Your Guide to Using Essential Oils for Anxiety Relief

by BRANDY OSTLER

How Essential Oil Therapy Can Help With Your Anxiety

For those who struggle with anxiety, finding adequate relief can be a challenge, particularly if you are looking for alternatives to harsh or habit-forming medications. More and more people are looking for viable natural remedies to help combat the often overwhelming feelings that accompany anxiety. Luckily, there are some promising options available, including essential oil therapy.

What Are Essential Oils?

In the simplest of terms, essential oils are natural oils that have been separated from plants through distillation or mechanical processing. They have been used for centuries and were once thought to be the life force, the fifth or “quintessential” element, of plants. They are aromatic in nature and are believed to have healing properties.

What to Look For?

There is a difference between essential oils and fragrance oils. Essential oils are always natural while fragrance oils are synthetically made. These synthetic materials do not contain medicinal properties and may not be safe to use on your skin. When selecting essential oils, look for those that are labeled as “therapeutic” grade.

How to Use Essential Oils

Topically

Although some essential oils can be safely applied directly to the skin (such as lavender), most should be diluted with a base or “carrier oil.” Good base oils include coconut, sesame, or sweet almond. You only need a couple of drops of the essential oil for each teaspoon of the carrier oil for a 2% dilution, which is considered ideal for most adults and in most situations.

You can massage the prepared essential oil into the skin or use a compress. Common application areas include the wrists and back of the neck.

Inhalation

Under certain circumstances, you might find inhalation a more desired method for essential oil therapy. This is particularly true if you have sensitive skin or are seeking a quick result. I have personally found this to be the best method for dealing with anxiety. There are a variety of techniques you can use when inhaling essential oils:

- **Diffusion:** Essential oils are placed in a diffusing device with water and released into the air. They often contain a timer for convenience. This method results in a mild, constant exposure.
- **Evaporation:** Place a few drops of the desired oil on a cotton ball or tissue. Cup it in your hands close to

your face and breathe in deeply. Alternatively, you can keep the cotton ball or tissue in your immediate vicinity as it evaporates resulting in slower exposure.
- **Steam:** Add a few drops of oil to a hot, steaming bowl of water. Place your head over the bowl and cover with a towel. Breathe in deeply for an intense dose. Alternatively, you can use a hot wash cloth with several drops and hold it close to your face.
- **Spray:** Place several drops of the desired essential oil in a water-filled spray bottle. Use the mist setting and spray the solution into the air. Be sure to shake the bottle first to ensure a good mixture.

Combination

A great way to combine topical absorption and inhalation is through a soothing essential oil bath! Add a few drops of the desired oil to your warm bath and soak. The essential oil will be absorbed through your skin while providing a comfortable aromatic experience.

However, it is important to remember that essential oils are not water soluble, so you might want to add a dispersing agent. Suggestions include a few tablespoons of milk, bath salts, or a bath base consisting of one part baking soda, two parts Epsom salt, and three parts sea salt.

Next page: one more option for using essential oils, and a list of the most helpful oils for anxiety sufferers.

How to Use Essential Oils

Internally

There are mixed opinions as to the safety of ingesting essential oils. The majority of experts suggest that you do not ingest essential oils, but others state they have safely done so — often through cooking. Some essential oils have been infused in toothpaste and I have read recommendations regarding gargling. However, in both of these instances, the essential oils are not actually swallowed.

You can even find essential oil suppositories for sale (or instructions to make your own). At any rate, any internal application of essential oils should only be done under the recommendation and supervision of a licensed health care professional.

How Do Essential Oils Work?

- **Skin absorption:** Our skin is permeable. When essential oils are applied to the skin, the active chemicals are absorbed into the body much like pharmaceutical creams.
- **Aromatherapy:** the smell receptors in your nose communicate with the part of your brain that controls emotions. When you breathe in essential oil molecules, this part of your brain is stimulated, which influences your emotional health.

Specific Essential Oils for Anxiety

So now that you understand what essential oils are and how they work, it’s important to know which oils work best for controlling anxiety. Keep in mind that there are a number of essential oil companies to choose from, and most of them have created specialized blends for a multitude of ailments, including anxiety. However, there are plenty of single oils that work well and are readily available! The top five are explained below.

- **Lavender:** This is probably one of the most versatile essential oils you can find. It works great in the diffuser or the bath and is one of the only essential oils that can be applied directly to the skin without a carrier oil. The scent is calming, resulting in a relaxed mood and state of mind.
- **Wild orange:** This essential oil is a mood booster! The citrus scent will enhance your overall well-being and promote feelings of happiness.
- **Bergamot:** This oil is said to be a stress reducer. It can ease tension, elevate your mood, and promote

relaxation.

- **Ylang ylang:** This oil is said to balance emotions. It accomplishes this by releasing negative emotions and nurturing positive emotions. The calming effect relaxes the mind and has been shown to reduce stress, tension and elevated blood pressure.
- **Clary sage:** This oil has a calming and sedating influence on nerves and emotions. It can help relieve nervousness, tension, stress and depression, and helps create a more positive outlook.

Additional “mood-boosting” oils include basil, lime, grapefruit, rose, orange, geranium, and sandalwood. Like the ones listed above, these can be used topically or aromatically to create the desired effect. Some of the blends that have been created to relieve anxiety from the top essential oil companies include:

- **doTERRA**: Balance, Serenity, and Elevation
- **Young Living:** Valor, Peace and Calming, Joy, Harmony, Stress Away
- **Native American Nutritionals/Rocky Mountain Oils:** Aligning, Calming, Balance
- **Eden’s Garden:** Align, Relaxation, Stress Relief

Conclusion

It’s important to remember that everyone experiences feelings of anxiety from time to time. However, for those who suffer with an anxiety disorder, the condition can be debilitating. In addition to traditional treatments that include medication and counseling, essential oil therapy can bring about some much needed, fast-acting relief.

So, whenever you feel the next bout coming on, try a few drops of some of the suggested essential oils in a diffuser or apply them to your wrists and experience the calming effects for yourself! It may not completely alleviate the problem, but any improvement is well worth the effort!