

# Licence to Chill

The city's full of cranky stress puppies. If we're not moaning about the economy, we're regretting what we ate, drank and spent over the holidays. There are ways to decompress without breathing into a paper bag. Here, an experiential guide to the newest purveyors of inner peace

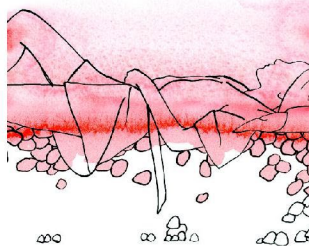


## Laughter yoga

The latest export from Mumbai, this practice invites participants to breathe deeply and bust a gut. Group members sit in a circle as a “laughter leader” conducts the cheek-straining euphoria, asking people to howl on cue. Whether the laughter is real or forced, it's an endorphin-pumping, immune-system boosting, stress-banishing and generally hilarious pastime.

**DE-STRESS FACTOR: 8/10**

There's nothing funnier than seeing a roomful of otherwise mentally stable adults chuckling, hooting and snorting like lunatics.—Olivia Stren **Up to \$5.** [www.laughter-yoga.ca](http://www.laughter-yoga.ca).

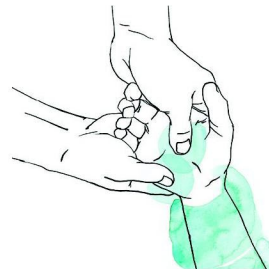


## Rock bathing

Ganbanyoku, or rock bathing spas, are all the rage in Japan. The brochure promises increased health, weight loss and rejuvenation. The hour-long routine involves alternating 15-minute sessions on a bed of toasty black silica stones (heated to 43° C) with short spells in a cooling room. The radiating heat isn't the assaultive steam blast of a sauna, but a deep, penetrating, volcanic smoulder.

**DE-STRESS FACTOR: 10/10**

For the rest of the day, I feel dreamy and warm to the core.—Morwyn Brebner **\$95 for 60 minutes.** *Iyashi Bedrock Spa*, 2662 Yonge St., 416-488-7625.

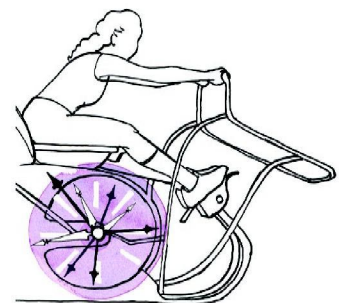


## High-tech hand massage

Designed to soothe keypad-savaged hands, wrists, arms and necks, this one's a must for BlackBerry addicts. As I lie on a heated spa lounger, my masseuse vigorously kneads my forearm—by turns enjoyable and excruciating. Later, I clutch hot stones (meant to warm and relax) and have my arms lathered in blackberry balm and rubbed with steaming towels.

**DE-STRESS FACTOR: 9/10**

I shuffle out with arms as floppy as a Muppet's. Text this: treatment = divine.—O.S. **\$83 for 30 minutes.** *Stillwater Spa*, 4 Avenue Rd., 416-926-2389.



## Super-fast workout

The utopian premise: stuff an hour-long workout into four minutes. First, I stand on a metal plate known as the Vibe. My trainer flicks a switch and I shake back and forth like a can of paint in the mixer. Then I hoist myself into the cockpit of the cyborgian rowing machine known as the ROM and pretend I'm crossing some oily, post-apocalyptic river.

**DE-STRESS FACTOR: 4/10**

Three for the mild endorphin rush, plus a point because “The Humpty Dance” was playing.—M.B. **Free trial.** *HIT Fitness*, 77 King St. W., TD Centre Royal Trust Tower, 416-869-1448.