

Beauty



Fashion



A Better Shower

And now...your eight minutes of Zen. Executive editor **Theresa O'Rourke** reflects on the mind and body benefits of a good steam session.



my first love was a stage-five clinger. All six feet of him. Once things grew steamy, he'd reach for my thighs. Here is where I either relieve or disappoint you and admit that the "he" in question was a vinyl shower curtain.

I grew up in an Irish-American household where the laughter was capacious but the space was not. And so the shower became the one place I could hog all to myself, using my Rapunzel hair as an excuse. ("The Kerasilk conditioner directions say to let sit for at least 30 minutes, Ma!")

Magical things seemed to happen when water hit head. It didn't matter that the shower itself was humble (soap-scummed tiles, octopus-suctioned tub liners). This was a retreat. Under a pummeling showerhead and the steam of windows, problems big and small seemed to dissipate, or at least become foggier, less sharp. Thoughts loosened; body insecurities drained (the human form when lathered? Hot damn!).

Some believe a shower can have the power to release dopamine, a neurotransmitter that oozes out when we're relaxed. How else to explain the popular Reddit forum Shower Thoughts, in which people post the musings they've had under a hot stream? (Example: "Technically, every mirror you buy is in used condition." Whoa, now that's deep.)

More important, some surmise, is the sound. Shower water, like rain, equates to white noise—the kind of noise that allows us to drift off into a steady dream state, untethered by inhibitions. Maybe that's why the shower stall has given birth to nearly all of my creative eureka moments. And why it's allowed me to work through big decisions. Mid-shampoo, as a junior in college, I resolved to change my major; and it was while showering that I made the decision to change jobs at not one, not two, but three companies.

As I grew older and got apartments (and mortgages) of my own, the accommodations became more fancy: modern frameless doors, porcelain mosaic tiles, beds of stone pebbles under my feet. But in retrospect, all that seems superfluous. Showering is an activity best pursued blind. Close your eyes, inhale a bouquet of scents, and let it take you where you need to go.

I'm now handing the baton to my 5-year-old daughter, Kat. Until recently, bath time was our time: me sitting by her side, playing make-believe with a gaggle of squishy toys. Only recently has she asked me to drain the bathwater and turn on the "top tub," as she calls it. As the shower water is released, she closes the curtain and whispers, "Okay, Mama...you close the door and go bye now." And so I leave her be.

Pretty Quick

The reality: Sometimes we need to sprint through our self-care. These new speed treatments get the job done in the span of a commercial break.



For a Believable Glow

Leave this mousse on for one minute before rinsing it off in the shower. Jojoba lipids help the tanning molecules attach to the skin's proteins; a special gel acts like a waterproofer to keep the formula from washing away. **St. Tropez Gradual Tan One Minute Pre-Shower Tanning Mousse, \$20, ulta.com**

For Blemish-Free Skin

Once you smooth the salicylic acid and charcoal-infused stick evenly over your skin, it takes only five minutes to pull out impurities and zap breakout-causing bacteria (just rinse with warm water). **Yes to Tomatoes Detoxifying Charcoal SnapMask Stick, \$16, at drugstores**



For Healthier Hair

Genius! The shower steam releases the moisture-rich aloe lining inside of this disposable mask into your hair, leaving your strands glossier in five minutes. **L'Oréal Paris EverPure Deep Moisture Hair Sheet Mask, \$4.49, at drugstores**

TRUNK ARCHIVE (WOMAN); RYAN O. PHOTOGRAPHY/RODALE IMAGES (PRODUCTS)

Beauty

Your Routine, Optimized

These innovative products will make your tub time simultaneously more efficient *and* deluxe.

1/The Buildup Buster

Micelles, tiny surfactants that are already cleansing MVPs in water, wipes, and face washes, work the same way in shampoo: They lift away excess oil and product buildup, while fortifying strands with panthenol. **Pantene Pro-V Micellar Gentle Cleansing Water Shampoo, \$6, at drugstores**



4/The Chic Shower Cap

This waterproof turban, stretchable to fit even superlong, thick hair, is made with waterproof fabric and has the same rubber grip found on strapless bras, meaning it stays put but won't leave behind the dreaded indentation on your forehead. Bonus: It's machine washable and it has antibacterial properties, keeping grossness like mildew at bay. **Shhhowercap in The Muse, \$43, shhowercap.com**

2/The Dry-Patch Obliterator

If anything could put body lotion out of business, it's this. Post-body wash, slather on this formula—rich in almond, olive, and borage oils (which, by the way, are revered for their nongreasy moisturization)—and then rinse for soft skin all day. **NaturaBrasil Pitanga Triple Phase Shower Oil, \$24, naturabrasil.com**



5/The Nick-Proof Shaver

A product that will disrupt your grooming routine in a very good way: The bidirectional blades on this razor allow you to shave any which way you like (be a rebel and go against the grain without fear of nicks or cuts!), and the built-in gel cushions make it glide around with total ease. **Schick Intuition f.a.b. Razor, \$14, at drugstores**



3/The Earth-Friendly Conditioner

The bottle is made from 100 percent recycled plastic *and* is fully recyclable. Plus, the all-hair-types formula is made of conditioning molecules that rinse more quickly than traditional ones. So you get tangle- and residue-free strands faster, wasting less water in the process. **Love Beauty and Planet Radical Refresher Conditioner, \$9, at drugstores**



6/The Face Wash on a Stick

Rub this solid across your face and massage it in with your fingers before rinsing—the coconut oil base sucks up dirt and oil and also replenishes skin with lipids, while anti-inflammatory manuka honey curbs irritation. The result: a clean, glowing complexion. **St. Ives Apricot & Manuka Honey Cleansing Stick, \$8, at drugstores**



7/The Preportioned Body Scrubber

Each of these sugar cubes is perfectly portioned to exfoliate you head to toe once, giving your body a thorough sloughing without leaving behind an oily residue. Aside from gentle exfoliating sugar, they contain shea butter and aloe to soften and soothe skin. **Harper + Ari Brunch Collection, \$34, harperari.com ■**