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One-Person Pamper Party

Natural Ways to Refresh and Renew

by April Thompson

Pampering ourselves isn't a luxury so much as a necessity to refresh and renew mind, body and spirit.

A Spa Specialty

Spas have been synonymous with pampering throughout the ages. "Every civilization around the world

has had some kind of communal gathering place for people to practice 'self-healing,'" says Jeremy McCarthy, group director of Spa & Wellness for the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group and author of *The Psychology of Spas & Wellbeing*.

From ancient Greek bathhouses to Japan's beloved natural hot springs,

spas have long served as sacred places of healing and restoration. Indeed, many treatments provided at today's eco-spas draw inspiration from traditional uses of herbs, honey and olive oil to care for skin and hair.

Locally, natural spas' pampering services may range from botanically based facials and mud masks to herbal body wraps and hot stone massage. Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design certified spas take extra strides toward sustainability through efficient use of renewable energy, green building materials and sound stewardship of resources.

"Spas are more important to people today than ever," says McCarthy. "In the modern age, we all need places to escape from technology, experience moments of quiet contemplation and feel the touch of another human being." He recently launched a new Digital Detox initiative at Mandarin Oriental hotels, where guests are encouraged to surrender their phones upon arrival at the spa to curtail online distractions. In spa relaxation rooms, they can instead access mindfulness activities such as journaling, note card writing, meditation or simply enjoying the silence.

More Pampering Spots

While busy people tend to put off self-care, there are treats to suit any schedule or budget—from getting a quick manicure or pedicure at a neighborhood eco-nail salon to visiting a yoga or wellness center.

"I build pampering into my week. If you don't make time for you, who will?" asks Melanie Laporte, a make-up artist and freelance writer in Washington, D.C. "When your significant other or family members see you taking care of yourself, they'll honor your time more. I remember Mom taking power baths and telling us, 'This is my time. I'll be back in 30 minutes and then we can read together.' We respected that."

For a quick, healthy pick-me-up, visit an organic juice bar. Opt for businesses that feature fresh, whole ingredients rather than pre-mixed

MAKE HOME A SPA ZONE

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Between professional spa visits, a do-it-yourself spa day at home can be a rewarding and economical treat. "You can create a full day of home spa treatments using ingredients most people have in their kitchen," advises Lise Andersen, an expert in nature-based cosmetics from Copenhagen, Denmark, and the owner of *LisaLise.com*, offering custom skin and hair care products, individualized formulations and beginner-friendly DIY kits.

One of Andersen's home skincare favorites is simple raw honey, used as a cleanser and face mask. "You can use it alone or in conjunction with an added ingredient like almond meal or ground oats. It rinses off beautifully and both softens and cleanses," she says.

A "facial tea" made with herbs like chamomile, lavender and elder blossom is another of the Scandinavian's at-home favorites. Simply boil water and pour it into a bowl with a



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handful of herbs, drape a towel over the head, embracing the face and breathe deeply. "It smells wonderful while opening the pores and hydrating the skin," Andersen says.

Dry brushing with a mitt made with a natural fiber like sisal or jute serves as a quick, everyday pick-me-up. It stimulates and exfoliates the body and helps boost circulation.

For beautiful cuticles, Andersen suggests a handmade scrub made from raw brown sugar or Himalayan salt combined with a carrier oil like almond or grapeseed. It exfoliates and hydrates, leaving hands feeling silky smooth.

To get the most out of a home spa day, prep materials in advance and let family members know that it requires absolute solitude. Complete the spa-like atmosphere with relaxing music and naturally scented beeswax candles.

Visit Tinyurl.com/Lisa-Lise-Blog for more home spa treatment tips.

powders or sugar-laden juices; to give the immune system an extra lift, add a natural booster shot of ginger or turmeric. Most grocery stores now carry cold-pressed juices that can pack as much as six pounds of produce into a single bottle.

An honored ritual that continues to restore spent spirits is drinking a cup of tea. Whether sipped at home, as a British high tea featuring an organic Earl Grey or as part of a traditional Japanese green tea ceremony steeped in Zen, tea time allows us to slow down and savor the moment along with the aromas in our cup. Also, antioxidant-rich tea is fortifying.

Salt room visits, another healthy pleasure that has spread throughout the U.S., dates back 150 years to an indigenous Polish practice. Research indicates that salt therapy, or halotherapy, can help improve conditions such as asthma and allergies and support the immune, nervous and lymphatic systems (see Tinyurl.com/SaltRoomPampering). Universally restful salt rooms also offer a unique sensory experience.

Another highly accessible way to treat body and mind is to move

in a joyful way. Consider taking up a playful new class for de-stressing and stretching such as trapeze yoga, conscious dance or any other dance. Aerial yoga, using suspended trapeze-like supports, helps lengthen the spine and strengthen muscles in ways not easily achieved on the ground. Dance

delivers health and fitness bonuses in the midst of having fun.

If we're not in the habit of pampering ourselves, it's time to stretch our beliefs about what we deserve. We'll find bliss is an attainable luxury.

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