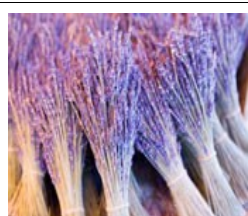


The Power of Aroma

by Denise Wickell, LMT, CA, RA

It has been said that our sense of smell is the strongest of our five senses. No doubt, aromas are very powerful; they can take us to a very deep space or immediately cut through negativity, creating an opportunity for profound healing, insight, or transition. Aromas are so powerful that our perception of them bypasses our analytical thinking and evokes an immediate emotional response. It is only after we experience these instantaneous emotions and memories that routine thought processes are again engaged.



Think of the moments when an experience from your past arose simply from perceiving an aroma -- perhaps upon smelling lavender sachets or bread or apple pie baking in the oven, you have been transported back to nostalgic childhood moments, perhaps visiting your grandmother's house for the holidays, and remembering feelings of warmth, comfort, and love. For those few seconds, it's as if someone hit the pause button. However brief, nothing else exists in your mind except that particular memory and feeling. It is later that routine thought patterns return.

Aromatherapy with essential oils can be a very influential but gentle tool for helping us take a pause and for "getting out of our own way." Many times, we don't even know that we habitually obstruct our own potential for deeper, more meaningful experiences in our daily lives. We are so busy as a society, on auto-pilot so to speak, that we may not notice small, everyday gifts that are with us from moment to moment. Essential oils can help us take a pause and redirect our awareness and our habitual patterns. Allow me to share a story of aromatherapy and a very enriching client experience.

I have enjoyed working with one particular client named Anita for over six years. She enjoys the same basic massage each time I see her. The session is adjusted to suit her particular needs, a little more neck work, more back work, etc, as her body requires, but it's basically the same massage routine each month.

This client has also become an aromatherapy enthusiast. So I decided to surprise her one day with an extra treat. At the start of the session, I opened a bottle of very premium grade Frankincense essential oil and asked if she like it. She took a sniff, her eyes rolled, and she smiled; she loved it! To start her massage, I put 2 drops of the pure Frankincense liquid in my palms, rubbed my hands together quickly, and began with a scalp massage. Occasionally I would cup my hands over her nose and allow her to inhale the magical molecules. Then I massaged her neck, posterior and anterior, and again hovered my hands over her nose.

Anita is normally a very talkative client; she doesn't usually quiet down until about half way through her massage. That happens to be "her way" and I respect that that's what she needs to do. Her chatter is her mode of not only visiting with me, but a means of expressing her feelings, processing life's encounters, and calming down. But not that day. I noticed right away that she was very quiet and thoroughly relaxed. In fact, she uttered not a peep for the entire hour after the Frankincense was introduced.

I went through my usual strokes and techniques for my client. In the past, she would sometimes drowse off to sleep after decompressing--30 minutes or so into the session--but she was not sleeping this day either. The treatment room was a sacred space; both of us were as peaceful as contemplative nuns in meditation, she receiving the massage and I mindfully performing it.

When the hour past, I silently stepped out, washed up, and waited for her to take her time and dress. When my client opened the door to let me back in the treatment room, she exclaimed, "oh my goodness, what did you do?!" Without giving me a chance to answer, she continued, "that was the same massage you always give me, but it was different, I could feel **everything!** I could feel every single little part and muscle being massaged!"

With a dinner date to get to, she left fairly quickly. But Anita called me a week or so later. "Denise," she began, "I'm still thinking about that incredible massage, but you didn't do anything any different."

"I used the Frankincense, Anita," I replied.

"Oh Denise," she paused and thought, "was that it? I've got to have some of that for myself!"

So, what happened during this particular massage?

In my opinion, the Frankincense focused the client's energies, cutting through the superficial mind-swirl and allowing access to deeper sensitivities and discernment. This focused energy brought forth an innate inner aspect which allowed her access to observe and sink deeper into the experience. Her consciousness was expanded as well as simultaneously grounded and centered.



As mentioned at the beginning of this article, essential oils bypass our analytical thinking and allow us to just *be*. In this particular case, my client's mind chatter stopped and a distinctive, tuned-in, unobstructed awareness became pronounced.

So what's the message in this story?

It's that the impact of introducing essential oils into your personal daily life (or massage practice) has the potential to bring very profound, inspirational, enriching results. *The essential oils make the change for you, and for the client, even if you change nothing else.* Essential oils can set the tone for the entire appointment. They can help you get out of your own way, to clear your agenda and your head, and simply be present to what unfolds moment to moment. Essential oils help cultivate a sacred space, and they may facilitate a change of habitual patterns for yourself and your client, paving the way for a deeper, more meaningful, more gratifying experience.

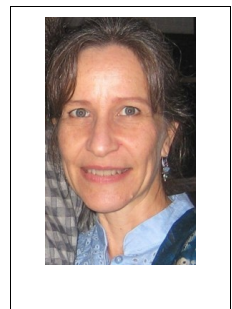
My client told me that was the best massage she had received from me in all the years that we had worked together, even though my massage routine was the same as usual. She said she was profoundly aware of each individual muscle, every fiber, every nuance of being touched. Two weeks later, she was still talking about it. And for the next massage appointment, she asked for the Frankincense again.

I highly recommend bringing essential oils to your massage practice, and into your own lifestyle practices. Ensure that your client likes the essential oil you suggest, or offer a few selections and let them choose what they like best. Often, people will choose what they need most at that moment. As an alternative to scalp massage, the oils can be applied to the feet or appropriately diluted and applied to the entire body. However, the most immediate response will come from direct inhalation of the oils.

My current favorites for promoting awareness, getting out of my own way, for cutting through stress, grief, or irritation, include Frankincense, Ocotea, and Fragonia. I invite you to call or email me; I look forward to hearing which oils are your favorites.

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Denise Wickell is owner and founder of Prima Body, LLC, and has enjoyed a private holistic health practice in North Palm Beach, Florida since 1995. Denise is a Certified Aromatherapist with clinical training by the accredited Australasian College of Health Sciences and Registered Aromatherapist through the Aromatherapy Registration Council. She is an approved Continuing Education Instructor & Provider for massage therapists through the state of Florida Department of Health and the NCBTMB, a national massage therapy organization. Denise's passion lies in offering aromatherapy consultations, treatments, products, and educational seminars.



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