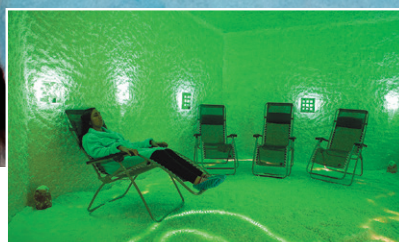


health & wellness

from
Biofeedback
 to the
Salt Cave

Choosing Alternative
 Paths to Wellness



by **Beth Daigle**
 photos by **Rob Huntley**

The “salt cave” at Alantra Spa in North Reading is outfitted with “zero-gravity” chairs that relieve spinal tension and promote better breathing, according to the spa.

If optimal health is the answer, the question is how do we achieve it? Traditional medicine is comfortable for many people, but others desire natural and holistic alternatives.

Whatever the treatment, identifying the cause of the ailment is sometimes the biggest challenge.

Michelle Corey, a holistic health consultant and the founder of Boston Biofeedback in Andover, attempts to locate internal issues that might not be evident. Corey interprets electromagnetic frequencies delivered by a sophisticated device that identifies and retrains “stressors” within the body. The biofeedback device uses electro-dermal sensors to capture and measure information about the body based on brain and muscle activity, skin temperature, heart rate and respiration, Corey says. These measurements are achieved through “galvanic skin response,” which is similar in concept to the output of a lie detector test, according to Corey.

“People often come to me because they’ve had blood work that looks normal [but they still aren’t feeling well]. They’ve been to a few doctors and they just don’t know what’s going on,” Corey says.

An interpretation of the biofeedback measurements can indicate where a problem exists in the body, she says.

According to Corey, most clients benefit from having six to 10 biofeedback sessions, when signals are sent from the device to the body in an effort to release blocked energy. Repeated signals over several sessions can help retrain and release “patterns of stress,” she says.

“It’s a self-measuring tool that is sending frequencies to you, and you are sending them back,” Corey says. “You are working with it to help balance [yourself] out.”

Biofeedback therapy begins with a 90-minute evaluation (\$125). Subsequent sessions are an hour each (\$85). Corey says biofeedback can identify and improve upon issues including fatigue, depression, stress and migraines. Corey deals most commonly with allergies and digestive issues.

Allergies are a big concern for many New Englanders, so natural remedies to alleviate their symptoms are in high demand. Sitting in a “salt cave,” or halotherapy, addresses issues with allergies, as well as many other conditions. Two local spas that offer this therapy are Bien Soigné in Salem, N.H., and Alantra Spa in North Reading. Their man-made, salt-covered rooms mimic the therapeutic qualities attributed to natural salt mines and caves.

“Salt is a natural entity that moves mucus, kills inflammation, bacteria, viruses and infections, and is highly absorptive. It is very effective for any kind of respiratory problem, but also for the skin,” says Kay Charron, owner of Bien Soigné. “The cave is also high in negative ions, which are very good for combating our daily exposure to radiation from computers, television and cellphones. The negative ion content boosts serotonin levels, which helps with mood and immunity,” she says.

The treatment occurs in a salt room outfitted with “zero-gravity” chairs that relieve spinal tension and promote better breathing, according to the spas. Patrons can relax for up to 45 minutes (\$30 to \$40 per session) in the tranquil, salt-infused spaces. People suffering from conditions including asthma, allergies, cystic fibrosis, sleep apnea, snoring, acne, eczema, arthritis and ear infections often seek relief by using this therapy.

Though it is important to address physical concerns, our mental

well-being must not be neglected. Dr. Maureen Magauran says she embraced holistic psychiatry in an effort to get to the root of her clients' issues and away from the symptomatic approach of traditional psychiatry. The foundation of Magauran's practice is meditation. She believes that teaching her clients to create an inward focus through meditation, in contrast to most of our daily activities, where the focus is outside of ourselves, is a critical component in helping clients reconnect with parts of themselves that have been "lost." The meditative process helps to reawaken confidence, joy, love and energy through self-empowerment, according to Magauran.

"Meditation has a way of taking you out of your thinking mind and more deeply into yourself," Magauran says. "There is a sense of getting out of the circling thoughts in the mind and going deeper into yourself and your body in a way that we often don't. There is so much knowing there, and that is what helps people shift and really feel, at a deep level, what the issues are."

Magauran says people often notice a shift in their state of mind after the first session. "A lot of people are looking for an alternative; they want to empower themselves," Magauran says. "That is the biggest part of this work for me — helping people empower themselves so that I am not giving them a pill or telling them what to do."

Magauran teaches her clients techniques that help break down compulsions, obsessions, worries and negative thoughts. Through meditation and compassionate guidance, Magauran says her clients have been able to better navigate their way through life, creating a pathway to positive and ongoing change. mvm

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