

## Treating Depression Symptoms With Aromatherapy

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by MichelleAllen

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The line between food-plants and medicinal herbs is a fuzzy one. Science regularly reports newfound medicinal effects in plants once taken for granted; many fruits once thought quite plain contain some of the world's most potent anti-cancer agents. The same goes for teas - green tea is one of the most potent anti-oxidants known - and spices - cinnamon may prevent the onset of debilitating diabetes - and this list continues to grow. This same lack of distinction exists between natural fragrances and therapeutic essential oils. The oil of a rose, laden with Citronellol, does triple duty as a perfume, an effective agent against the herpes simplex virus, and an uplifting aromatic that can help one open emotionally after a traumatizing experience.

The use of so-called 'alternative' therapies is on the rise; more individuals are turning to the wisdom of nature for assistance for all types of ailments, both physical and psychological. Interestingly, the source of most ills, from a naturopathic point of view, is being out-of-balance with nature. Eating unnatural things, following unnatural cycles, and living in unnatural environments. Lack of balance with the earth, from which we are made and upon which we live, leads to 'dis-ease' in our bodies and minds. As plants have created their wondrous botanical materials in a process guided by the rhythms of the heavens and earth, we may look to 'plant wisdom' to lead our way back into balance.

A depressed emotional state is a common reason for using complementary and alternative therapies today. A wide range of psychological, physical, and energetic issues can lead to feelings of depression and a pervasive outlook of negativity. Moreover, once in a state of depression, patterns can arise that make relief all the more difficult to find. The use of essential oils for uplifting the psyche and spirit is becoming more widespread because of the oils' broad and dramatic effects. While the oils themselves may not directly affect the underlying cause of depression, they may help individuals break free from depressive cycles - they may provide the impetus to 'get off the couch', so to speak, and begin creating long lasting change. Many natural healers believe depression to be a result of, like many other ills, of being out of balance; being unable to 'synch up' with the natural state of harmony that permeates the universe. For relieving this is-harmony, aromatherapy can be a very powerful means to infuse one's body and mind with the most concentrated, sublime botanicals nature has to offer.

Our olfactory region is located in each of the two nasal cavities between and below the eye sockets. Containing nearly fifty million primary sensory receptor cells, this part of the nervous system is highly intricate, being ten thousand times more sensitive than the sense of taste. We find that olfaction is more complex than the sense of sight as well - it is able to distinguish a nearly infinite number of aromatic molecules at very low concentrations. Visible light is sensed using only three types of receptors, whereas the sense of smell relies on several hundred distinct classes of sensors.

Essential oils stimulate multiple regions in the human brain, including those controlling our hormonal and emotional reactions. Aromatic oils have direct and profound effects on our innermost control systems which balance our feelings

and mental states. When inhaled, aromatherapy oils passing through the outer layers of the sinuses and activate the olfactory nerves. There, the brain is directly stimulated, producing powerful systemic effects, with the most immediate being on the emotions.

In both Naturopathy and Ayurvedic Medicine (The Science of Life), essential oils are considered to enhance the flow of prana (essential life force), enhance and nourish ojas (sustaining energy and immunological essence), and brighten tejas (clarity and mental luminosity). In Traditional Chinese Medicine, essential oils in general are medicines for the Shen, the spiritual essence that resides in the heart and guides and governs consciousness. Used consciously, essential oils powerfully enhance positive mental and emotional states.

Further, the medicinal properties of essential oils, through their ability to support physiological healing, can also be of great benefit to the heart and mind. A Korean study on the effect of aromatherapy on pain in patients with arthritis found that receiving massage with lavender, marjoram, eucalyptus, rosemary, and peppermint oils significantly decreased both the pain AND mental depression levels.

Following are some oils that have a reputation for uplifting Shen, enhancing prana, nourishing ojas, and brightening tejas - combinations that may have marked effects on symptoms of depression. These oils can be used alone or in combination in a nebulizing diffuser (producing a fine mist of oils for inhalation), or in aromatherapy massage, thereby inhaled and absorbed through the skin concurrently.

Bergamot (pressed from the peels of bitter oranges) has a strong reputation for its ability to gently uplift. In terms of Chinese medicine, this is a direct result of its smoothing the flow of Liver-Qi ('Chi' or Life Force), the liver being thought of as the seat of the eternal soul. Bergamot combines the ability to both relax the nerves and refresh the Spirit; it is suitable for many types of depressive states.

Neroli (from the flower of bitter oranges), like Bergamot, regulates the Qi - and like Jasmine flower oil, comforts the mind and heart. Neroli is called for at a core level, for the type of depression that comes from nervous and emotional exhaustion. Neroli uplifts the mind and Spirit with its potential to nourish and unify. Neroli assists in retrieving and releasing repressed emotions, with potential to nourish and unify a fragmented psyche. Neroli is specifically indicated for individuals who, in order to escape from emotional pain and suffering, cut themselves off from their feelings and senses.

The essential oil of Chamomile flowers is used when the depression manifests in a moody, irritable, dissatisfied outward expression. Chamomile essential oil is earthy, rich, and grounding with significant calming and uplifting qualities.

When depression is of a Fire (overly aggressive) nature, it often involves an imbalance of joy and love - the root emotions of the heart and mind. Joy is an extension of Shen's (spiritual essence's) innate sense of harmony and perfection, an experience of emotional and spiritual well-being. The depression that afflicts the heart and Shen involves a loss of one's natural sense of joy. There is often an accompanied lack of enthusiasm and interest as well as an inability to become inspired. Rose otto - steam distilled rose essential oil - or Rose Absolute may have a profound effect on this state. Rose is thought the premier heart opening aromatic, bringing joy, uplifting and restoring balance.

These are a few recipes for uplifting the spirit; as with most aromatherapeutic applications, it is best to use your intuition in finding the appropriate one. Often, the single essential oil or blend you find most attractive will be the one that serves you best. Experiment, explore, and have fun with these fantastic gifts of nature. These blends may be used in a diffuser or candle lamp, unless where a carrier oil is indicated - blends with carriers are intended specifically for aromatherapy massage (self-massage is very effective, as well as a simple massage from a friend or loved one).

For opening the heart:1 part Rose 3 parts Sandalwood 1 part Sweet Orange or Bergamot3 parts Jasmine 1 part Ylang Ylang 1 part Sandalwood. For brightening, refreshing and uplifting:3 parts Bergamot 1 part Ylang Ylang 1 part Grapefruit2 parts Bergamot 2 parts Clary Sage 1 part Frankincense3 parts Bergamot or Sweet Orange 2 parts Clary Sage2 parts Frankincense 1 part Lemon 1 part either Jasmine or Neroli. For nourishing:1 part (Roman) Chamomile 1 part Vanilla 10 parts carrier oil of choice. If you like floral and earthy (uplifting and softening to Spirit):1 part Neroli 1 part Vanilla 1 part Orange or 1 part Sandalwood1 part Chamomile 1 part Bergamot 1 part Helichrysum.

Single oils can also be used, and should be investigated so one can learn the different energies of each plant. For depression associated with negativity: Bergamot, Chamomile, Helichrysum, Neroli, or Sweet Orange. For a profound lack of joy, try Rose, Jasmine, Patchouli, or Ylang Ylang. For overthinking and worry, try Frankincense, Lemon, Marjoram, Myrrh or Vetiver. For pessimism, regret and remorse, try Clary Sage, Cypress, Hyssop, or Pine needle. For doubt of one's capacity to cope with overwhelming situations, try Juniper Berry.

For cases of moderate to severe depression, professional help should always be sought. It is important to consider if you one requires professional help if the depression is overwhelming - while aromatherapy can provide support in a significant number of situations, it may not be for everyone. Essential oils can safely be used in conjunction with other treatments - consult your care giver to ensure there are no conflicts if medications have been prescribed.

#### About the Author:

The author is the owner of Ananda Aromatherapy, a source for world-class Geranium and other essential oils, therapeutic essential oil blends and aromatherapy supplies.