



Aromatherapy

and its role in relieving stress

The brain instructs the body to react to stress as though it were about to cope with extreme danger.

The brain creates nervous responses, which cause hormone levels to change.

Hormones (especially adrenalin) are released into the bloodstream, which cause the following physical changes in the body:

- Breathing becomes quick and light
- The heart pumps more rapidly
- Blood pressure rises
- More blood is supplied to the muscles, causing them to tense

Less blood is supplied to other bodily functions, which results in:

- A slowing down of the digestive system
- A slowing down of the immune system
- A slowing down of the reproductive system.

A certain amount of challenge keeps us alert and involved in life, but too much pressure is unhealthy, and causes the general level of our health to deteriorate. Our bodies cease to function properly as they continually try to respond to an overproduction of adrenalin.

Common signs of an over-stressed mind and body are as follows:

- Aching jaw, neck, shoulders and back
- **Digestive problems:** nausea, indigestion, constipation, diarrhoea
- **Disturbed sleep patterns:** waking up feeling tired
- Dizziness and shortness of breath
- Energy swings
- Food cravings combined with poor appetite
- Frequent colds and flu
- Headaches, migraines and blurred vision
- High cholesterol levels

- Irritability, moodiness, anxiety
- Muscle twitching
- **Poor circulation:** cold hands and feet
- Rapid heart beat, palpitations
- Skin rashes, eczema, psoriasis.

The major causes of stress in our lives

The roots of stress can lie in physical, mental or emotional problems, or in a combination of all three. When we try to cope with these problems by seeing them as 'just life', we lose sight of how much they are affecting our health and happiness. While it is not healthy to dwell on problems and obsess about them, it *can* help to identify them. Looking straight at the problem allows us to get it into perspective, and find creative ways of dealing with it. It seems scary at first, but it is actually less stressful than trying to cope with unnamed fears and vague worries.

Causes of stress might include:

- Physical problems such as ill health
- Mental problems such as financial worries,

family troubles, pressure of work

- ☉ Emotional problems that are often caused by unrealistic expectations of ourselves
- ☉ Deep-seated emotional problems, which are usually very complicated in origin and cause us to suffer from feelings of anger, guilt and anxiety.

For many of us, the main source of stress in our lives is the sheer pace of life. Modern society seems to be moving so fast, we have to run like mad to keep up with it. Life no longer moves at a measured rhythm, it just zooms. Most of us no longer live in family groups, or within tight-knit communities, we have to be self-sufficient and self-supporting. And when we need help, it is difficult to know where to find it. This has caused us to look for ways in which we can help ourselves, which is why there is so much interest in self-help treatments, such as aromatherapy.

These therapies offer us simple, natural alternatives that can support us as we battle with the stresses and strains of contemporary living.

How aromatherapy can help

Aromatherapy oils can help to restore balance to a stressed body and a frazzled mind. They influence the body in two ways:

1. Via our most primitive sense – the sense of smell
2. Via our largest organ – the skin.

Essential oil molecules are very tiny, and are easily absorbed into the body through the nose or through the skin.

WARNING: Certain oils should not be used during pregnancy, with children under the age of 12, in conjunction with or after sunbathing, or with high blood pressure, epilepsy or diabetes. Some oils cannot be combined with homeopathic remedies. If in doubt consult a qualified aromatherapist.

Essential oils and the sense of smell

When they are inhaled through the nostrils, essential oil molecules are taken up deep into the brain. They come into contact with the thalamus and the hypothalamus. The thalamus is believed to control emotions and memories. This would explain why certain perfumes make us feel uplifted and happy, while others repel us and make us feel uneasy and nauseous. Certain aromatherapy oils evoke a feeling of calm, others can make us feel refreshed, and some oils can revive us and make us feel more alert. The hypothalamus controls part of the nervous system, and also regulates hormone levels in our bodies. It is responsible for the body's instinctive reaction to stress, which is known as 'Fight or Flight'. Essential oil molecules influence the hypothalamus, and encourage the body to return to a state of balance.

They can be breathed in using the following methods:

1. Inhale directly from a bottle held about 6 cm under the nose – one deep breath per nostril – do not allow the neat oil to come into contact with your skin, and be especially careful about your eyes. Follow the inhalation with some deep, relaxed breaths.

2. Drop one drop of essential oil onto the palm of one hand, bring both hands together, then cup them gently over your nose. Breathe in slowly to the count of three, and then exhale slowly to the count of six.
3. Drop three drops of essential oil into bowl of hot water and inhale the steam.
4. Burn three to six drops of essential oil in a vaporiser or light bulb ring in order to disperse them into the atmosphere.

Essential oils and the skin

The skin's main function is to defend us. It protects us from harmful microbes such as bacteria and it keeps the rain out! Normally, it doesn't allow anything that's big enough to hurt us to pass through it. Essential oil molecules, however, are so fine that they are able to pass through the skin and enter into the bloodstream.

Once within the body, they behave like microscopic guardian angels, helping to protect the body cells from pollution and disease, and hastening the growth of new, healthy cells where necessary.

Aromatherapy oils can be applied to the skin using the following methods:

1. Bathing – either full body bath or hand and



SI Academy offers the best in training and development for the complementary therapist in the fields of Aromatherapy, Massage, and Product-making.

In May 2014 we will be running the IFA accredited Professional Essential Oil Therapist (PEOT) course, leading to the PEOT diploma qualification and IFA membership.

Dinesh Kotecha is an aromatherapist (for 12 years). He is a principal teacher, examiner and past Chair for the IFA. Kalpna Kotecha is a cosmetic scientist and is responsible for developing the Spa Isha product range. They will teach this course, including product-making, between them.

If you are interested in the PEOT course or any other training opportunities with Spa Isha, please contact Dinesh on 07958 769997 in the first instance, or email dinesh@spaisha.com



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6 Aromatherapy

foot baths. The relaxing effects of the essential oils are enhanced by the therapeutic action of water. Add 6–12 drops of essential oil to a warm bath and immerse yourself in it for at least 10 minutes. Or add three drops of essential oil to a bowl full of warm water and bathe your hands or feet, swishing them through the water with a rhythmical motion.

2. Massage – essential oils should be diluted in good-quality vegetable oils before being massaged into the skin. The vegetable carrier will soften and nourish the skin. Add 3–6 drops of essential oil to an egg cupful of vegetable oil and mix thoroughly. Massage the oil into the skin, using gentle but firm pressure and a rhythmical, stroking action.

Essential oils to relieve the symptoms of stress

Oils from the orange tree are particularly effective for relieving stress symptoms. Neroli (from the blossom), petitgrain (from the leaves and twigs) and orange (from the fruit) soothe the nervous system and have a regulating effect on the

digestive system. Lavender is a very calming oil and can be used to promote restful sleep. Frankincense is deeply comforting and geranium is balancing for the nervous and hormonal systems. These oils are safe to use providing you observe the instructions provided with the oils. Neroli is an expensive oil; frankincense, geranium and lavender are medium priced, whereas petitgrain and orange are very affordable. Make sure you purchase your oils from a reputable supplier and with full instructions for use.

Aromatherapy massage

Aromatherapy massage can help you to relax and it can also help to return you to a more balanced state. Regular treatments will soothe and calm your frazzled nervous system, improve your circulation and encourage your digestive system to function more normally. Regular



massage with aromatherapy oils helps to boost the immune system, and gives an increased resistance to viral infections. If you do not have the time or financial resources available for regular massage, why not opt for shorter treatments? Half-hour facials, foot massages, scalp, neck or hand massages can still make you feel marvellous. **CHW**

© If you would like more information about professional aromatherapy, are interested in training to become an aromatherapist or would like to find a qualified aromatherapy practitioner in your area, please go to the International Federation of Aromatherapists (IFA) website at www.ifaroma.org or email office@ifaroma.org

Love your lymph!

Increasingly in today's society there are more and more people who are choosing to detox/cleanse their bodies, believing that there are toxins causing their systems to become blocked.

There are safe ways to do this as opposed to historically fasting. In my opinion, aromatherapy is the easiest and most enjoyable way to cleanse your body, making it fighting fit for those tetchy bugs that go around.

The lymph is a colourless fluid similar in composition to intercellular fluid (tissue fluid). As part of the continual process of circulation, some of the tissue fluid is absorbed into the bloodstream via the capillaries, and the remainder, containing the greater part of the proteins found in tissue fluid, is absorbed into the smallest lymphatic vessels. These form part of a system that parallels the blood circulation, but with the important difference that it has no central pump, i.e., the heart to help it circulate. Instead,

