



SELF CARE WITH AROMATHERAPY

It is important that we work to keep ourselves healthy – mind, body, and spirit. Especially during a pandemic. We need time for activities and routines that encourage rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation. Integrating aromatherapy into your daily self-care routine is a simple way to manage stress and enhance your overall wellness.

The Alliance of International Aromatherapists (AIA) defines aromatherapy as “the inhalation and topical application of true, authentic essential oils from aromatic plants to restore or enhance health, beauty, and well-being.” There are a variety of ways to use essential oils. The most safe and effective methods are through inhalation, or applying them to the skin, after they’ve been diluted.

The quickest, and most effective way to experience the effects of your essential oils is by breathing them in through your nasal passages. Options for inhalation can include using an aromastick, cotton ball, tissue paper, aroma jewelry, and diffusing.

Place one to two drops on a cotton ball or tissue. Close your eyes and breathe in as you connect with the aroma. You can also leave the cotton ball or tissue in a small glass bowl to allow the aroma to fill a space around you. Proceed with some additional deep breathing, stretching, or other calming activities that you enjoy.



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Here are some examples of essential oils that can be used

Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) is the celebrity of essential oils. It is usually the gateway into the world of aromatherapy. Commonly used for calming and relaxation, it is versatile and generally safe to use. It has been shown to reduce anxiety, stress, and pain perception. Its aroma can vary depending on the variety you purchase, but overall, it has a lovely fresh, herbaceous, and floral aroma.

Orange, Sweet (*Citrus × sinensis*) essential oil is extracted from oranges by expressing the rind of the fruit. It has been shown to uplift mood, decrease anxiety, and aid in stress management. If you're looking for an oil that is both cheerful and upbeat, this may be the one to start with. Its aroma is light, refreshing, citrusy, and sweet. It is one of the few citrus essential oils that is not considered phototoxic and it is generally safe to use.

Vetiver (*Vetiveria zizanioids*) is distilled from the roots of a grass. It has a deep, heavy, rich, earthy, and smoky aroma. Anecdotally, it is known for grounding and centering, just as the roots are to the plant. Some people enjoy blending it with other essential oils to help balance it out. A little goes a long way.

Frankincense (*Boswellia carteri*) comes from distilling a tree resin. The resin itself can be burned as incense. Throughout history, frankincense has been incorporated into spiritual practices by various religious groups. The chemistry of frankincense supports its calming and relaxing effects. It has a woody, fresh, earthy, and slightly spicy aroma.

Additional essential oils that could be used for stress management include citrus oils like grapefruit, lemon, and mandarin. You could also include sweet marjoram, rose, patchouli, ylang ylang, and petitgrain.

Additional safety information: be mindful of medical history, allergies, medications, pregnancy, age, application method, dilution, knowledge of the particular oil, and phototoxicity. If you begin to have an adverse reaction, stop using the essential oils immediately and seek medical attention.

If you are interested in learning more about the benefits, applications, and must-knows of Aromatherapy, check out the upcoming **Aromatherapy Foundations Certificate**:

Dates: 3/1, 3/8, 3/15, 3/22 & 3/29 (Mondays)

Time: 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Delivery: Virtual – Live, via ZOOM

Instructor: Jen Shepherd

*If you are interested in purchasing materials/supplies – please consider registering early to receive instructions and to account for shipping and delivery time.



Jen Shepherd, MSW, LICSW, CCA, is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and Certified Clinical Aromatherapist with a mission to empower behavioral and mental health professionals to be able to integrate aromatherapy into their practice, safely and effectively. Her work focuses primarily on the psychological and emotional effects of essential oils, known as psycho-aromatherapy. She is a consultant, educator, and wellness clinician and has taught at Normandale's Integrative Health Education Center since 2019.
