

RANDOM WALK

Back to the present: bliss in a water tank



BY ANNE
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BALANCE, HARMONY, BLISS: all this in a basement storefront on Lincoln Avenue at SpaceTime Tanks, where the spaced-out '60s live on and on and on. There, for \$30 and an hour of your time, you can float in darkened silence in a sealed oblong tank of warm water suffused with 800 pounds of Epsom salts.

Designed 45 years ago by neurologist John C. Lilly to study the effects of sensory deprivation on the mind, the coffin-like tanks ap-

peal today to stressed-out professionals overwhelmed—understandably—by 75-hour workweeks.

Says Internet entrepreneur Michael Casey, 27, who speaks at double-espresso speed, "It's a way of getting your mind back together."

Even some who work more reasonable hours find the experience irresistible. "When I get out of a tank, I feel incredibly present," says Jessica Turnoff, 25, an associate consultant at the Chicago office of Hay Management Consultants.

Management consultant Glenn Bailey, 38, floats as often as three times a week. Every session is different, he says, but "very often, it is a state of bliss." The only time *not* to float, he wisely advises, is after drinking a lot of coffee.

Actors, artists, traders, computer programmers and moms are among the regular floaters, says SpaceTime Tanks co-owner Eric Polson.

The common thread is having an open mind, he says. "Type B's take to this."

The business, now in its 16th year—the longest-operating flotation center in the nation—has not so much thrived, says Mr. Polson, as persisted.

But the times could be a-changing. Tank sales are on the rise, says Lee Perry, founder and president of Samadhi Tank Co., a Grass Valley, Calif., manufacturer of the \$6,000 plastic tanks, who sells 300 annually to customers around the world, typically massage therapists.

Day spas and health clubs have been calling lately, she says, and the firm's new, more-affordable \$3,500 model may appeal to people who want to put tanks in their homes or offices.

That's welcome news to Ms. Turnoff, who longs to float during her lunch hour, because she feels so "focused" after a session.

Mr. Casey, founding partner and chief technical officer of GenerationXcellent LLC, has requested a flotation tank for his office in the firm's new South Loop headquarters. (Mr. Casey was on a collision course with stress after pulling off a live Internet feed of the White House Easter egg roll when a friend bought him his first float.)

Mr. Casey views an in-house tank as a no-brainer business expense: "I come out of the tank 300% more productive."