

# Scentsational Ideas

**Science** is catching up with what many of us have suspected for a long time: that smell can affect our mood as well as our reactions to people and places. Researchers at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, U.K., found that patients receiving aromatherapy (in this case, using essential oil of lavender) reported significantly greater improvements in their mood and perceived levels of anxiety than those receiving either massage or bed rest.

Aromatherapy uses essential oils extracted from plants to improve physiological and psychological health. These oils can be applied in a number of ways, including inhalation, massage, and baths.

Not all essential oils are created equal, however. A double-blind trial of essential oils from two different species of lavender revealed that the quality of the oil determines its efficacy. In the study, 28 patients received aromatherapy massage with one of the two oils on two consecutive days; one of the oils was found to be almost twice as effective as the other.

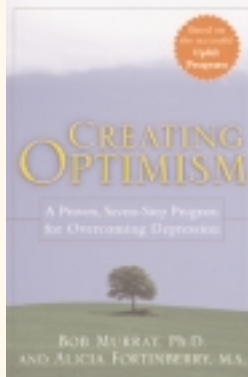
If possible, talk to a professional aromatherapist about which oils would be best for you; you can find a practitioner at The National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy ([www.naha.org](http://www.naha.org)) or the Canadian Federation of Aromatherapists ([www.cfacanada.com](http://www.cfacanada.com)).

Here are some of the essential oils most recommended for stress-related problems:

- **Bergamot.** Smells a bit like orange and lemon with a slight floral undertone.
- **Chamomile.** Sweet, warm, herbaceous, slightly fruity.
- **Clary Sage.** Herbal, nutty.
- **Cypress.** Fresh, spicy, woody, balsamic.
- **Jasmine.** Heady, sweet, flowery, exotic
- **Lavender.** Fresh, herbaceous, soft, floral.
- **Mandarin.** Sweet, tangy, orange-like, floral.
- **Marjoram.** Warm, slightly spicy, herbaceous.
- **Neroli.** Sweet, floral, slightly citrusy, delicate, warm.
- **Rose.** Floral, rich, rosy, sweet.
- **Sandalwood.** Exotic, woody, soft. ■



# Wired for Happiness



"You are wired for happiness. This may come as a surprise to you, but it's the truth... However, to those who are depressed, happiness can seem like an unreachable shore," note Bob Murray, Ph.D. and Alicia Fortinberry, MS in their book *Creating Optimism: A Proven Seven-Step Program for Overcoming Depression* (McGraw Hill, 2004). This husband-and-wife, psychologist-and-psychotherapist team have created a ground-breaking book that shatters the myths about depression and anxiety, clearing the way for real healing.

In Chapter Two, they discuss the "Eight Fundamentals of Happiness," as well as offering practical tips to help move you from depression to satisfaction. Here's a brief taste of what they have to say about generating long-term happiness:

- 1) **Connection to others.** "If your relationships are supportive and fulfilling, you can be healthy and happy, you can free yourself from depression, and become optimistic. If your relationships are anything less, then the reverse happens... *Tip: Make a list of friends you haven't contacted in a while but would like to, and call them.*"
- 2) **Autonomy.** "Autonomy is a feeling of independence and a sense of being in control of your destiny. It's about being an individual within the context of a supportive group... *Tip: Go to as many local establishments rather than chains as possible and strike up a conversation with the proprietor or service people.*"
- 3) **Self-Esteem.** "If your relationships are supportive and fulfilling, you can be healthy and happy, you can free yourself from depression, and become optimistic... *Tip: Try to catch yourself every time you make a self-deprecating comment.*"
- 4) **Competence.** "Your sense of competence derives from two elements: your interests and the encouragement and praise you got from others... *Tip: Ask the people in your life to tell you when they think you've done something well.*"
- 5) **Purpose.** "It's very dispiriting to ask 'why am I here?' and find you have no answer... *Tip: Ask your friends and acquaintances... to describe what they see as their purpose beyond making money or caring for others.*"
- 6) **Connection to your body.** "Distorted body image, trauma, and abuse play a particularly potent role in depression... *Tip: Throw out all your magazines that feature impossibly perfect-looking men or women on the covers.*"
- 7) **Connection to nature.** "Our brains are forged to live in small, mutually supportive communities in close contact with nature and animals... *Tip: Walk in a park or other natural area for 20 minutes each day.*"
- 8) **Spirituality.** "Without a solid grounding in spirituality, there can be no happiness... *Tip: Make a list of all the things you believe in that give you comfort.*"

The authors also make the important distinction between "value-based" and "feel-good" happiness. The former is limitless, because it comes from the sense that our lives have purpose and meaning; the latter is transient, sensation-based, hedonistic, and it gets harder to generate as time goes by. This book offers proven techniques for identifying dysfunctional behavior and changing it, and a step-by-step process for establishing and maintaining healthy relationships. Their insights can help speed your divorce recovery, as well as offering hope for a happier, more fulfilling future.

*Creating Optimism* is available at online and retail bookstores; for more information, go to [www.books.mcgraw-hill.com](http://www.books.mcgraw-hill.com). ■