

HEALTHY LIVING HEALTHY PLANET

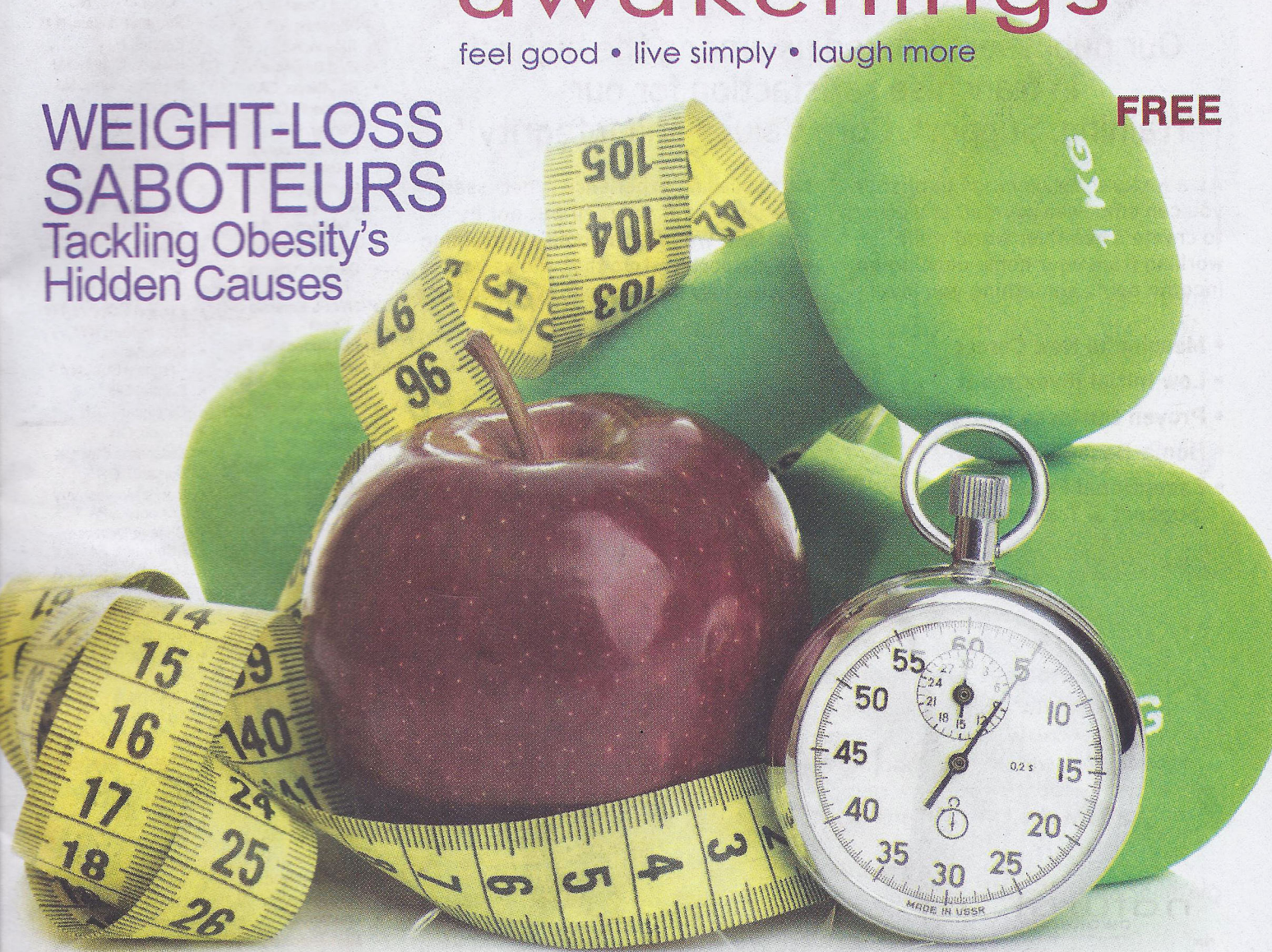
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# Heat Up Your Health



## Urban Sweat Offers Bliss for the Body and Strength for the Soul

by Wendy Lewis

It felt like the Sahara desert, but in a good way. I expected 180 degrees to be unbearable, but in Urban Sweat's Finnish sauna, the warmth felt like a soothing, full-body embrace.

The Finnish sauna is one of many recent additions and upgrades to Urban Sweat, the active Relaxation Center of Raffa Yoga, in Cranston, and the only facility of its kind in New England. The facility has constantly evolved to meet clients' needs since Raffa Yoga moved to its present location on Sharpe Drive in 2011 and opened Urban Sweat the following year. "People now are looking to bring more relaxation and steadiness into their lives," says Christine Raffa, owner and operator.

Urban Sweat, the "spa" side of Raffa Yoga, complements Raffa Yoga's classes with services and amenities like the Finnish sauna. "As the world becomes more chaotic," Raffa says, people need to streamline and focus on what's more important, with the crazy demands of hectic work lives, family and relationships." Urban Sweat, Raffa says, is a local oasis where people can

reclaim their tranquility and bring the benefits back to their daily lives.

I heard the Finnish sauna door open. "Wow, it's *hot* in here!" another guest said, stepping into the heat. I smiled. I could swear the heat had reached my bones. "I just got out of the infrared sauna," he said. "This is hotter, but I think you sweat more in there." He only stayed a minute. The heat radiated from two large metal cylinders filled with rocks. I closed my eyes, enjoying the gentle pinging sound of the metal flexing in the heat. The snow flurries outside seemed very far away.

The Finnish sauna—now Urban Sweat's hottest—offers an exceptional quality of heat due to its all-cedar structure and the creation of a deep, misty steam called "lola", created when water is sprinkled over the rocks. Considered a "cleansing bath", benefits of the sauna include increased circulation and metabolic rate, and a passive cardiovas-

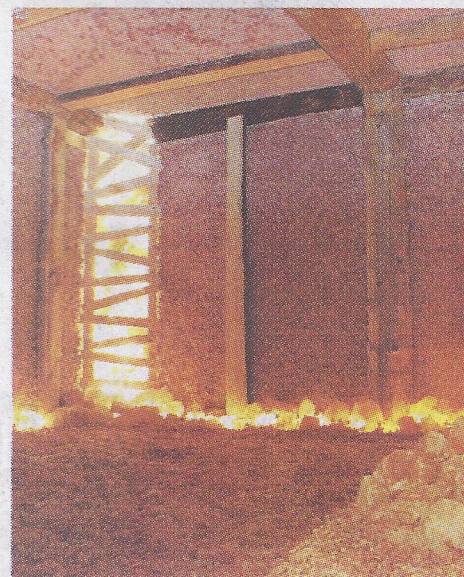
cular workout.

I tried the infrared sauna next. With a temperature range of 110 to 125 degrees, it did feel slightly cooler than the Finnish but after only a few minutes, I left with an impressive pool of sweat on my towel.

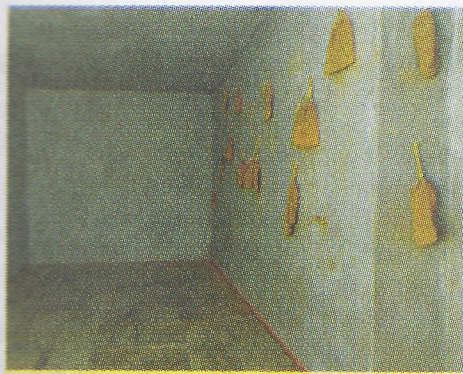
Some cultures, Raffa says, believe that arthritis and other ailments are the results of dampness in the joints, and that warming and "drying out" the joints brings relief, healing and illness prevention. "The neat thing about coming in here and using the saunas," she says, "is that perpetual heat is sustainable heat. To have the opportunity to heat up, cool down, relax—and repeat—helps get us through the winter and each day."

Greeted by the refreshing scent of eucalyptus, I stepped past the Urban Hammam, its radiant-heated seating areas recently upgraded in marble, and a gently trickling Buddha fountain. I opened the glass door to the Eucalyptus Steam Room to find a womb-like, all-white acrylic enclosure of 140-degree heat and 100-percent humidity. Drops of water from the domed ceiling plopped gently on my head as LED lights cycled through the colors of the chakras. Raffa had said that an ozone filtration system now pulled air out of the room and drew fresh air in. The steam and eucalyptus felt wonderful

Salt Grotto







*Turmeric Room*

in my lungs. I made a mental note to return for winter congestion relief.

I popped into the Black Charcoal and Yellow Turmeric Saunas and the Himalayan Salt Grotto before flopping onto one of a roomful of adult-sized bean bags. Soft lights glowed overhead and a large dancing Shiva statue beckoned from a far wall. It felt like an Indian palace. Sleepy and blissful, I didn't want to leave.

"What we're creating here is an experience," Raffa says, "A destination for relaxation for the body and mind and the depth of the soul. People can come in for a yoga class and then gather with others and enjoy the rest of their day in Urban Sweat, maybe get a massage, enjoy something from our juice bar. We're really giving people the opportunity to make a day or even weekend out of it, and more and more, that's what we're seeing." Raffa cites an increased flow of visitors from as far as Boston and New York, and new day-long retreats such as the Raffa Reset, designed to meet their needs.

Over the past 25 years, Raffa has observed an increasing need for therapeutic services as a complement to traditional health care. "This is a formula to care for yourself," she says. "The neat thing is that everyone is welcome, and the practice meets you where you are—whether you're feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or blissed out, the practice is there for you." Raffa Yoga and Urban Sweat, she says, provide options to bolster and support ourselves with total-body care for a lifetime.

Raffa Yoga and Urban Sweat are located at 19 Sharpe Dr., Cranston. Visit [RaffaYoga.com](http://RaffaYoga.com) or call 401-463-3335. See ad on page 7.

## Do you wonder if you'll ever really be happy?

Do you settle out of fear that there's nothing better?

Do you question what's wrong with you and feel isolated?

### Here's the Good News!

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## Is 2017 going to be your year?

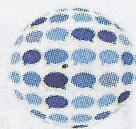
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