



EQUILIBRIUM

Emotional Balance

by Michelle Roque O'Neil

Life in the 21st century is demanding and hectic and sometimes challenging. Maintaining equilibrium can often be difficult and sustaining emotional balance is high on the wish list. As modern society becomes more demanding and our workdays extend into our personal time, the line between work and play can easily be lost. Evidence shows that more and more doctors' surgeries are filled with people suffering with stress related issues such as anxiety, insomnia or depression and related physical issues such as a compromised immune system, tension, backache and exhaustion.

Amongst the many factors that contribute significantly to a general lack of emotional stability currently is stress, both acute and chronic and it is at the very top of the table. It brings with it an array of additional issues with insomnia and anxiety polling the highest, swiftly followed by panic attacks, tension, loss of appetite and emotionally a deep sense of hopelessness, low self esteem and depression...the list is endless. The many hours spent in front of computers and

mobiles means there is no quiet time, no time to reboot... the consequence of this over dependency on digital technology is causing a lot of electro-magnetic imbalances which reek havoc on our nervous system and can contribute to all of the above.

Many believe that a breakdown in community and extended family has left people feeling isolated and loneliness is a factor that contributes to many addictive and destructive behavioral patterns. Financial worries, job and global uncertainty undermine the foundations of our life. For some the answer is to self medicate with cigarettes, alcohol and recreational drug use resulting in over extension, toxicity and inflammation. Conversely performance and external expectations can create an insatiable mutating ask placing immense pressure on an individual to fulfill and match expectations, everything is loaded towards an inevitable meltdown. Polarities are no longer swinging from work to rest but from extension to over extension.

So what measures could one offer to

halt the runaway train and avoid the ensuing wreckage? Over extension is a familiar pattern that I encounter. So much of our sense of emotional balance seems reliant on our sense of stability, financial, emotional and cultural. This is often driven by feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem, lack of support or a sense of dislocation (not belonging) that are fundamental to our human condition. It's very complex and tied up in subtle layers that inform our sense of belonging such as power, wealth and acceptance and connected to the very foundations of what our life beliefs have been built on.

Our core impulse is to survive and connects to a very primal instinct of survival; often emotionally charged and fuelled by fear we can be irrational when we are at our most vulnerable, exhausted and distraught. When these feelings and thoughts take grip an internal panic button gets pressed. More often we are taken into familiar survival patterns as a means of coping, "Better the devil you know"... But these can be detrimental and reinforce an already negative belief, which can

aromatherapy

emotional balance

pull you off course and into an emotional spiral that can be energy sapping and blur clarity. Halting the stress reaction and understanding where it comes from and the beliefs fuelling it is one of the key ways to navigate a path back to balance.

Most of our stress responses are preprogrammed, held in a vast emotional vault filled with unresolved trauma and memories that are indelibly retained within our emotional memory or cellular system. Some beliefs are even deeper inherited through our DNA and genetics, both racial and hereditary. These are energetic beliefs transferred and held even deeper at the mineral level and often reveal themselves at times when we feel utterly impotent to effect change. The third level at which stress impacts is through the neurovascular and autonomic nervous system, effecting blood flow and respiration and is more animalistic fight and flight response. This in turn connects with the hormonal system, specifically the hypothalamus, pituitary and adrenals.

One of the reason I have enjoyed working with Aromatherapy is because it offers a multi-dimensional approach to restoring integrity and inner balance. It combines several subtle points of access that work collectively not only to restore balance but to clear and realign areas of both emotional and physical trauma. Working with touch offers nurture, release and connection. When combined with aroma we have the ability to modify and respond to both emotional and mental states, spoken and unspoken and from a physical perspective helping to cleanse and strengthen systems so they are more likely to respond effectively and may have been compromised at an earlier stage of life including conception and before.

The unique nature of aroma-therapy means that the element of touch is combined with therapeutic qualities of essential oils to create a powerful collaboration. Aromatherapy techniques are applied with the greatest sensitivity, working systematically over the

body in a structured sequence responding to individual needs on every level and creating a truly holistic therapy. Unlike traditional massage techniques we do not solely focus on the presenting physical issue, instead the body is worked on in a layered treatment.

Aromatherapy works with a series of strokes devised to soothe, awaken and harmonise the nervous system, with long strokes utilised for dispersing physical and emotional stagnation or blocks; whilst the precise pressure point techniques stimulate on a deeper level stimulating nerve ganglia and the para-sympathetic nervous system, energy strokes help to recalibrate and harmonise. Each stroke is applied within a curated sequence and each area of the body works to support the release and balancing of the whole.

The whole body is treated from head to toe including the face and reflex points of the feet, working along the meridian system and the neuro-pathways. In aromatherapy rather than focusing only on the physical issues that are presenting, we look deeper at the underlying mental and emotional story it is reflecting. By creating a multi-level diagnosis the therapist is able to formulate the protocol for the treatment and for selection of oils. This will not only elicit physical support but also effect and treat the emotional state presenting both at superficial and unexpressed level. This offers a more intuitive response to potential and hidden issues that may have to be supported and coaxed to the surface for healing.

Essential oils work through the sense of smell as well as absorption. It is a misconception that a client should like the oils used during the treatment as some therapeutically efficacious oils can at first sniff illicit a strong reaction. This is generally because a hyper adrenalised state will react dramatically to an essential oil whose aroma emphatically imposes itself and deeply seek to quiet and still the mind. So the selection of oils

for application needs to be objective taking all the presenting and underlying factors.

Breath-work can also be a powerful tool; when combined with aroma this can become a deep and profound process that can be developed into a technique that can be utilised at home or work. Breath has a very specific effect on anxiety and can profoundly interrupt the panic that can ensue. You can start with simple abdominal breathing holding the breath between the in and the out breath, as the rhythm is established and the oils work their magic people begin to sink into a receptive calm.

Instructions then become more specific, working with key points to reduce anxiety, supported by a slightly different breathing style and within minutes there is a very palpable transition from anxiousness to serenity. Repetition of this technique gently embeds the process into the psyche. Breath also gives a focus that the recipient can concentrate on; a simple mindfulness meditation of watching the breath cycle offers respite from the tangle of thoughts that stress can feed.

Selection of oil whilst doing this process will be directed towards quieting and reducing anxiety, such as Neroli, Lavender or Frankincense. The aroma is inhaled through the thousands of smell receptors situated in the nose that are connected to the olfactory organ, this is connected to the limbic system situated in the brain and is a reservoir where both pleasure and trauma are stored. The aromas inhaled will have a very immediate impact whereas those applied to the body need to be absorbed and do the work internally, because different oils absorb at different rates the effects can continue for many hours. The key to emotional balance in life is to recognise that our thoughts or beliefs do not hold us captive, it is our attachment to them that give them power. Sometimes they can feel uncomfortable but by stepping out of panic we can gain compassion and perspective.



Michelle Roque O'Neil is the current vice Chair of the International Federation of Aromatherapists. Michelle is the founder of Roques O'Neil. For over 3 decades she has practiced the powerful healing art of Aromatherapy, as part of a repertory of ancient and 21st Century know-how. Ranked by Vogue as one of the Top 10 Aromatherapists in the world and a Reiki master, her signature approach combines the principles of Aromatherapy, cellular release, acupressure, reiki, reflexology and the ideals of Qi energy-balancing to potent effect. 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 at office@ifaroma.org.

