

Aquatic Therapy - An Effective, Inexpensive, Drug-Free Alternative for Medical and Emotional Ailments

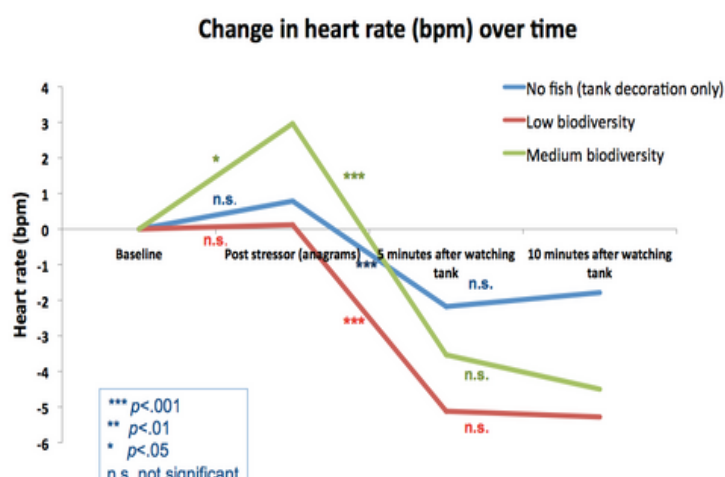


It may sound silly but there are a number of health benefits of just watching fish in an aquarium. It has been proved in various researches around the world that watching fishes in aquariums/ tanks, also known as aquatic therapy, has a soothing effect on a restless mind. Their peaceful and calming nature and the serenity that surrounds them can simply leave the observer hypnotized and fill him up with a sense of undefined calmness, magically relieving them of the stress they have been carrying, in those few moments.

The health benefits of watching the fishes in #freshwateraquarium or #saltwateraquarium is not just limited to reducing stress, insomnia, anxiety and even hypertension but scientists have also found it to be helpful in certain psychiatric conditions as well, even while treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders, Depression and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders.

So, is it just hearsay or is there science behind it?

History of fish-keeping can be traced back to Sumerians around 2500 B.C. It is simply amazing how sitting in front of the aquarium for a few minutes, observing colourful fishes in their natural habitat,



can induce calmness and happiness effectively reducing stress levels and keeping the blood pressure in check. This is a boon for people who suffer from cardiovascular disorders/problems.

With the help of modern neuroscience it is now possible to understand the correlation between the #aquarium and brain neurochemicals which are secreted when an individual gazes at fishes and the décor of the aquarium.

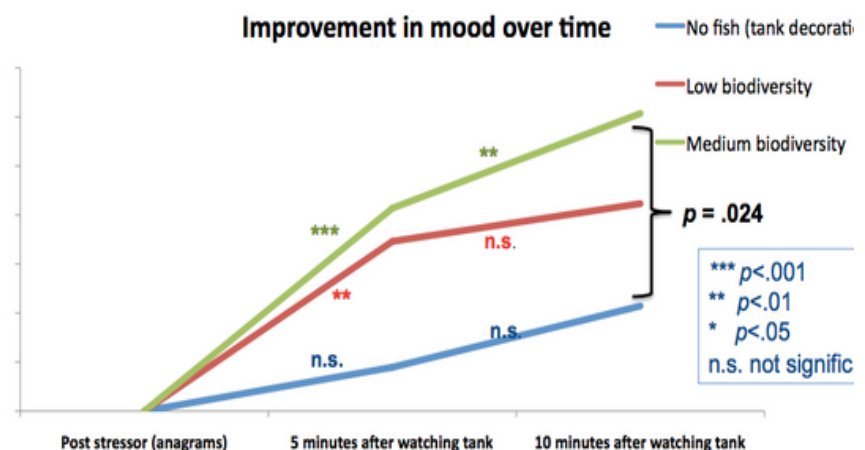
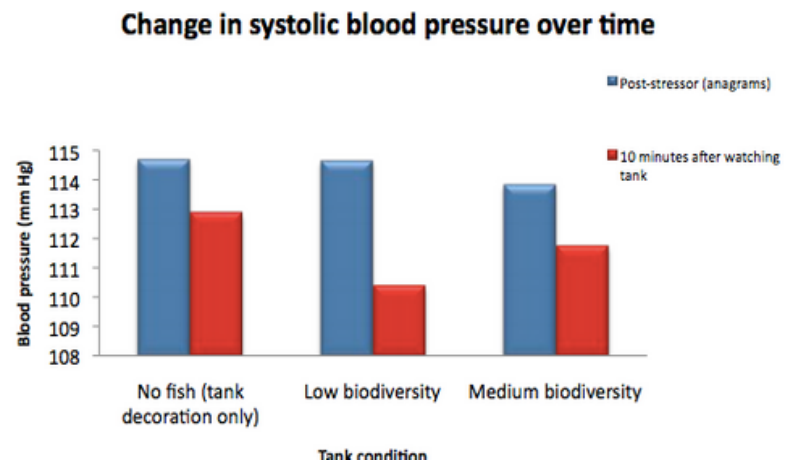
Research has proved, people practicing #aquariumhobby are less susceptible to heart diseases, and live a longer and happier life. This concludes that by having an aquarium in the house, the illness caused by stress and other emotional trauma can be effectively tackled to a large extent *without* any mental health medications. Around the globe, bio-diverse #aquariums are being used to treat people suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (#PTSD) and #Depression.

Scientific studies have proved that gazing at a fish aquarium stabilizes the blood pressure, which offers a great health benefit for an individual suffering from cardiovascular disorders. Watching the fish swimming in the aquarium in their dazzling colours can induce a state of deep relaxation. This is extremely therapeutic as it alleviates the tension and clears the mind of all anxiety. This practice of gazing the aquarium and watch beautiful ornamental fishes swim in shoals, triggers neurochemicals in the brain called GABA, which is an amino acid acting as a neurotransmitter in the CNS and acts by inhibiting or slowing the nerve transmission in the brain, reducing the anxiety, and Serotonin or 5-hydroxytryptamine is a monoamine neurotransmitter which is capable of stabilizing the mood. Serotonin maintains a balance between breathing and heart rate, it regulates the sleep cycle, regulates body temperature and pH levels in the blood.

In this competitive and challenging world, there is a huge amount of stress, which every individual experiences. #Stress brought about by today's' busy and demanding lifestyles, pave the way for specific health problems including #insomnia #anxiety and even #hypertension to develop. Stress is greatly reduced by simply gazing and admiring the movement of fishes and plants in the tank. #fishtanktherapy

The office environment that you work in has a direct correlation with your productivity. It's estimated that health care costs are almost 50% higher in high-pressure companies than other organisations. This stress causes disengagement, and a study by the Queens School of Business found that disengaged workers had 37% more absences, 60% more errors and 49% more accidents. A study carried out in 2011 on the effects of nature contact in the workplace proved that there is a direct link between contact with nature, and decreased stress and health complaints. One form on nature contact which the report promotes, is keeping an aquarium in your office. According to a report by the World Health Design, an aquarium with living fish produced higher positive moods in the office environment than any other natural or artificial nature elements.

Neurochemicals such as Endocannabinoids are self-produced cannabis that acts on the Cannabinoid receptor Type 1 and 2 of the cannabinoid system. The word Anandamide is derived from a Sanskrit word "Ananda" meaning Bliss or Happiness. It is the most well-known endocannabinoid. This neurochemical is responsible for the surge in #happiness.



Aquariums have also been shown to exert pain-reducing effects in people. This has been proven in a study done on patients who suffered chronic dental problems or recovering from a medical procedure. In fact, the "analgesic" effect of #marineaquarium has been shown to be on par or better than hypnosis and even certain pain medications.

Children suffering from Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) often have very low focus span and are notorious. An aquarium in the house have been found to reduce hyperactivity and help these children stay more focused and calm, simply because the fish swimming inside the tank distract children from their hyperactive behaviour. In this case, the excess adrenaline rush in hyperactive kids is minimized by a surge in secretion of GABA, which occurs due to watching the fishes swim. It simply eliminates or slows down the transmissions in the brain, producing a calming effect. Instead of inundating hyperactive children with mood-altering drugs, an aquarium in the home provides an inexpensive and effective drug-free alternative to combat #ADHD. Aquariums in kid's rooms have been found to help children sleep better too.

Children with sensory processing disorders, developmental disabilities, #Autism and ADHD often need more time to process things and usually benefit from visual supports in their day-to-day lives.

Things that are seemingly easy everyday things for the majority of people can prove really difficult for

those children with additional needs. Whilst many occupational therapists, teachers and professionals are aware of the benefits that visual aids provide children with, only a few are aware of one very simple and effective method - animal assisted therapy (AAT). Animal assisted therapy is widely recognized in helping children with autism to form relationships, but when most people think of animal assisted therapy, they think of horses, cat, dogs and other larger animals.

This therapy also helps to improve the mood of children, and help them participate and get the most out of other therapy sessions such as speech and language, occupational therapy and physiotherapy. Most of these larger animals however, are near impossible to have in the house or a classroom, or therapy setting. One way to incorporate #AAT therapy into any setting, extremely easily, is keeping a fish tank. Watching the fish reduces anxiety and stress which is a common factor amongst children with additional needs. Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania have found that keeping fish is an effective therapy which helps with disruptive behaviours in children.



Aquariums have been found to have profound effects in seniors. The elderly who were provided with an aquarium filled with fish displayed improvements in their cardiovascular system and significant blood pressure reduction. They also ate more, readily took their medications and marked as

happy and tension free, ultimately boosting their longevity.

Alzheimer's gradually destroys the memory, thinking skills and ultimately destroys the ability of the patient to perform routine tasks. Alzheimer's patients are often found to be very aggressive and troublesome. Studies have confirmed that fish in aquariums induce general sensory stimulation, which helps individuals suffering from #Alzheimer to eat better, gain weight and stay mentally active. Watching the fish swim, the attention span of patient increases and aggressive behaviour reduces to a great extent.

The fast pace of urbanization has made it nearly impossible to see a green patch in the concrete jungles. Human eyes can see up to 7 million colours. The colour green is more desired by the eyes as it feels most relaxing. An aquarium planted with a variety of live plants and driftwood #aquascape #aquascaping #plantedaquarium can help stimulate greenery in the house which is soothing for both eye and mind. Many eye specialists have an opinion that, gazing at beautiful natural planted fish aquariums #plantedaquarium daily for at least 1



hour can significantly improve the vision of an individual.

Keeping fish is a fantastic learning experience for children. Learning to look after a small animal can teach them how to be responsible, and the importance of caring for everything on our planet, no matter how small. Children learn valuable life skills by caring for the fish and maintaining the fish tank. There is also the inevitable death of a fish and since death is an unavoidable part of life it is a helpful way to teach your children about death and how to deal with it #fishtank #aquascape #tropicalfish

Who has not heard of the "selective" reading habits of children who only read books on topics of interest to them? The wide variety of aquarium-related topics can help foster good reading habits in children who may not otherwise be interested in reading. Biology, chemistry, ecology, and physics are just a few of the sciences involved in aquarium keeping. Having an aquarium #aquariumfish in the house helps children learn topics such as fish anatomy, the food chain, the water cycle, or the nitrogen cycle.

In conclusion, it doesn't really matter whether you have a five- or a hundred-gallon tank (although bigger is better). What matters is the unfolding underwater scene where plants and fish co-exist; creating a visual panorama that is pleasing to the senses. Moreover, aquariums do not making any noise, nor do they take up much space. In comparison to other animals, #fishkeeping is relatively inexpensive too.



But, do remember, there is no one-size-fits-all here. Aquariums have to be carefully planned to maximize benefits for specific problems it is being used to treat. Biotope types, with appropriate plants, fish and décor (size, colour, speed of movement, schooling or non-schooling) play a critical role in deciding the outcome.

Hope you find this useful.

Amitava Banerjee

(Trust me. This works. I have been using aquatic therapy myself to control everyday stress for the last 25 years. During this time, I have introduced numerous people with such problems to this therapy and seen their lives get better. Although, the information shared here is exhaustive, do reach out to me in case you wish to know more on this subject. [AQUATA](#) specialises in therapeutic tanks and can custom build one to suit your specific problem. Pics courtesy of them)