



Mind, Body and Soul

Stress relief through Aromatherapy

By: Alisa Nelson

Did you know that smells could alter your mood, and thought patterns from sad, depressed and stressed to joyful and blissful. You might say sure, but that's only temporary, I still have to go to work and pay the bills and soon as I walk into my house the kids will need me to prepare dinner and check homework etc. . . .

Stress can be described as being in the constant state of alert, which can lead to physical problems such as, headaches, back pain, high blood pressure, indigestion, sweating, heart palpitations, and anxiety.

True, we all have work we must do and stressors in this life to cope with; however, for just that moment in time to be able to let go of your current thoughts and breathe the delightful, smooth fragrances of jasmine, rosemary, juniper, vanilla, or cinnamon extracts will allow you to breathe, relax and exhale over and over again.

Can you remember when you were a child and walked into grandma's house and smelled the sweet aroma of hot buttered rolls or an apple pie coming fresh out of the

oven? No matter what was on your mind at the time, (the job, the bills, the children and the stressors of life). Once, grandma's door was opened, all of your worries disappeared into thin air, at the simple aroma of Granny's home baked goods. Aaah, stress was relieved and your senses came alive, your taste buds were awakened with the thoughts of embracing a slice of pippin' hot cinnamon apple pie. Your anticipation was clouded by just the smell of what you're about to enjoy. The aroma alone changed your mood, thoughts and worries. You probably never thought about grandma's house full of aromatherapy, but you always felt better being at Granny's.

The term Aromatherapy was named the French chemist René-Maurice Gattefosseé who grew up during the beginning of the 20th century. His research showed that many essential oils were used for antiseptics, for example, he discovered that using lavender to serious gangrenous burns on his arm and head helped heal his sore quickly and left no scarring.

Essential oils are extracted from array of plant sources bark, petals, leaves, seed,

nuts, kernels and flowers. Their sensuous vapors, which provide the fragrance in many perfumes, can be used in baths smoothed over the body, and used by burning the oil to change the aroma in a room. The pleasure and versatility of aromatic oils make them one of nature's kindest gifts.

The essential oils contain active plant ingredients in a very high concentration and potent forms. The oils need to be treated with care and should never be applied directly to the skin undiluted. Make sure you are not allergic before using essential oils.

There are various ways of using the essential oils: inhalation (steam inhalation is a great method for treating respiratory problems), therapeutic massage (this is the classic aromatherapy treatment for the body's natural healing processes by using the lymphatic massage and stimulates the flow of blood), fragrances (this is the attractive pots, also known as diffusers or vaporizers – simple to use just fill a pot with water and add a few drops of essential oil, the candle underneath heats the water/oil), baths (run a bath tub with hot-water and add 5 – 10 drops of essential oil to suit your mood, foot bath (refresh your tired feet by adding 3 -5 drops of peppermint oil in a large bowl of hot water) room sprays (add 8 tbsp. of water to a blend of 12 drops of essential oil), pillows (you can perfume your pillow the 2 drops of lavender or sage to assist you in a night of well needed sleep and relaxation), shoe-rack (freshen up and deodorize your shoes with a few drops of pine oil on cotton balls to insert inside of your shoes), pot- pourri (make your own),

and add essential oils to scented candles or oil lamps.

You can even use essential oils in drinks, (teas and water) the oils must be organic and mixed in a suitable carrier and only use a few drops such as, lemon or orange. Be sure to consult a qualified aromalogist or an aroma therapist along side of a medical doctor for the proper dosage. Give your mood a boost by melting away your stress with your favorite essential oil fragrance.

The sheer pleasure of rediscovering the wisdom of the past eras and civilizations, helps us to restore the balance that has been lost in this modern day lifestyle. Now here is a little history for you. Did you know that the Chinese discovered the medicinal powers of plants used in aromatherapy? The Hindu system of medicine incorporated plant extracts and essential oils into its healing potions.

As far back as 4500 BCE the Egyptians utilized the power of perfumes. The Egyptian deities had their own unique fragrances and scented oils they believed that the oils would last in embalmed bodies for 5,000 years.

The ancient Greek physician Hippocrates, known as the 'father of medicine', once said that 'the way to health is to have and aromatic bath and scented massage every day'.

Aromatherapy was used in 14 century Europe, pine was burned in the street and floors were covered with aromatic plants as protection against infectious diseases.

If you question, the influence and power that smells have on your thoughts, just shut

your eyes and take this little test and tell me what you think of when you get a big whiff of: bleach, cow manure, old garbage, sour milk, oranges, strawberries, and peaches. For some of you, just the thought of old garbage sitting around or the reek of sour milk, brings back memories and makes you want to immediately open up all of your windows to air the room out and rid your home of that aroma, right.

Did you know that it has been said that by adding a few drops of rose essential oil to a basin of hot water acts like a natural antidepressant. Aromatherapy has been used when selling a home, attracting a mate and as an antidepressant. What buyer do you know that wants to walk into a home and smell cat litter or dirty socks? But the smell of a pot of freshly brewed coffee or oatmeal cookies appeals to the buyer senses to the point that the buyer might buy the house. And as we all know that both men and women spend plenty of money on celebrity named hygiene items, perfumes, oils and lotions just to smell good and possibly attract the opposite sex.

With today's modern lifestyle, stress, pollution, unhealthy diets, hectic and sedentary lifestyles all are factors that have adverse effects on our bodies and spirit. The art of aromatherapy works on every level to open up your senses and cleanse the body and balance the mind. Your everyday problems will not necessarily go away completely, but aromatherapy will help restore the mind-body harmony that is needed for good health and improved energy.

Okay, so you say you're not a fan of the scent of cinnamon apple pie, but what

about the aroma of peppermint, spearmint or the fragrance of fresh cut roses or the smell of lavender on a cool breezy day?

Unlike other therapies, aromatherapy is one therapy that you can apply all by yourself. So, why not indulge in some "me time" with a hot bubble bath infused with 6 to 8 drops of essential oils and a glass of ice tea. The next time you get off work, go home and kick off your shoes and stress less by rejuvenating your mind, body and soul with a little aromatherapy.