

Aromatherapy Comes of Age

Now that we have begun to understand the mystery of smell and its relationship to the brain, what relevance is there for us?

Walk into any gift store that sells scented candles, and you'll often respond with, "Oh, it smells soooo good in here!" We are naturally drawn to things that smell good and scented products attract consumers because they evoke various emotions, thoughts and memories.

Even the ancient Egyptians enjoyed the aromas from lit candles, further validating that our attraction to pleasant scents is inherent and not a passing trend. We have progressed, however, from filling our homes with sweet smelling candles to a wide variety of other products intended to satisfy this olfactory need.

We no longer have to depend on scented candles or aerosol sprays. Infusers, simmer pots, and plug-ins are just some of the many products that we're using to scent our homes and workplaces. Aromatherapy is receiving further acclaim by highlighting various types of aromas that produced changes in moods and emotions.

Research Worthy of a Nobel Prize

In 2004, a Nobel Prize was awarded to researchers Linda Buck and Richard Axel who published a research paper on odorant receptors and the organization of the olfactory system. Never before has anyone uncovered the genes and proteins that control the responses that result from this sense.

With each of our olfactory-receptor cells producing a single odorant receptor gene, they determined that there are as many types of olfactory-receptor cells as there are odorant receptors. Since most odors result from a combination of odorant molecules, with each odorant molecule activating multiple odorant receptors, an odorant pattern is formed. As a result, we are able to recognize approximately 10,000 different odors, with each odor having the potential to evoke a memory.

Odors travel up the nose to a patch of nerve cells located above the eyes. From this olfactory bulb, smells go to the higher brain areas that are responsible for conscious discrimination and to the more primitive areas that control emotions.

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Smell is a chemical sense. When a person's olfactory receptors are stimulated, they transmit impulses to the limbic system in the brain. This part of the brain deals directly with emotions. That's the reason that a person usually reacts to a smell, either in a positive or a negative manner. Smells evoke memories. Memories evoke emotions. This is because of the limbic system.

Through the gentle, yet powerful, stimulation of the limbic system, moods, emotions, and other effects on the mind and body can be manipulated through scent. Since the fastest way to change our emotions is through our sense of smell, this sense is our most primitive, yet most influential sense.

True aromatherapy involves the use of pure essential oils. Although expensive, using pure essential oils is the only way to ensure that the desired result will occur. Synthetic oils do not contain the therapeutic properties of quality essential oils and can cause rashes, burns and other irritations. Our brain's feel good chemicals (serotonin or endorphins) are released through certain aromatic scents.

Long before prescription drugs were our mainstay, people used plant oils to heal many illnesses and emotional disorders. Popular uses of aromatherapy include treatment for stress, sleep disorders, anxiety, food cravings, depression and energy fluctuations.

Aromatherapy in the Corporate World

A school in Withington, UK takes the use of aromatherapy seriously. In addition to having the hallways and classrooms filled with the relaxing scent of lavender and the stimulating scent of orange, the school also has its own aromatherapist.

Kajima Construction Company, located in Tokyo, uses aromatherapy to improve productivity. During the mornings, the uplifting scent of lemon flows through the air-conditioning duct. The stress reducing smell of roses fills the plant and offices at mid-day and the afternoons are scented with cypress, a perfect choice for perking everyone up.

Peppermint works to lessen fatigue and dispel drowsiness of the associates at the Tokyo Stock Exchange. Companies like these have found this to be a simple and effective way to not only reduce stress, but also to instill a sense of well-being and alertness. Both morale and efficiency improve greatly

with the simple use of aromatherapy.

Psychologists agree that concentration, efficiency and mental stamina can all be improved by using aromatherapy. The real question now becomes, why aren't more companies discovering this simple truth?

Maybe it's because aromatherapy is still associated with fragrant gift shops that corporations just haven't learned to take the science of aromatherapy seriously. As with all innovative concepts, it will take awhile for the therapeutic value of aromatherapy to catch on. But once it does, you can count on the world being a sweeter place!

About the Author

Luke Vorstermans is the founder of The Sense of Smell Lab, a world leader in the development of innovative products that use our sense of smell to influence behavior, trigger memories, manage cravings, enhance moods and improve your sexual health. He is also the Official Guide to [Aromatherapy](#) on Selfgrowth.com. Learn about how to use Scent Therapy for optimum health and wellness at: www.scenttherapy.com

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