

## Anxious or Feeling Down: Can Essential Oils Help? by Dorene Petersen

An earlier version of this article first appeared on the ACHS Health and Wellness Blog at:  
<http://info.achs.edu/blog/depression-and-anxiety-can-essential-oils-help>

There has been more open discussion than ever in the health and wellness community about emotional disorders like depression and anxiety. Talking about this difficult topic is an enormous step forward on the road to supporting those in need. A Registered Aromatherapist (RA) may be asked “How does aromatherapy work with depression and anxiety?” and “Can essential oils really help?”

With a 2014 study showing a link between anti-anxiety medications and dementia [1], there is more reason than ever for RAs to research the uplifting benefits of essential oils. Bergamot, clary sage, and lavender are three essential oils that research has shown can help support healthy mood.

### **Bergamot: A Powerful Mood-Booster**

One essential oil that stands out as a mood-booster is **bergamot** *Citrus aurantium* (L.) var. *bergamia*. Many citruses are acknowledged for their uplifting effects, but bergamot is particularly powerful.

There are a lot of historical and anecdotal reports of the calming and cheering effects of bergamot essential oil. There also are scientific studies supporting these claims.

A 2014 study with 58 hospice patients presented some interesting conclusions. [2] The hospice patients were given hand massages once a day for one week with an essential oil blend in 1.5% dilution with sweet almond oil. The essential oil blend consisted of the following essential oils in equal ratios:

- **Bergamot** *C. aurantium* var. *bergamia*
- **Frankincense** *Boswellia carterii* (Birdw.)
- **Lavender** *Lavandula angustifolia* (Mill.)

Here is the good news: *all* of the patients who received the aromatherapy hand massage reported less pain and depression. [3] No tests, however, were done on the separate essential oils. This study shows that aromatherapy massage with this specific essential oil blend is more effective for pain and depression management than massage alone. The next step would be to test the individual oils in a similar study.

### **What about anxiety?**

Another study conducted in Taiwan in 2011 provided clearer and more powerful evidence. The authors selected elementary school teachers, who are known to work under significant stress. The researchers used an inhalation of bergamot *C. aurantium* var. *bergamia* essential oil as the method of administration. They focused on the physiological stress signals that are easy to record and straightforward to interpret. They found that even a 10-minute-long weekly inhalation of aromatherapy resulted in a significant reduction of blood pressure and heart rate and drove autonomic nervous activity toward a balanced state. In addition, participants with moderate and high degrees of anxiety benefited more than the light anxiety group. [4]

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

In an animal study with mice, researchers even demonstrated that bergamot *C. aurantium* var. *bergamia* essential oil has calming properties that can be as strong as diazepam (valium) [5], although it is important to note that in this animal study, mice received injections of bergamot *C. aurantium* var. *bergamia* essential oil. Injections with bergamot oil in humans is not recommended, but inhalation or diluted topical application could be effective.

### Anti-Stress Blend

Here is a floral blend that may be supportive to clients coping with stress or sadness:

**Lavender** *Lavandula angustifolia* oil: 5 drops

**Ylang ylang** *Cananga odorata* var. *genuina* oil: 3 drops

**Bergamot** *Citrus aurantium* var. *bergamia* oil: 2 drops

Blend the oils and add 3 drops to a full bath or use a foot or hand bath once daily. Adding this formula to liquid soap and using it daily in the shower is also an effective alternative.

### Clary Sage: Clear, Calm, and Content

The English name *clary* originates from the Latin *sclarea*, which was derived from *clarus*, meaning “clear.” **Clary sage** *Salvia sclarea* (L.) essential oil thus can be thought of as “clearing” away the dark clouds of one’s mood, as it has traditionally been known for its uplifting and euphoric actions. This is an oil that can be recommended to clients to diffuse before bed or add to the bath for a relaxing, restorative soak.

### Where is the research?

A 2010 research study with rats documented the antidepressant effects of clary sage *S. sclarea* essential oil [6], suggesting that it could be a useful holistic addition for those coping with depression and anxiety.

Additionally, a randomized controlled trial in 2013 suggested that clary sage *S. sclarea* essential oil may be useful — more so than lavender *Lavandula angustifolia* [Mill.] — in reducing stress for female patients undergoing urodynamic assessment. [7]

## 2016 EXAMINATION DATES

**April 2-16, 2016**

Application Deadline: 3/1/2016

**October 1-15, 2016**

Application Deadline: 9/1/2016

Download a Handbook and Application at  
[www.ptcny.com/clients/ARC](http://www.ptcny.com/clients/ARC)

**RA EXAM AVAILABLE IN JAPANESE AND KOREAN**  
 The Aromatherapy Registration Council was established in 1999 as a resource for a growing community of aromatherapists. Since that time, we are pleased to say that hundreds of aromatherapists have elected to take and have passed the Registered Aromatherapist Exam, which continues to strengthen our aromatherapy community by affirming our shared commitment to a core body of aromatherapy knowledge and public safety. Our community continues to grow! In fact, we have gone global! ARC now offers the Registered Aromatherapist Exam in Japanese and Korean. Candidates can sit the exam in Japan! Soon the Exam will be available for candidates to take in Chinese, too! If you or an aromatherapist you know would like more information on the Japanese or Korean Registered Aromatherapist Exam, or forthcoming Exam in Chinese, you can find more information on the ARC website.

### Relaxing Bath

This relaxing bath blend could be an effective recipe to recommend:

**Clary sage** *Salvia sclarea* essential oil: 3 drops

**Ylang ylang** *Cananga odorata* var. *genuina* essential oil: 2 drops

Add the essential oil to the bath after it is full. Mix the oils well and immerse oneself for a wonderful, relaxing soak.

### Lavender: The Purple Flower of Peace

It is no secret that the author is a big fan of lavender *L. angustifolia* and its many therapeutic properties. Not only does it smell divine, but it is an extremely versatile herb and essential oil with a number of practical uses, including pest control, sleep support, and of course promoting a balanced mood.

In a small but relevant double-blind trial, patients with mild to moderate depression showed improvement after receiving 60 drops of lavender tincture (1:5 in 50% alcohol) per day. [8]

A study in 2007 also showed that, in healthy men, lavender aromatherapy reduced serum cortisol, which plays a central role in the body's response to stress. [9] The researchers concluded, "These findings suggest that lavender aromatherapy has relaxation effects and may have beneficial acute effects on coronary circulation."

Further, research suggests that it is possible that lavender essential oil can be an effective substitute for other common and potentially addictive psychoactive drugs used for anxiety. A 2010 study investigated the use of lavender with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). When taken over six weeks, Silexan (an oral lavender oil capsule preparation) was shown to effectively relieve generalized anxiety comparable to a common benzodiazepine (lorazepam), a powerful psychoactive drug. [10] Researchers also noted:

"The safety of silexan was also demonstrated. Since lavender oil showed no sedative effects in our study and has no potential for drug abuse, silexan appears to be an effective and well tolerated alternative to benzodiazepines for amelioration of generalized anxiety."

It is important to note, however, that these studies were assessing the soothing properties of lavender *L. angustifolia* and **NOT** lavandin *Lavandula intermedia* (Emeric ex Loisel.), which can have stimulating effects. As a reminder, be sure to inform clients that it is crucial to check that the Latin name reads *Lavandula angustifolia* when using lavender essential oil for calming and therapeutic purposes.

### More Mood-Boosting Oils

While bergamot, clary sage, and lavender are excellent oils to support healthy mood, here are 10 more oils that can be recommended to calm clients, brighten their day, or both:

- **Basil** *Ocimum basilicum* (L.)
- **Geranium** *Pelargonium graveolens* (L'Her.)
- **Grapefruit** *Citrus paradisi* (Macfad.)
- **Lime** *Citrus aurantifolia* (Christm.)
- **Neroli** *Citrus aurantium* (L.) var. *amara*
- **Roman chamomile** *Chamaemelum nobile* (L.) All.
- **Rose** *Rosa damascena* (Mill.)
- **Sandalwood** *Santalum album* (L.)
- **Sweet orange** *Citrus sinensis* (Osbeck)
- **Ylang ylang** *Cananga odorata* (Lam.) var. *genuina*

### Is a Client Experiencing Symptoms of Depression or Anxiety?

While essential oils are wonderful additions to a wellness routine, depression and anxiety are serious mood disorders.

If a client is experiencing severe symptoms of depression or anxiety, please have him or her seek the attention of a trusted physician, naturopath, or mental health provider, who may in fact suggest an aromatherapy regime.

This article is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to treat, diagnose, cure, or prevent disease. This article has not been reviewed by the FDA. Always consult with a primary care physician or naturopathic doctor before making any significant changes to a health and wellness routine.

#### References:

- [1] de Gage, S., Moride, Y., Cucruet, T., Kurth, T., Verdoux, H. Tournier, M. et al (2014). Benzodiazepine use and risk of Alzheimer's disease: case-control study. *BMJ*, 349:g5205.
- [2] Chang, S.Y. (2008). Effects of aroma hand massage on pain, state anxiety and depression in hospice patients with terminal cancer. *Taehan Kanho Hakhoe Chi.*, 38(4):493-502.
- [3] Ibid.
- [4] Chang, K. & Shen, C. (2011). Aromatherapy Benefits Autonomic Nervous System Regulation for Elementary School Faculty in Taiwan. *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*. Retrieved from: <http://www.hindawi.com/journals/ecam/2011/946537/>
- [5] Saiyudthong, S. & Marsden, C.A. (2011). Acute effects of bergamot oil on anxiety-related behavior and corticosterone level in rats. *Phytother Res.*, 25(6):858-62.
- [6] Seol, G.H., Shim, H.S., Kim, P.J., Moon, H.K., Lee, K.H., Shim, I. et al (2010). Antidepressant-like effect of *Salvia sclarea* is explained by modulation of dopamine activities in rats. *J Ethnopharmacol.*, 130(1):187-90.
- [7] Seol, G.H., Lee, Y.H., Kang, P., You, J.H., Park, M., & Min, S.S. (2013). Randomized controlled trial for *Salvia sclarea* or *Lavandula angustifolia*: Differential effects on blood pressure in female patients with urinary incontinence undergoing urodynamic examination. *J Altern Complement Med.*, 19(7):664-70.
- [8] Akhondzadeh, S., Kashani, L., Fotouhi, A., Jarvandi, S., Mobaseri, M., Moin, M., et al. (2003). Comparison of *Lavandula angustifolia* Mill. tincture and imipramine in the treatment of mild to moderate depression: a double-blind, randomized trial. *Prog Neuropsychopharmacol Biol Psychiatry*, 27(1):123-7.
- [9] Shiina Y., Funabashi N., Lee K., Toyoda T., Sekine T., Honjo S., et al. (2007). Relaxation effects of lavender aromatherapy improve coronary flow velocity reserve in healthy men evaluated by transthoracic Doppler echocardiography. *Int J Cardiol.*, 127(2):193-7.
- [10] Woelk H. & Schlafke S. (2010). A multi-center, double-blind, randomized study of the lavender oil preparation Silexan in comparison to Lorazepam for generalized anxiety disorder. *Phytomedicine*, 17(2):94-9.

**About the author:** Dorene Petersen, BA, Dip.NT, Dip.Acu, RH (AHG), is the Founder, President, CEO, and Principal of the American College of Healthcare Sciences (ACHS). She has over 35 years of clinical teaching and lecturing experience in aromatherapy and other holistic health subjects. She has presented papers on essential oils and clinical aromatherapy at the International Federation of Essential Oils and Aroma Trades Annual Conference (IFEAT) in California, USA; the Aroma Environment Association of Japan (AEAJ) in Tokyo, Japan; the Asian Aroma Ingredients Congress (AAIC) and Expo in Bali, Indonesia; the International Center of Advanced Aromatherapy (ICAA) at the WonGwang Digital University in Seoul, Korea; the AAIC Expo in Kunming, Yunnan, China; as well as the Northwest Regional Lavender Conference II in Portland, Oregon. Dorene currently serves as Chair of the Aromatherapy Registration Council (ARC), and she also is active with the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC).

#### How you can get involved

There are many ways you can get involved with ARC activities. One of the easiest ways is by writing test questions for an upcoming ARC examination. You may also participate in an ARC item review session to review potential test questions. In addition, you may write articles for the ARC Newsletter. All of these activities also qualify for contact hours for reregistration. Check the reregistration guidelines at [www.ptcny.com/clients/ARC/index.html](http://www.ptcny.com/clients/ARC/index.html). If you would like to help in any of these capacities, contact ARC for further information at (503) 244-0726 or [info@aromatherapycouncil.org](mailto:info@aromatherapycouncil.org).

Congratulations to the aromatherapists who registered in October 2014:

Eun Young AHN	Misun BAE	Seon In BAE	Min Ha BAN
Michelle Susan BOYER	Cynthia E. BROWNLEY	Seul-Gi CHAE	Akiko K. CHOI
Soon Kyoung CHOI	Anna S. DOXIE	Lynne A. ELMAN	Marjorie A. GORE
Jin Hui HAN	Vickie Lynn HAREMZA	Eun Ae HEO	Tomoko HINO
Jin Young HWANG	Eun Jin JANG	Mimi JO	Young Do JO
Young-Hee JUN	Da Wun JUNG	Duckhee KIM	Gwangsook KIM
Hyo-Shin KIM	Jihye KIM	Min Jae KIM	Minjung KIM
Su Jung KIM	Yeon Joo KIM	Chae Yeon LEE	Hyeon Ji LEE
Ki Hoon LEE	Sae Ra LEE	Sol LEE	Olivia J. MCNISH
Nae Sook MOON	Joy MUSACCHIO	Hye Won NAM	Min A. NAM
Yumi ONG	Emiko ONO	Eun Ok PARK	Gyoung Hoo PARK
Jeong Seol PARK	You Hee PARK	Rebecca S. RHODES	Jung Eun SEO
Takako WARD	Eun Ju WOO	Youn Hee YANG	Youn Sun YI
Ye Som YU	Hyangmi YUN		

Congratulations to the aromatherapists who reregistered in Fall 2014:

By Examination:

Rieko SAKURAMOTO

By Continuing Education Units:

Marilyn K. BOERNER	Patricia J. BONNARD	Lora C. CANTELE	Mary Ellen D. CASSMAN
Jennifer R. DOZIER	Barbara M. ENTEEN	Noel P. GILLIGAN	Bridget L. KELLEY
Kathy E. KLUG	Sunyoung KWON	Amber-Lee MCLEAN	

Congratulations to the aromatherapists who registered in April 2015:

Soo Young AHN	Jaeyong AN	Eun Ji BAE	Keunah BAE
Carole A. BERG	Katrina M. BODMANN	Minkyong CHA	Miyeong CHO
Sookhee CHO	Yoo Jung CHOI	Ivy CHUANG	Holly DRAPER
Junghee HONG	Eun Yoo JANG	Miran JANG	Hye Lim JEONG
Hyangsuk JUNG	Doyoon KIM	Hye Ryon KIM	Jandee KIM
Misun KIM	Sujung KIM	Ye Sol KIM	You Soo KIM
Young Sug KIM	Sunyoung KOH	Lorna M. LIGON-POWELL	Hyeyoung LEE
Kyoungmin LEE	Kyungjin LEE	Young Ju LEE	Ji Ha LIM
Heawon PARK	Suhyeon PARK	Lana D. SEPOLEN	Amie THERIAULT
Jeong-Min WOO	Sunhee YONG		

Congratulations to the aromatherapists who reregistered in Spring 2015:

By Examination:

Michelle BARDWELL	Nobuko ISHIDA	Kiyomi NODA	Kwihyun PARK
Si Yeon PARK			

By Continuing Education Units:

Mi Seon AHN	Diane C. BRAYBROOK	Sandy DURAND	Seung KIM
Chae Won LEE	Younji SHIN	Su Jin WON	Sun Young YUN

To keep your directory details up to date, visit the ARC website at: <http://www.aromatherapycouncil.org>. Also please visit the ARC Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/AromatherapyCouncil?ref=hl>