

El Deana's Custom Essentials

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Aromatherapy and Massage

Karrie Osborn

Aromatherapy, a process utilizing the purest essence of a plant, is a 4,000-year-old technique that has enhanced the health of everyone from modern-day pop divas to the scholars of ancient Greece. The art of massage has its own deeply rich roots, with even Plato and Socrates touting the value of hands-on bodywork for good health.

Separately, these two therapeutic traditions hold individual prowess in the realm of personal health and well-being. Together, however, they become a formidable health alliance that can address not only a person's physical health, but the health of the mind and spirit as well.

Let's see how it works. Essential oils are extracted from herbs, flowers, and plants with the intent to improve a person's health and well-being. Addressing everything from arthritis to whooping cough, effects of the approximate 3,000 oils found globally can range from sedative to stimulating and antibacterial to antispasmodic. The benefits derived from aromatherapy during a massage come in part from the contact the essential oil has on our skin, but even more so how it affects us when it's inhaled and absorbed through the soft-tissue linings of our nose and mouth.

The scientific explanation suggests that the essential oil's molecules, when

*Be happy for
this moment.
This moment is
your life.*

-Omar Khayyam



What essential oil is your favorite?

A Natural Complement

Our senses were designed to work best in conjunction with one another. Our sense of taste would not be as acute without our nose lending its support to the process. Our auditory senses might seem hollow if we weren't gifted with sight as well. Indeed, there exists a quiet partnership between all our five senses that's built on synergy.

inhaled, lock onto receptor cells at the back of the nose, sending an electrochemical message to the brain's limbic system. This message appears to trigger memory and emotional responses, causing messages to be sent to other parts of the brain and body. "In this way," says aromatherapist Danila

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Mansfield, "the production of euphoric, relaxing, sedative, or stimulating neurochemicals is stimulated."

Judith Fitzsimmons and Paula Bousquet, authors of *Aromatherapy Through the Seasons*, say the use of essential oils creates a multifaceted effect: "The real beauty of aromatherapy is that it works on a cellular and physical level and also in the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic areas of your life."

It's really quite amazing when you think about it. Imagine an area the size of a small apricot pit, a 1-inch square area, filled with millions of sensory neurons that can capture, process, and store 10,000 odors. This is our olfactory system at work, and part of its job is to create a personal history for us based on scent, says clinical aromatherapist Ava-Marie Lind-Shiveley. "None of our other senses so well establishes a memory database." She says our response to scent is both physiological and psychosomatic. "Within an instant of smelling an aroma, we can be sent back to the first moment we were introduced to it."

By enabling us to recognize, revisit, and/or reclaim these various emotions and memories, aromatherapy allows another avenue of access for healing during a bodywork session. It creates a path through which the somatic experience can find its full strength.

When the powerful effects of aromatherapy are combined with massage, it can take us to another level, say aromatherapy educators Shirley and Len Price. "When, during a massage, the touch of the therapist is combined with the mental and physical effects of the essential oils, the client is helped to achieve a temporary separation from worldly worries, somewhat akin to a meditative state." Helping clients reach this level of relaxation is a primary goal of massage therapists and aromatherapists alike, so it makes sense that a partnership could beautifully exist.

A Scent Journey

"Scent is not simplistic," Lind-Shiveley says. "It is voluminous." She illustrates this point with a quote from Helen Keller: "Smell is a potent wizard that transports us across thousands of miles

and all the years we have lived. The odors of fruits waft me to my Southern home, to my childhood frolics in the peach orchard. Other odors, instantaneous and fleeting, cause my heart to dilate joyously or contract with remembered grief."

If you decide to do some personal exploration into the world of scent therapy, proceed with due caution in both the quality of the oils you buy and how you dose and administer them. There is a dichotic nature inherent in aromatherapy. It is gentle, yet powerful; subtle, yet intense. There are essential oils strong enough to cause miscarriage, but there also are many oils safe enough to use on infants. The key is knowing how to utilize nature's gifts to provide the best, most effective therapeutic collaboration possible. Talk with your massage therapist about incorporating the science of aromatherapy into your

sessions or ask about a referral to an aromatherapist in your area.

Karrie Osborn is contributing editor to Body Sense.

BALANCING

Bay Laurel, Cedarwood, Geranium

CLARIFYING

Juniper, Lemon, Peppermint

COMFORTING

Bergamot, Frankincense, Rose

ENERGIZING

Eucalyptus, Grapefruit, Rosemary

FOCUSING

Angelica, Sweet Basil, Lime

SEDATING

Chamomile, Clary Sage, Patchouli

UPLIFTING

Lavender, Orange/Mandarin, Pine, Tea Tree



Aromatherapy has roots in ancient cultures.

Lavender

An Essential Oil for Fundamental Health

Laurie Chance Smith

Lavender essential oil is a one-stop medicine chest, helping to reduce anxiety, fatigue, and stress and balance hormones, increase the immune response, lower blood pressure, and relieve pain. To utilize lavender's healing benefits at home, mix five to 10 drops of lavender essential oil in one ounce of jojoba oil or unscented lotion. (Essential oils shouldn't be applied directly to the skin; it's best to partner them with a carrier oil, liquid, or lotion.)

EARACHES

For earaches, dab one drop of lavender massage oil behind the ear and rub gently. Alternatively, place one drop of lavender oil on a cotton ball and carefully place inside the outer ear.

HEADACHES

Inhaling lavender is also effective for headache relief. Add a few drops to a bowl of warm water and breathe. Gently rub lavender massage lotion on the temples, forehead, and base of the neck.

COLDS

Lavender oil can also help break up coughs and clear sinuses. Colorado-based holistic aromatherapist Nicola McGill suggests the regular home-use of antiseptic essential oils such as lavender to help avoid colds and other infectious diseases. Add a few drops to a vaporizer to help clear colds and infuse the home with lavender's scent.

STRESS

At night, six to eight drops of lavender added to a warm bath helps melt away stress and relieve fatigue. Blend a footbath by adding three drops of lavender to a bowl of warm water, sink your feet in, and relax. For help inducing sleep, add two or three drops of lavender essential oil to the underside corner of your pillow.

TRANQUIL AROMA

A human takes 23,040 breaths a day, and each inhale floods the system with scent. Rely on lavender's tranquil aroma

to clear the way toward peaceful days.



Lavender is loaded with wellness properties.

Skin Care Fresh From the Farm

Noreen Young

People are seeking beauty with a health twist, not just a product in a pretty jar. They want to see and feel the beautiful benefits when they use a product and know that they're putting the freshest of the fresh on their delicate skin.

A fresh approach to skin care is "in," and my mantra is not all beauty needs to come from a jar. Farmers' markets, organic farms, and health food stores are burgeoning in every city, and the freshest local fruit, vegetables, and herbs are waiting for you.

Here are some simple ways to help your skin benefit from the bounty of the summer harvest.

SWEET-AS-HONEY FACE MASK

Honey, a humectant and natural antiseptic, softens skin in its own sweet way.

1 soup spoon of honey

Cleanse your face and then wrap it with a warm, damp towel or facecloth (leave room to breathe!). Lie down and relax for at least 3 minutes. Apply the honey with a spatula on your clean face and leave on at least 10 minutes. Remove the honey mask with a facecloth and warm water. Apply a light moisturizer to your face and neck. Add eye gel or an eye cream.

SWEET SUGAR SCRUB

1/4 cup sunflower oil

4 tablespoons organic brown sugar

Mix the sugar and oil for a skin-softening exfoliating scrub. Massage this mixture on your skin and leave on at least 5 minutes. This treatment scrub can be used on the face, hands, or feet. Remove with a warm

facecloth.

CUCUMBER EYE PAD WITH A LAVENDER SUMMER SURPRISE

1/4 fresh cucumber

1 drop of lavender essential oil

Slice the cucumber thinly, place in a small bowl of fresh spring water, and refrigerate for 10 minutes. Add a drop of lavender essential oil and let the bowl rest on the counter a few minutes while the essential oil infuses into the cucumber. Place slices on your eyes to reduce puffiness or to relieve itchy, allergy eyes.

*Try to be a
rainbow in
someone's cloud.*

-Maya Angelou

Massage therapy and aromatherapy are an amazing team. If you are interested in learning more about the benefits of aromatherapy, call or e-mail me today. I look forward to seeing you soon!

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