing him by the throat.

A hate message glowed on his monitor.

Ramirez, program director of a lesbian, gay and bisexual resource center in Northridge, says he frequently receives hate messages, but they still enrage him.

ETC.

"You feel violated, slapped and offended," he says. "The blood rushes from your toes to your head, and you feel helpless. But then reality sets in, and you get furious."

Ramirez says the '90s cyberspace boom has created an easy outlet for "flame mail" and hate-related home pages. He considers the examples of ignorance disguised in high-tech packaging and says they often originate from the country's highest centers of learning.

Sites like Skinheads USA and Aryan Nations are among the many home pages that preach messages of hatred toward people based on race, religion and sexual orientation.

Mark Weitzman, director of New York's Simon Wiesenthal Center, a nonprofit human rights organization, says his organization has monitored cyberspace for three years and has seen the number of hate sites increase from 50 to 300. He says many extremists use university systems because of the liberal atmosphere associated with colleges.

In response to increased flame mail and hate pages, many universities are attempting to cleanse cyberhate from their systems.

"Kansas supports free speech," says U. of Kansas system support

programmer Craig Paul. "However, we also support the right not to provide university facilities for it."

"In many cases, we will issue a warning to the student, but we can also take away an account or send it to judicial affairs."

David Day, a KU senior, says he is surprised by the university's policy.

"It's kind of ridiculous," he says. "As far as free speech is concerned, name-calling is protected. If it's not a threat on someone's life, I don't see the justification."

Shayna Rosen, a graduate student at the U. of Houston, says she disagrees.

"The Internet is so accessible to so many people, and there are cer-

tain things that can be very hurtful and inflammatory that people shouldn't be subjected to," says Rosen, a member of the campus Hillel, a Jewish organization. "Anything highly extreme should be censored."

Ramirez says flame mail should not only be outlawed, but offenders should be required to take courses in 'netiquette.

"The Internet is such an indispensable tool," he says. "But when you abuse the privilege of a university account, it defeats the whole educational purpose."

Jamie Malernee, U. of Florida / Illustration by Brian Cano, U. of California, Berkeley



Guest Expert: Andrew Dice Clay

On f—kin' hate crimes: "I say you hang the people who do the hate crimes."