



# Aromatherapy: Help for PTSD

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**P**ost-traumatic stress disorder, commonly known as PTSD, is an anxiety disorder that can develop after experiencing a traumatic event. Typically, this event threatens serious physical danger or involves physical violence. Following this experience, an individual may feel scared, confused or angry. However if these feelings continue long-term and become disruptive to daily activities, they may be suffering from PTSD.

Nearly 7.7 million Americans suffer from PTSD each year. Most public attention for PTSD is related to war veterans. However, PTSD can result from common events such as a car accident, natural disaster or personal assault. It is estimated that among veterans, the rate of PTSD is somewhere between 14-33%. Not everyone who experiences a traumatic event will suffer from PTSD but being aware of the symptoms and stressors could help with treatment and prevention.

Mood management therapy using pharmaceuticals is the most common way that PTSD is treated in the United States. Today, information regarding integrative therapies is more widespread and research substantiating the use of aromatherapy for depression, anxiety and emotional support is strengthening. All of these symptoms can be associated with PTSD.

Aromatherapy is the therapeutic use of essential oils to address various physical, mental and emotions concerns. For over 3,500 years, history has documented the use of essential oils for healing the body, mind and emotion. Recent modern day research has proven, for instance that lemon essential oil can be used to lift mild depression. Aromatherapy is a natural, less invasive treatment for chronic afflictions.

Many people with PTSD recover over time, but about 1 out of 3 experience PTSD as a recurring challenge. The use of aromatherapy in these cases has many advantages. If used correctly, they have minimal to no adverse side effects when used over time. Aromatherapy is also a healthy alternative, and essential oils when diluted and applied to the skin (or inhaled) can display almost immediate results.

Essential oils are distilled directly from plants. Essential oils are powerful and concentrated and should not be applied to the skin undiluted. Dilute with a carrier oil such as sweet almond oil or jojoba oil.

Using essential oils when treating PTSD should be part of a comprehensive program discussed with your Doctor and a Certified Aromatherapist as part of a consistent routine. The recommended integrative therapies solution is a combination of

wellness protocols such as holistic nutrition, aromatherapy and tai chi or qigong. To compliment a balanced and consistent program, here are some suggestions for simple, yet effective uses of aromatherapy at home.

1. Diffuse undiluted essential oils into the air on a room by room basis to assist with mood balancing. Inexpensive room diffusers can be purchased locally.
2. Put a few drops of essential oils in a handful of Epsom salts and add to your bath water or a relaxing foot soak.
3. Add essential oils to a spray bottle with water and spritz your pillow at bedtime for a good night sleep.
4. Carry an inhaler with essential oils for quick relief of feelings of anxiety or depression.

Essential oils known for their anti-anxiety and antidepressant qualities include:

Bergamot, Chamomile, Geranium, Lavender, Lemon, Pine, Rose, Rosemary and Sandalwood.

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