The Use of Essential Oils in the Process of Forgiveness

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Summer 2012
To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.” Lewis B. Smedes

INTRODUCTION

The motivation for this paper is to share the value of the journey of forgiveness that I have traveled. Through counseling, prayer, journaling, various creative outlets, and moral support of friends, the mountain of anger, bitterness, resentment and guilt as a result of long term abuse has been reduced to an anthill. I am now experiencing much more peace, joy and freedom. Although I did not know about the benefits of essential oils when I experienced the most difficult terrain of my journey, I truly believe they helped me when I began using them topically.

The purpose of this paper is to explain how essential oils impact physiological systems, to review research studies which indicate the beneficial emotional and physical effects, and to describe how essential oils can be used in the process of forgiveness. If any readers have any questions about my healing journey or the contents of this paper, you may contact me at pathofhope@msn.com.

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF HOW ESSENTIAL OILS IMPACT EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

When a fragrance is inhaled, the molecules of the odor go up the nose and into the olfactory membranes. These membranes are protected by the lining inside the nose. When stimulated by odor molecules, the nerve cells in the lining trigger electrical impulses to the olfactory bulb in the brain. This “light bulb” transmits impulses to the amygdala (where emotional memories are stored), and other parts of the limbic system. The limbic system is directly connected to those parts of the brain that control the heart rate, blood pressure, breathing,
memory, stress levels, and hormone balance. Thus, fragrance can have great physiological and psychological effects on an individual.

Anxiety, depression, fear, anger and joy all stem from the limbic lobe of the brain, known as the emotional control center. The limbic lobe can also directly activate the hypothalamus, which serves as our hormonal control center. The hypothalamus is referred to as “the master gland,” that controls growth hormones, sex hormones, thyroid hormones, and neurotransmitters such as serotonin.

Through their fragrance and unique molecular structure, essential oils can directly stimulate the limbic lobe and the hypothalamus through inhalation and topical use. Thus, they can be helpful in reducing stress, emotional trauma, energy levels, sex drive, and the growth/aging process. (Life Science Publishing, 2011; Price and Price, 2012).

In the Newsweek article, “Forgive and Let Live”, the correlation between unforgiveness and heart disease is described. Research suggests that unforgiveness, a combination of bitterness, anger, hatred, resentment and fear of being hurt or humiliated again have physiological consequences such as hypertension and hormonal changes, which are connected with cardiovascular disease, immune suppression, and possibly impaired neurological and memory. Research also indicates that forgiveness helps to reduce the intensity of the negative emotions, can lower cortisol levels and improve overall health (Newsweek, September 27, 2004). Essential oils can play a key role in helping to process the emotions from deep hurts for better emotional and physical health.
Definition of Forgiveness

The motivation to forgive is usually because a person wants to stop the pain in one’s life – to heal and move on. What is forgiveness? There could be a multitude of definitions pending on varying perspectives. According to a study with a group of experienced clinicians who incorporate forgiveness into therapy, it is “an inner process where the injured person without the request of the other releases those negative feelings and no longer seeks to return hurt, and this process has physical, psychological and emotional benefits.” (Denton, Martin p. 288).

Robert Enright, a psychologist, professor of educational psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and lead researcher at the International Forgiveness Institute has chosen to incorporate the definition of philosopher Joanna North of Great Britain in his work.

“we overcome the resentment toward the offender, not by denying our right to the resentment, but instead by trying to offer the wrongdoer compassion, benevolence, and love; as we give these, we as forgivers realize that the offender does not necessarily have a right to such gifts.” Enright, 2001, p. 25).

Enright makes it clear that forgiving begins with pain and that we have a right to our feelings. He proposes 4 steps move through the forgiveness process. These steps coincide with the ones described by experienced clinicians in Denton and Martin’s study (2000).

Phase I – Uncovering Your Anger
Phase II – Deciding to Forgive
Phase III – Working on Forgiveness
Phase IV – Discovery and Release from Emotional Prison” (Enright, 2001, p.78)

In Enright’s book, *Forgiveness Is A Choice: A Step-by-Step Process for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope*, he recommends that you find a companion to talk to about each aspect of the forgiveness process. This may be a confidante who has traveled the road of forgiveness or a
therapist. He also recommends getting a journal to process the emotions and thoughts that come up. It is best to begin with one person, one injury, or pattern of injury (Enright, 2001). In addition to Enright’s book, there are several creative ways to process emotions that I will share from my personal experience. Essential oils can assist in each phase of forgiveness.

Phase I – Uncovering Your Anger (And Other Emotions)

During this phase, the following issues need to be addressed.

- “How have you avoided dealing with your anger?
- Have you faced your anger?
- Are you afraid to expose shame or guilt?
- Has your anger effected your health?
- Have you been obsessed about the injury or offender?
- Has injury caused permanent change in your life or changed worldview?”
  (Enright, 2001, p. 78)

There are different ways to deal with anger and cover the inner wounds—stuffing the feelings, which can lead to depression, being anxiety driven about issues other than the offense, or through displaced anger via aggressive verbal/physical behavior (Enright, 2000). Studies have shown that essential oils can lower all three defense mechanisms.

Research Studies: Depression and Anxiety- Depression has physical, psychological, and social effects which lower vitality, interest, libido, and loss of insight. Anxiety consists of a combination of physical and psychological responses to threat, whether real or perceived. The anxiety may stem from the environment or arise from the unconscious part of the brain. (Lemon, 2004)

In a research study performed at Surrey Oaklands NHS Trust’s Day Hospital treatment plan, 32 patients that were diagnosed with either depression or anxiety or a combination of both.
The test group received 6 forty minute massages with essential oils bi-weekly. All nine oils that were used for various blends were empirically reported to potentially reduce depression and anxiety, as well as presenting physical symptoms, i.e. headaches, insomnia. The control group received the same number of massages in the same manner, but without the oils (Lemon, 2004).

The following oils were selected for their claimed effects according to Lawless, who wrote, *Aromatherapy and the Mind, 1994*.

Bergamot (*Citrus lergamia*) - light, fresh fragrance that’s uplifting to the mind, lifting one out of depression. It can stimulate or sedate the nervous system and calm fears.

Clary sage (*Salvia sclarea*) – can be euphoric, but consistently has a deep relaxing effect, and helpful for alleviating muscular stress and tension. It was also included for treating hormone related disorders.

Lemon (*Citrus limon*) - refreshing and uplifting and been found to have a psychologically strengthening effect on depressed or fearful patients.

Lavender (*Lavendula angustifolia*) – invaluable for those who suffer from widely fluctuating mood states, and feelings of emotional instability, including hysteria and manic depression. It can also help with feelings of anxiety and insomnia.

Roman chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*) – has a mildly sedating effect without being depressive. Good for people with emotional upsets, especially those prone to allergies.

Geranium (*Pelargoniualu graveolens*) – like clary sage, it was selected for its affinity for women’s conditions. It has an excellent regulatory effect on the body, including the nervous system.

Rose otto (*Rosa damascene*) – has a mild sedative and anti-depressant effect. It’s excellent for emotional shock, bereavement and grief.

Sandalwood (*Santalum album*) – included as a masculine scent, and it has a grounding and opening effect on the psyche. It’s beneficial for depression, anxiety, and stress related disorders.

Jasmine (*Jasminum officinalis*) – boosts a person’s sense of self-worth and confidence. It’s very beneficial for treating the lethargy associated with depression. (Lemon, 2004).

Both groups took questionnaires on a monthly basis for 3 months. The clients were monitored by their key worker in one-one sessions using the Montgomery-Asberg Depression
Rating Scale (MADRS) or the Tyrer Brief Anxiety Scale (TBAS). The clients also completed a Hospital Depression Anxiety Scale (HADS). Both groups benefited from the massages. Although there was a disproportionate number of more severely depressed or anxious clients assigned to the test group, there was a significant improvement according to all 3 questionnaires (Lemon, 2004).

In another study at Mie Hospital in Japan, 12 patients with major depressive disorder found that inhalation of a citrus oil blend was very effective in treating the symptoms. These patients spent most of the day with a blend of diffused lemon, orange, bergamot, and cis-4-hexenol for 11 weeks. The control group and the test group participated in the same types of other psychological treatments, but in different rooms. After 11 weeks, the Citrus test group had remarkable results. Nine patients were able to discontinue the anti-depressants completely, and the anti-depressant dosage was markedly reduced for the other 3 patients. The control group who only used anti-depressants needed to remain on the same doses of anti-depressants. In addition, the urinary cortisol and dopamine levels were reduced and normalized by the patients with the citrus oil treatment and the mean levels were significantly lower than the patients treated solely with anti-depressants. (Kamari, Fujiwara, Tanida, Noura, and Yokoyama, 1995).

The above studies, as well as several other studies summarized by Perry and Perry (2006) in the article, “Aromatherapy in the Management of Psychiatric Disorders: Clinical and Neuropharmacological Perspectives” indicate that essential oils can have a significant difference in alleviating the symptoms of depression and anxiety.

How can the above studies be applied to the process of forgiveness in practical ways to help depression and anxiety?

Practical Strategies for Overcoming Depression and Anxiety
1. Make a topical blend for daily use.

To increase energy levels and open up the mind for clarity of thinking, make a topical 1-2% blend, pending on the severity of the depression, anxiety, and personal olfactory preference. Initially, a depressed person may need the assistance of a friend due to the lethargy associated with depression.

Instructions for 1-2 % Topical Use Blend
1 oz of carrier oil i.e. grapeseed or jojoba oil.
6-12 drops total of any anti-depressant or anti-anxiety oils
Put on your neck, wrists, and/or feet a few times per day.

(Caution -- Do not use bergamot if you are exposed to the sun, since it’s phototoxic. Up to 12 drops of lemon can be used in the sun without being phototoxic).

Oils can be chosen from the ones used in the above studies: bergamot, clary sage, geranium, jasmine, lemon, lavender (lavendula angustifolia), roman chamomile, rose otto, sandalwood, and sweet orange. All of these oils are listed as both anti-depressant and anti-anxiety on Stillpoint Aromatics Website, (2012). A list of other anti-depressant and anti-anxiety essential oils can be found by doing a search on at:


2. Fill your home with an uplifting scent with a diffuser.

Diffusion Instructions

Add A few drops of citrus oil or other anti-depressant oils in a diffuser in the main room of the home.

By using the oils topically or inhaling them through diffusion, the depression or anxiety can be lifted enough to be able to do more self-reflection that is needed to move through the process of forgiveness.

Just as the patients who received more benefits from using the essential oils with the
massages in comparison to the patients that received plain massages, I would hypothesize that whatever steps are made to work through unprocessed emotions would gain more benefit if essential oils were a part of it.

3. **Journaling** – to clear the emotions that may hinder the journaling process:
   a. Apply the oils topically immediately before writing.
   b. Inhale directly from the blend or 100% pure essential oil bottle before writing.
   c. Journal in a room where oils are being diffused.
   d. Make a Worry Box and A Gratitude Box
   Place all your worries in a box. Place a couple of drops of a calming oil in the box. Imagine the fragrance carrying the worries to God. Each time you have a new worry, add them to the box, and experience the soothing effect of the oil. If you are obsessively worrying, keep adding the same request to the box until you can truly release it.

   Do the same with a Gratitude Box. Add a couple of drops of uplifting oils. Add things you are grateful for into the box. The uplifting oil and the act of gratitude can instill more hope to continue through the process of forgiveness.
   e. Express your emotions through creative outlets i.e. music, art, dance. Use your favorite oils to foster the release of your emotions either with inhalation or topical use.

**Safe Ways to Address Anger**

Anger regarding a hurt needs to be expressed in a safe manner, and not displaced toward others. In a research experiment with mice, the chemical component linalool decreased both anxiety and aggressive behavior in mice since they are CNS (Central Nervous System) sedatives
Thus, linalool rich oils would be good options to help diffuse anger. According to the Aromatics International Website, 2012) chemical component search, the following oils have 50% or more linalool: sweet basil (Ocimum basilicum ct linalool), Coriander (Coriandrum sativum), ghandi root (homalomena aromatic), Ho wood (cinnaomoimun camphor act teralol), and rosewood (Aniba rosaedora). Linaloe berry (Bursera delpechiana has 40% linalool. Other CNS sedatives are sandalwood (Santalum album) and Oregano (origanum vulgare) (Stillpoint Aromatics Website, 2012). The above oils can be used in the following ways.

1. Diffusing linalool rich oils as previously described.
2. Topically as previously described.
3. Inhale just before journaling. Getting the anger out on paper then ripping up what you wrote is a great release. Your family members appreciates that the anger is released on paper instead of them. Or, you may not want to use the oils until after you released the anger on paper.
4. Gardening can be calming. Spray plants with a lavender oil spray (4-8 drops per gallon) as a natural insecticide, then weed out what’s choking the plants. This is symbolic of taking control – you’re protecting the plants you care about and weeding out the emotions/thoughts that are choking you.
5. Clean with essential oils – wipe away the crap inwardly as you clean outwardly. Citrus oils would be better for cleaning instead of linalool rich oils.

Green Up Your Clean Up by Jill Potvin Schoff has great cleaning recipes.

Recognizing the defense mechanisms that have been used to cover the hurt then leads to the other phases of forgiveness. According to Salvatore Battaglia (2005) and Aromatics
International Website (2012), there is a correlation between plant parts and emotional healing. The remaining phases will incorporate this information. The oils can be used in the same manner described in Phase I.

“Phase II – Deciding to Forgive

- Decide that what you have been doing hasn’t worked.
- Be willing to begin the forgiveness process.
- Decide to forgive.”
  (Enright, 2001, p. 78)

Wood Essential Oils -- The properties of oils that are extracted from wood reflect the very nature of the trees. They can provide strength and endurance needed to face life’s challenges. Wood oils are centering, and have the ability to open up our consciousness without losing control. Use of these oils can be very helpful in the process of deciding whether or not to forgive. These oils can also reduce muscular pain that may be associated with stress. (Battaglia, 2005, Aromatics International Website, 2012). These oils include: Blue Cypress - *Callitris intratropica*, Cedarwood - *Juniperus virginiana*, Cedarwood (Indian) - *Cedrus deodara*, Ho Wood - *Cinnamomun camphora ct linalol*, Palo Santo (Holy Wood) - *Bursera graveolens*, Rosewood - *Aniba rosaeodora*, Sandalwood - *Santalum album* (Aromatics International Website).

“Phase III – Working on Forgiveness

- Work toward understanding. Gaining a perspective of the offender
- Work toward compassion.
- Accept the pain.
- Give the offender a gift.”
  (Enright, 2001, p. 78)

Resin Essential Oils – Resin oils support reflection. When a cut is made into a resin-producing tree, resin seeps out to help heal the wound. Just as the resin heals the tree, they are helpful for healing wounds of an emotional nature. Historically, resins have been used for meditation,

“Phase IV – Discovery and Release from Emotional Prison

- Discover the meaning of suffering.
- Discover your need for forgiveness.
- Discover that you are not alone.
- Discover the purpose of your life.
- Discover the freedom of forgiveness.” (Enright, 2001, p. 78).

Flower Essential Oils – Giving flowers is a way of offering love, friendship, forgiveness, and soothing the heart and mind. Oils made from flowers tend to promote self-confidence, creativity, and new energy (Aromatics International Website, 2012). The flower is the plant’s ultimate achievement. Flowers produce the aroma that attracts insects for pollination, which is symbolic for birth and new beginnings (Battaglia, 2005).

Use of Essential Oils in Process of Forgiveness

Roseann Dennerlein

Melaleuca teretifolia, Jasmine absolute - Jasminum grandiflorum, Lavender - Lavandula angustifolia, Marjoram (Sweet) - Origanum marjorana, Melissa - Melissa officinalis, Neroli - Citrus aurantium var. amara, Neroli/Petitgrain Co-Distill - Citrus aurantium var amara (Flowers and Leaves), Rose absolute - Rose damascena, Rose/ Geranium co-distill - Rosa damascena/Pelargouium Roseum X Asperum, Rosemary ct verbenone - Rosmarinus officinalis ct verbenone/camphor, Spike Lavender - Lavandula latifolia, Thyme (Benchmark) - Thymus zygis Loefl L., Thyme ct linalol - Thymus vulgaris ct linalol, Thyme ct thymol - Thymus vulgaris ct thymol, Yarrow - Achillea millefolium, Ylang Ylang (complete) - Cananga odorata (Aromatics International Website, 2012)

Conclusion

Like flowers are the ultimate achievement of a plant, forgiveness is the glory of the heart. The beauty that springs forth reaches beyond what the human eye can see or imagine.
REFERENCES


Love essential oils but not sure how to benefit from them? Discover 12 go-to oils and 60+ essential oils uses to enhance your health and well-being. It will also help speed the healing process due to its tissue regeneration properties.

3. Foot callus softener/remover. Rub several drops of orange oil into the affected area prior to putting on your socks and shoes. Skin anti-aging. Orange oil helps promote the production of collagen in the skin. It also helps the body detoxify, increases circulation, and improves skin tone and texture. Add a drop to skin care products such as toner and/or moisturizer to improve skin appearance and decrease the signs of aging.

Lemon Essential Oil. In your cooking. Lemon oil is one of the most popular essential oils... Essential Oils and individual components in Food Flavouring substances are used in processed foods and beverages to impart desirable organoleptic qualities and to provide the specific flavour profile traditionally associated with certain food products. Unlike many substances which are added to food to achieve a technological purpose, the use of flavouring substances is generally self-limiting and governed by the flavour intensity required to provide the necessary organoleptic appeal.

The Forgiveness & Essential Oil Connection - Intro - Oils of Shakan. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. Luke 11:4 (NIV) Forgiveness and essential oils? Rosie shared some of her own personal testimony in regards to forgiveness along with how the use of essential oils can facilitate the process of.

Forgiveness Essential Oil helps you forgive, forget and release hurts of the past; and move to a place of forgiveness. More here... Forgiveness essential oil has this effect. Using it daily can raise your vibration and allow the soul to forgive, forget and release on so many levels. And as we know with most emotional and physical blocks (and disease), our first step starts when we can release denial and begin to forgive ourselves.

My own interest in essential oils and herbal remedies derives from the maternal side of my family who came from Finland, where home ‘simples’ retained popularity long after they had vanished from most parts of Britain. My Finnish grandmother knew a great deal about herbs and wild plants which she passed on to my mother, as she recalls. At the beginning of the 1990s, aromatherapy was still considered a fringe practice and the use of essential oils in the home was by no means widespread. However, as scientific trials and clinical research have continued to confirm the potentiality of essential oils, they have become increasingly respected within the medical arena.