Natural Scent Therapy
How Bodywork Blossoms with Aromatherapy
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“I was born with music in me.”

So said Ray Charles, and I believe it of myself as well. My music is a melody of “fragrant” chords, the essence of plants. They are music for my nose, mind, and spirit.

I cannot remember the precise moment when I became aware of my acute ability to smell, to distinguish the finite variables of aroma. The day I opened my first bottle of plant oil essence, so completely engaging my nose and transforming me so swiftly, feels like another lifetime. That tiny bottle of liquid gold would lead me on a path of study, professionally and personally, that I could never have manufactured for myself, no matter how great my imagination.

Aromatherapy is so integrated into my life, aligned with every malady or challenge I encounter, that I must remind myself it remains a new “discovery” to our Western world.

By name, by “smell,” aromatherapy has infused its way into our marketplace. The mention of essential oils can conjure up images of fragrant body care products, room deodorant, cleaning aids, scented candles, even incense, before it registers as an alternative health product, as would a vitamin, mineral, or herbal supplement. Yet, the avalanche of fragrance we experience today is not pure (from whole essential plant extracts); rather, it is obtained from their naturally acquired derivatives, or worse, their synthetic replicates.

Moving beyond feeling slightly ruffled, as a professional aromatherapist, an ironic beauty comes to mind. I remember the days spent trying to explain, wanting to share, and expose someone to my vocation. I was met with looks of complete confusion, or even disinterest. I am still met with confusion, but now I am rarely met with disinterest.

Enter the century for reawakening our sense of smell. “Olfaction” has become a hip word and is being investigated and celebrated in every form of media. Visuals of botanicals have left the pages of gardening and agriculture magazines to add backdrop to product containers and marketing ploys. Theaters, shopping plazas, theme parks, hotels, places of worship, salons and spas (including areas we would never have imagined such as office spaces, places of commerce, casinos, classrooms and even hospitals), have acquired a new familiarity through their scents.

We are acquiring “scent” memories, and these have taken physical form to the plants they represent. There is added excitement at cosmetic and perfume counters when a sales clerk references exotics of frankincense, bergamot, ylang ylang, lemon verbena, mandarin, linden, and jasmine. Shopping for food and household necessities is now a sensory task. Spices and herbs of cassia, clove, black pepper, ginger, cardamom, marjoram, mint, basil, rosemary, and sage cause us to pause and reflect on their flavor, their “scent.” We scan labels on our household products for the names of tea tree, lemon, pine, and lavender — not so much in recognition of their antibacterial properties; rather we want to create a halo of their fragrance while we clean. Even our social consciousness has been triggered. Sandalwood and rosewood have moved beyond beautiful fragrance to plants that are bearing the weight of planetary mismanagement. We are creating mental scrapbooks for scent, no longer content to merely smell, we want to know what we have smelled and how the scent will make us feel.
Indigo Oxygen

Uplifting, balancing, refreshing, clarifying, and supremely anti-infectious infused with aromatic antioxidants. Bright and bracing, initiating the color spectrums of blue-green. An aromatic interface between the Alps and sea.

- 12 drops lavender (angustifolia)
- 6 drops lavandin (grosso)
- 6 drops yuzu (Japanese lemon)
- 6 drops white grapefruit
- 6 drops pine (sylvestris)
- 4 drops seaweed

*To enhance aroma and application, incorporate lavender hydrosol to your mister recipe.

Venetian Rubies

Nurturing, strengthening, comforting and empowering. Relieving a state of exhaustion, anxiety, and disconnection and establishing harmony, balance, fortitude, and sensuality.

- 12 drops mandarin
- 8 drops blood orange*

Scientific research has found that smell is the keenest of all our senses. In an area the size of the pit of a small apricot, 1 square inch with millions of sensory neurons, we have the capacity to capture, process, and then store 10,000 odors. Through the reflexive and unconscious act of breathing, scent creates a personal history for us, without our even being aware. None of our other senses establishes a memory database quite like this. Our response to scent is both physiologic (body) and psychosomatic (mind and spirit) as it enters the olfactory nerve tract and connects to the central nervous system. Within an instant of smelling an aroma, we can be sent back to the first moment we were introduced to it.

Scent is not simplistic; it is voluminous. In each breath, we inhale a complex recipe of aroma naturally given off by our surroundings. Everything we do or do not touch has one, or multiple scents. The walls of our rooms, the trees at our front door, scents carried on the wind, animals we pet, people we greet, clothes we wear, the floor of the earth we stand on. Helen Keller once wrote, “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.”

Our mind does not discriminate between a scent and how we should respond to it. Rather, our individual histories, locked within the recesses of our mind, govern our responses and our feelings. This theory, called “learned-odor response,” is why the same aroma can affect us each quite differently. A scent that triggers good memories for one person may revisit painful memories for another.

One of the most poignant photos I encountered this year was that of a soldier on the battlefields of Iraq. He was holding a letter to his face — a face shrouded by a carpet of mud created from sweat and desert sand. He was not looking at his letter, but smelling it. There were words of explanation captioned below, but truly no words were necessary. His face held a smile, and his body was relaxed with joy in a way that only the discovered scent upon his letter could have produced amidst that intense backdrop.

Scientists, artists, spiritualists, physicians, and businesspeople are searching to better understand our sense of smell and how aroma interfaces with our minds, bodies, and spirits. There is no disputing that fragrance, in whatever form, can have an emotional effect on us. Yet, in our consumer-driven forum for aromatherapy, most of us are missing the experience of pure essential plant extracts, which is the basis of what a therapist refers to as “aroma-therapy” — the use of aroma, achieved with the use of pure essential plant extracts, oils, and often their floral waters (hydrosols), for therapeutic application.

The Next Level

Aromatherapists are healthcare specialists who have devoted advanced education to such studies as anatomy and physiology, pathology, and all the principles of aromatherapy — from the agriculture of plants, to the chemistry of their by-products, to the psychology of scent. It is essential they have a thorough understanding of how the body, mind, and emotions interface with health, as well as the phytotherapy potentials of essential plant extracts. They may also be trained in additional medicine and complementary therapies to assist their clients in living healthier, creative, and satisfying lives.
Plants have been the major source of medicine for centuries. First employed in whole form, cultural evolution and modern technology have provided us ways to isolate and replicate primary components. Through extensive, controlled research we have identified components in plants that minimize, even eliminate, harmful microorganisms, fungus, viruses, and infectious diseases. Where medicine synthetically replicates components of plants, herbalism and aromatherapy incorporate the whole of the plant or its plasma — its plant oil, its essential oil.

Aromatherapy has sparked a renewed interest in the potential of organically-derived elements for health and well-being; however, it is not recognized with the same stature as herbalism. Where we might consider supplementing or even replacing our prescription or over-the-counter drugs with herbs, the suggestion of using an essential oil in the same manner would surprise most people. There is no connection made that essential oils are the infrastructure of herbal plants and are contained within the plant derivatives utilized for a vast majority of medicines. Technology, for all its contribution, continues to surround us with media-flash that encourages us to desire and rely upon what is conceived within a lab, rather than on what the earth organically provides us. As technology advances, ironically we are working against the planet, placing it and ourselves in danger of health disharmony.

We resist taking aromatherapy to the next level, as a therapeutic enhancement, and I am not certain why. We scramble to add scent to our environment and our bodies, yet we do not utilize it to perform a therapy for us as ancient civilizations once did. Rome, Greece, and Egypt have rich apothecary histories where fragrance was both an aesthetic delight and a medicinal benefit for its wearer. The Egyptians were devout in their belief that the nose was the main portal to the soul and to breathe scented air gave them veritable life. Perfume once was an adjective aptly used to describe the fragrance of a plant, flower, food, or drink. Today it more readily signifies the artistry of manufacturing. Perfume has become synonymous with aromatherapy, rather than being defined as “aromachology,” the science of scent, not the use of pure essential oil extracts.

In a time when simplicity and living a more organic lifestyle are becoming paramount, utilizing pure plant essential oils and their hydrosol is organic; it is simple. For years alternative therapists and traditional healers espoused the interrelationship between body, mind, emotions, and health. Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI), is a new branch of medical science in the last century, established through scientific credibility the links between emotional disharmony manifesting itself in physical symptoms, lowered immunity, and disease. Acknowledging our new relationship with our noses, and how scent can affect how we feel, aromatherapy becomes a simple combatant to our whirlwind paces and the stresses that can result. Perhaps we are not aware that conclusive research on the health benefits, emotional and physical, of multiple essential oils now exists? The combined efforts of scientists, researchers, clinicians, therapists, and even doctors, are dispelling many of the myths and misunderstandings that surround aromatherapy.

Essential oils are being studied as enhancements to learning and productivity, and possible factors in our buying behaviors. And even though the remedial potential of essential oils is being investigated, their unequivocal mastery still lies in their fragrance.

An essential oil gives the plant its fragrance and can be found in the roots, rhizomes, leaf, flower, stem, bark, wood, fruit rind, and seed. It is housed within specialized pockets, canals, cells, and reservoirs. It functions as our own plasma does — complex and concentrated, supporting metabolism, feeding and protecting against infectious invasion, contributing to the health and very life of the plant. Although extracting an essential oil expends the life of the plant, it remains alive, resonating with active molecules. A single essential oil can contain between 70 to 300 recognizable chemical constituents. In physical form these oils appear to be liquid, when they are in fact vaporous, expeditiously permeable to our skin and our nose. They have distinctive aroma, texture, density, color, and even “flavor.” Yes, we use both our sense of smell and taste to completely savor the full aromatic value of an essential oil — fragrance through our nose, and flavor if our tongue detects the impulses of bitter, sweet, sour, or salty.

The Evolution of Scent Therapy

In the 1950s, the Austrian biochemist Marguerite Maury, in tandem with her husband (a French homeopathic doctor who studied the essential oil work models of René-Maurice Gattéfosse2 and Jean Valnet, M.D.), took aromatherapy into the dimensions of bodywork as we use it today. Maury would devote her life’s work to the viability of aromatic plants, their essential oils and waters, and their aesthetic and health benefits to skin. She took inspiration from an ancient Tibetan methodology, developing a unique massage enhanced by essential oils. Through her work, we were able to acquire a greater understanding in the duality of the oils’ administration and absorption, via the skin and inhalation.

Maury’s expose, Secret of Life and Youth, published in the late 1960s, was substantially responsible for rekindling the bonds between the components of aromatic plants and massage.4 She also founded the theory that a formula should be modeled to suit the individual needs of its recipient, and was to be altered and reformulated as their mental and physical distresses began to alleviate. So devoted to her study and labor, it has been rumored the stroke that took her life was a result of the stresses of overworking. Her protégé, Micheline Arcier, advanced Maury’s work, establishing aromatherapy as a complete, holistic system of healthcare and management — holistic aromatherapy.4

Himalayan Song

Centering, stabilizing, resolving, enlightening, deepening breath and strengthening chi. A sacred, deliberate blending inspired by aromas of forest, cathedral...
As Maury was pursuing her work, there was advanced use of the aromatogram, a lab test able to acquire analysis of an essential oil’s activity in vitro, examining its effectiveness against a broad range of infectious illness. This testing, still used in Europe today, would forever change the face of aromatherapy, elevating it from purely aesthetic to therapeutic, being acknowledged as a potential form of phytomedicine. By the late 1970s, essential oils had been taken into double-blind studies that successfully proved their efficacy, particularly on autonomic nervous system disorders. It was then that quality standards were set for essential oils used medicinally.

Estheticians and spa specialists, whose study traditionally is steeped in European philosophy and science on the benefits of phytotherapy, were some of the first to work more closely with holistic aromatherapy in America. They utilized essential oils and hydrosols to help repair and stimulate new cell growth and skin regeneration, set up a barrier to bacteria, prevent environmental invasions, and preserve elasticity, thus warding off the effects of aging.

The composition of products applied to the skin determines the absorption rate. Essential oils are lipid soluble — that is soluble in fats and oils — and our skin is comprised of lipids. By combining essential oils with a lipid soluble carrier (containing vegetable oils) and accelerating the blood flow through the skin (creating heat through the application of massage or hydrotherapy), the absorption of a holistic aromatherapy application can be most effective. Every form of spa treatment — facials, body wraps, glows, baths, showers, saunas or steam baths — can be enhanced with essential oils.

Massage therapists also are learning how essential oil products can effectively augment and enhance the strokes and movements of nearly every form of massage, be it Swedish, shiatsu, reflexology, Hellerwork, jin shin, polarity, Thai, Alexander Technique, or lymphatic drainage. Beyond the therapeutics of therapists' manipulations, the subtle, yet profound diffusion of scent can engender feelings of joy, relaxation, and an inner sense of well-being for clients, making practitioners indispensable scent and bodywork caretakers for both body and spirit.

Bodyworkers become essential oil connoisseurs and artists as they train themselves in the art of organoleptics (the linguistics of scent) and blending. And practitioners become scientists as they research to understand more completely the molecular composition of essential oils and relate them to the therapeutic actions they may be seeking for various pathologies. Aroma-massage provides ingenuous support for healing and health, for advancing therapists' skills, for their own personal satisfaction, as well as what they are able to offer their clients, and for the practicality of financially growing their business.

**U.S. Shortfall**

What remains daunting in America is a lack of responsible and comprehensive aromatherapy education and the lack of therapy standards. Even though there are dedicated educators and therapists who are working to establish criterion, anyone who feels they qualify as an aromatherapist can call themselves such. The days when one could find merely a simple handbook have dissolved to finding bookshelves dedicated to the subject. Although newer publications have sorted through historical milestones in the history of scent and aromatherapy, much of the therapeutic and botanical data remains dated or incorrect, requiring readers to be diligent in their research and discriminating in their cross-referencing. It definitely makes the craft challenging and patience-driven.

Fortunately, with holistic aromatherapy gaining popularity, the public is beginning to investigate and scrutinize information on the subject and the credentials and backgrounds of those who extend treatments. Skill and proficiency with any therapy is as good as one’s training. Aromatherapists, as well as other bodyworkers, are being challenged to secure clarified and respected credentials. Schools extending classes in aromatherapy are also being challenged.

**Bella Jazz**

Sumptuous, motivating, warming, and deeply sensual. Spicy voluptuous aromatic musings of Latin America filled with verve, confidence, and spark.

- 16 drops clary sage
- 6 drops ylang ylang (extra)
- 8 drops black pepper
- 4 drops coriander
- 2 drops violet leaf
- 2 drops patchouli
- 2 drops clove bud

*To enhance aroma and application, incorporate ylang ylang hydrosol to your mister recipe.*
Serious texts on aromatherapy will place emphasis on the biochemistry and the pharmacological (drug) activity of essential oils. I still remember the moment in my own studies when I embraced how empowering it was to understand and qualify the chemistry of the essential oils within my apothecary. It’s essential to comprehend that chemical components help define therapeutic actions, aroma, and even the oils’ stability or shelf life. Sometimes a rather dry, intimidating read, these texts can diminish one of the most genuine benefits essential oils afford to our health, through their scent, a core to holistic aromatherapy. Another leg of your journey, developing an even more personal relationship with your essential oils, is in acquiring a well-trained nose. Your nose may well become your most trusted barometer in distinguishing purity, aromatic distinction, and therapeutic values.

Quality and therapeutic value are key terms when applied to the success of holistic aromatherapy. As with food, it is not always necessary to purchase essential oils with organic verification. Many plants are grown wild and unfettered. However, others, such as citrus, are generally grown with pesticide sprays and processed for their essential oils through methods most often not employing the benefits afforded by distillation. When this is the case, organic becomes necessary. Another exception is hydrosols, which, in my opinion, should be from organic plants.

Finding reputable vendors is ideally a rudimentary goal. Building a reliable network of like-minded, goal-oriented professionals is a place to begin this exploration. Devote the time to interview your suppliers before purchasing their products. Do they have gainful knowledge on all the variables of their product? Request to sample their product, to experience the aroma, application, and how their product is presented. Companies offering therapeutic essential oils and hydrosols are generally proud of their product and exhibit this with meticulous bottling and labeling. Many suppliers provide a certificate of analysis distinguishing chemical composition and other variables; however these too require advanced training to decipher, and are not always reliable.

I recently read a fascinating article by Charles Spence, lecturer in experimental psychology at Oxford University, that not only put a name to, but also reinforced my belief in holistic aromatherapy having the ability to enhance health. By adopting a “multisensory” approach to life, becoming more conscious of all the dimensions of our senses, we live with more awareness and have the ability to be healthier. He suggests that by living in an environment that depletes one, or several of our senses, we create imbalance that can have a direct effect on our health. Not just with our auditory, tactile, or visual senses, but also with our sense of smell.

Bodyworkers naturally create this multisensory environment for clients both through their touch and the tone or atmosphere they create in their therapy rooms, which typically includes scent to stimulate the sense of smell. Essential oils are most often incorporated diluted into massage oils and lotions, applied with a hot or cold compress, and inhaled by misting the air using a professional diffusion unit, or even dispensing through steam in a bowl of warmed water placed under the face cradle. It can also be added by the mist of hydrosols to linens or incorporated through the use of essential oils in the products practitioners apply.

A Blossoming Future

We are entering a time when we are becoming more physically isolated, with technology providing us with a variety of means and excuses to stay indoors rather than out-of-doors. Touch is often viewed more with a negative connotation than recognition of physical nurturing. It only stands to reason that our need for these altruistic holistic therapists becomes more evident, more vital.

We live in times where our bodies reach for touch well beyond a hug, a kiss, to all variety of creative athletics and bodywork, and our nose reaches not only for fresh air but also for pleasant, multi-layered scent. Once considered pampering, holistic aromatherapy has become vital and necessary. It’s as essential to nourish our bodies, brains, and souls with touch and smell, as it is to fuel them with food.

Éva-Marie Lind-Shiveley has specialized in holistic aromatherapy for 15 years. She has practiced as a clinical aromatologist and held the position of program lead and department dean at private career colleges with accredited programs on natural health therapies, massage, spa, and fitness training. She’s also worked in research and design for several holistic aromatherapy product-based companies. A resident of Portland, Ore., she now lectures and writes on the uses, product design, and eco-concerns of medicinal and aromatic plants and can be reached at emlessence@prodigy.net.

Her most recent book Aromatiques, A Sensualist’s Guide to Aromatic Oils is $16.95 at bookstores, but available to M&B readers for $13.50 for a limited time through Bay/SOMA Books in San Francisco at 800/358-3000.

References

Blending for Bodyworkers

Essential Aromatic Herb and Floral Infused Base Oil

What It Takes To Create Essential Oils

Resources

Fibularis Muscle And Tendon Injuries
If you've strained one of your fibularis tendons, the pain in your ankle will let you know something is wrong, but you'll probably have a hard time identifying the fibularis as a source of the trouble.

How Long Should I Wait to Exercise After a Massage or Bodywork Session?
Exercising right after a session can both increase muscle soreness and compromise the value of the soft-tissue work you've just received.

15 Things Your Massage Therapist Wants You to Know
1. I am not a masseuse, and, no matter how cool you think that word sounds, your massage therapist probably doesn’t like it.
As a massage therapist or bodyworker, you have an opportunity to offer a service that is in dire need in our modern age. That service is personalized healthcare. By its very nature, healthcare is a personal business. I have found regular trips into nature to be very restorative for me personally. Whatever it is that helps you “get out of your head”, be sure to do it on a regular basis. I think you will find that this is critical to a long and happy career as a therapist. 8)

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Patience. Developing a practice can be very frustrating. Find out what working as a massage therapist entails, including the types of modalities you can specialize in. Learn what certifications and licenses you may need in your state. Once the therapist determines that massage therapy could be beneficial and that they can help the client, he or she will begin the session. The therapist kneads, pushes and pulls muscles and soft tissues and applies finger and hand pressure as necessary to treat the client. On the physical side, professional bodyworkers often have to be on their feet most or all of the day, and they may have to accommodate numerous appointments.
This is an inspiring guide to the therapeutic powers of fragrance, demonstrating the remarkable ability of scent to respond to our mental, physical and spiritual needs. It reveals how to use scent to balance mood: try a stimulating or refreshing perfume when you are feeling low or tired, use calming fragrances to ease away your cares; and enjoy a rich and luxurious bouquet when you need a little pampering. Reed diffuser, give your room a fresh, clean scent, fill your space with lovely fragrance. Essential Oils. Essential Oils, revitalize your body and release your pressure from work or study. Scent Therapy - These scent therapy innovations range from aroma-infused eye packs to essential oil diffusers that are said to enhance one's mood. Insomnia is a common feat for many who lead a busy lifestyle and these aromatherapy products are a great way to treat sleep deficiencies and restlessness naturally.