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SOAK IT IN!



Slip into something more comfortable ... like a hot

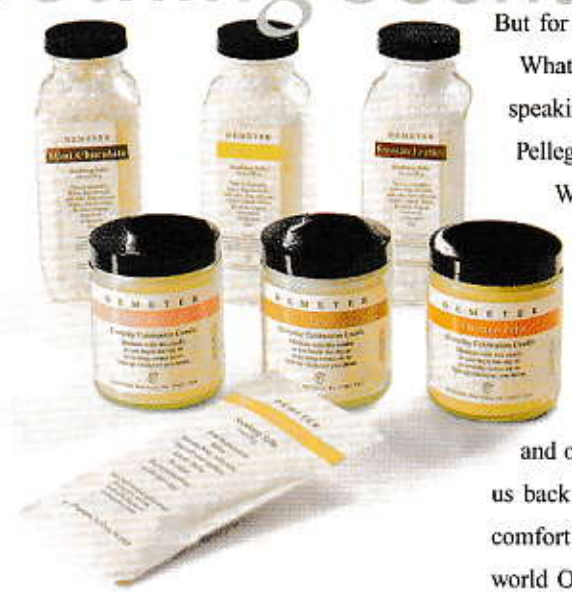


Some have said there's nothing a hot bath won't cure, and I'd have to agree. In times of stress, the bathtub is where you'll find me—listening to Bach, basking in candlelight, breathing in the fresh scents of lemon and lavender, and pretending, even if it's just for a little while, that I'm in the south of France.

It's ironic that so many of us cherish time spent soaking in hot sudsy water, because when we were kids, bath time was punishment, not pleasure. When that changed, I cannot say. But for many, the magic that a bath brings is real.

What power does a hot soak really have, scientifically speaking? Plenty, says stress-management expert Anthony Pellegrino, Ph.D., a licensed psychologist practicing in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey. "On the physiological level, the warm water relaxes muscles and dilates blood vessels, both of which lower blood pressure, giving you a sense of relaxation." But it doesn't end there. On a psychological level, Pellegrino says, the warmth and heat of a hot bath is oh-so-soothing to our bodies and our minds because it not only feels divine, it also takes us back to a time in our early childhoods when warmth and comfort were all we needed to make everything in the world OK.

soothing scents



ndles



bubble bath.

Soothing soaps, candles, and scented bath beads, like those shown on these pages, are available anywhere from superstores to specialty stores.

Sinking into a hot tub can also be a mini-vacation from daily life. By taking the phone off the hook and making sure you're undisturbed for your bath, you can shut out all of your stresses and responsibilities, Pellegrino says, allowing you to focus on relaxing and pampering yourself. "Try to experience the pleasure of the warm water, focus on your body and try to relax all of your muscles. Let yourself go limp."

And don't forget Sigmund Freud. His theory compares soaking in a warm bathtub to floating in the womb, providing the bather with a sense of tranquility and peace.



Ooh-la-la

Being the hard worker that I am, I selflessly spent several weeks testing bath products to find ones that were unique, luxurious, decadent—hey, anything for the job. And here's the best of what I found:

- Crabtree and Evelyn's Relaxation Aromathology bath salts and pillar candles, *opposite top*. The exquisite aroma is a mixture of geranium, neroli oil, and tangerine, and also comes in a water mist you can spray on your face as you're bathing. If you fall in love with the scent, you can enjoy it all day long, in the bath or not, by using the roll-on Pulse Point Balm in the same fragrance.
- Demeter bath salts, *opposite bottom*, and votives come in out-of-the-ordinary scents such as Sugar Cookie, Ginger Ale, Crème Brûlée, Gin and Tonic, Orange Juice, Tiramisu, Rye Bread, and, Cinnamon Bun, to name a few.
- The Healing Garden Green Teatherapy bath salts and votive *above*, with a light aroma derived from green tea, has a divine fragrance that's a mixture of tea, herbs, and subtle floral. The smell is natural, almost earthy, while still being feminine.
- The Thymes Limited Herbal Metaphors Citron features bath salts and aromatic candles with a citrus aroma accented with notes of lavender, marjoram, comfrey, and aloe. They also make Tea Thymes Tranquil Bath: tea-infused Epsom salts with soothing fragrances.
- The Body Shop Milk Bath, a long-standing favorite, has an almost creamy aroma, sure to take your mind and body far from the woes of the world. It also moisturizes with ingredients including oatmeal and avocado oil.

tea therapy

bath salts



WRITTEN BY ALYSSA ETINGER PHOTOGRAPHER HOPKINS ASSOCIATES



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Soothing the Senses

Our sense of smell is a keen one, and scents can quickly trigger memories, according to the National Candle Association. You can use aromas—both in bath water and infused in air—to make your bathing experience that much more powerful. According to the tenets of aromatherapy, the aroma of lavender relaxes and calms you; rosemary energizes; geranium lifts your spirits; chamomile reduces irritability; and both basil and peppermint stimulate thought. Some believe patchouli and jasmine are aphrodisiacs; and floral scents, such as roses and gardenia, invoke romance. No matter what mood you want, there's a scent that will get you there.

The way you light your bathing area will also help you achieve the right mood. Pellegrino suggests dim lights or candlelight to create a calming ambience. In addition, the flicker of candlelight is easier on the eyes than artificial light, helping your body relax.

And here's a great tip for making the bath more comfortable: Instead of a plastic blow-up pillow to lounge on, try a hot water bottle instead. It molds to your shape and is warm from the get-go.

Jasmine



lavender



rosemary



chamomile

Healthy Healing

In her book, *Bathing for Health, Beauty and Relaxation* (Reader's Digest Books), author Eva Gizowska offers easy recipes for baths with physical healing power, including decongestant baths, skin-soothing baths, and detoxifying baths. Gizowska's book is a bathing bible for those of us who take our soaks seriously and want to reap all the benefits we can from a simple tub of water.

To whip up your own soothing tub recipes, look to your kitchen cabinets:

Milk and Honey Bath: Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of milk, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey to hot bath water. This recipe is wonderful for calming jangled nerves, and will leave your skin extra soft.

Oatmeal Bath: Grind $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of whole oats in the food processor till powdery. Add to bath water for a skin-saving soak—oatmeal baths are wonderful for relieving itchy, dry skin.

Chamomile Calmer: Toss 4–5 chamomile tea bags under the tub faucet as you're running your bath; this is a perfect way to soak the stress away.

Citrus Soak: Add 1 cup of orange juice to the bath water to revitalize a tired body and mind. ✽



patchouli

gardenia

geranium

basil & peppermint