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## **Deep Relaxation Therapy**

### **The relevance within the spa & within yoga and meditation practice**

The concept of deep relaxation as a therapeutic experience within itself, has become more and more pertinent as stress levels rise. You and your spa client are greatly supported in total health and wellbeing by understanding the principles and practices that lead to a deeply relaxed state of mind. Learning how to access a depth of relaxation can be achieved through yoga and that is certainly what the experience of savassana gives. However, deep levels of relaxation that bring the body and the mind into a super-relaxed awareness can be created through many other routes. The principle of deep relaxation therapy is to create Theta Waves.

The brain is known to produce a chemical-electrical energy and there are four researched categories of brain waves that the human brain generates. Our everyday mind, that is engaged in an activity of active concentration, analysis, action or debate will generate Beta Waves which also relate to cognitive thinking. Beta waves move at a rate of 15-40 cycles per second and reveal a strongly engaged mind. When the mind begins to slow down, perhaps through just sitting and taking a break, walking, reflecting, perhaps even watching TV, Alpha Waves are generated which are a slower frequency of energy that move at a rate of between 9-14 cycles per second. This shows signs of the brain disengaging and retreating a little in some way

Theta Waves are the next level of slowing down brain activity and are related to a sense of detachment from physical reality in one form or another. The frequency range moves between 5-8 cycles per second, a marked shift down from the alpha state. The electrical energy creating theta waves comes from a sense of time lost, or timelessness or elevation, where the mind drifts off, and is not aware of the physical body yet retains a level of sensory awareness. Out of this theta state of mind often arise great new ideas, or realisations yet the other thoughts around that idea, or where they came from in terms of linear thinking are not known or remembered in a cognitive way. Ideas and reflections flow freely during this repose, without censorship or guilt, and is therefore a very positive, healing frame of mind.

Daydreaming, deep meditation, long motorway driving, running, massage, spa bathing and other repetitive movements where the body is somehow forgotten or at rest, when the mind is free to roam are common situations that generate these brain waves. The Theta state serves to create a deeply

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regenerative and creative internal environment of well-being. The growth in environmentally harmonious music, guided relaxations, visualisation and meditations are working towards generating this altered state. Pain relief clinics use deep relaxation therapy, progressive muscular relaxation, meditation, visualization and breathing techniques to therapeutically change the sufferers relationship with pain, disassociating from it and thereby reducing the painful symptoms.

For your own well-being the theta state is an optimum quality of mind to experience over and over again. It allows for a deeper process of letting of stress and tension on the level of the body-mind relationship, which is the interface where most resistance and tension is held. As in the creation of theta waves, it is also repeating the practices that create this state that matures your ability to reach deeper levels of relaxation. You can take time out to practice your ability to go into this state rather than just hoping it will happen spontaneously, though it may. Practicing yoga, breathing and meditation etc are all effective ways to slow down the brain waves and come into this elevated space. Today there are even technologies that create pulses designed to alter brain rhythms that directly affect nerve centres and the brain-waves.

The spa environment is designed to initiate this process of unwinding the tight coils in the body-mind relationship and after a thorough spa experience of bathing, steaming, sauna, cold showers or plunge pools the mind is often brought into an altered state whereby people can relax and drift off completely. As a therapist, when you treat your client with deeply relaxing aromatic oils, harmonious massage and chakra energy balancing, you are also influencing the electro-chemical responses in the brain thereby creating the potential for a theta experience.

The fourth level of brain waves, Delta Waves, are generated during sleep and are of the greatest amplitude but the slowest frequency of between 1.5 and 4 cycles per second. In the deepest dreamless sleep the brain can be at the lowest frequency of 2, and the brain dead mind is registered at 0. During deep sleep dreaming is known to occur in 90 minute cycles and raises the frequency so that REM, rapid eye movement, occurs.

