

# The surprising monthly ritual that keeps me grounded as a leader – sound baths

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Once a month, I find myself in a quiet room, surrounded by five or six strangers, lying down on a yoga mat with pillows and blankets, preparing for an hour-long sound bath.

The room is dimly lit and filled with windchimes, gongs and singing bowls. They are carefully dispersed throughout the space, with some hanging from the ceiling. It can sound a bit hokey, but I swear by it.

A [sound bath](#) is when a facilitator plays a variety of calming instruments, generally including singing bowls, which are made from crystals or metals and struck gently with a mallet. People in attendance are “bathed” in sound waves. They are typically held for small groups so attendees can be close to the instruments.

As someone who has a background in radio journalism and currently runs a podcast production company, it’s no surprise that I gravitate to auditory experiences.

The first sound bath I attended was in New York City in March 2020. Days before the world went into lockdown, I was at a podcast conference that featured panels, exhibits and immersive audio experiences. It took place in a hotel and one of the rooms invited people to enter, lie down and listen. With a jam-packed conference agenda, I planned to pop in for 15 minutes and then head back to the main stage. I wedged myself between two other attendees, closed my eyes and tuned in to the harps and singing bowls. The woman running it hummed along to the rhythm of the music as the warm sun beamed down on my face through the window. I drifted into a dreamy state. I envisioned a person who had been causing me stress on a raft floating away in the water.

I wasn’t asleep but I wasn’t awake. (I later learned I was in [the theta state of mind](#).)

I woke up after what felt like minutes, only to realize a full hour had passed. I jumped up and ran out of the room wondering what just happened to me. Although I was jolted by seeing the time, I couldn’t help but feel a deep sense of calm. The stressful situation that was previously concerning me no longer felt overwhelming.

At the time, I didn’t even realize it was a sound bath. I just knew whatever I had experienced was powerful.

A few years later, I found myself in a high-stakes leadership role. I was working long hours and carried home a lot of emotional weight from the workplace. I found that even in moments of physical rest, my mind was racing. I was looking for ways to help me to be present and I remembered the experience in New York. I turned to Google.

I learned sound baths are also referred to as sound healing. Many people will experience these performances differently, but [what's proven](#) is that the vibrations from the instruments decrease tension in the body. Sound baths can also help people access that theta state. When we're in this state, [our brain waves have a frequency of 4-8 Hertz](#), which is said to be where our creativity and intuition are at their highest. Some people believe [sound baths help with](#) chronic pain, anxiety and sleep.

I found a facilitator in Toronto who had a certificate in therapeutic sound, which seemed to fit the bill. After one session with her, I knew I had to build this into my routine. I was able to tap into a deep sense of calm that I wasn't able to reach on my own. I started going once a month and each time was slightly different. Sometimes I would wake up feeling energized with more capacity to get back to work. Other times I would awaken with solutions to issues that had been lingering. One time I woke up remembering I had left a banana in the trunk of my car that needed to be thrown out.

There were also sessions where I would immediately fall asleep. The experience just made me ready for bed. I reconciled that in those moments, that's what I needed.

Earlier this year, I returned to New York City and decided to see if I could book a sound bath. To my surprise, there were plenty being offered. I found one location that looked like a spa – there was a gift shop, a smoothie bar and multiple rooms dedicated to “sound experiences,” as they called them. They were hosting three to four each day. The person at the front desk told me they were about to open a second location. Clearly, I'm not alone in my fandom.

[Research has continued to support the notion](#) that mindfulness and meditation can help leaders with their well-being, resilience and leadership capabilities. If traditional meditation doesn't do it for you, maybe a sound bath will.