

Emotions & Essential Oils

What is an emotion?

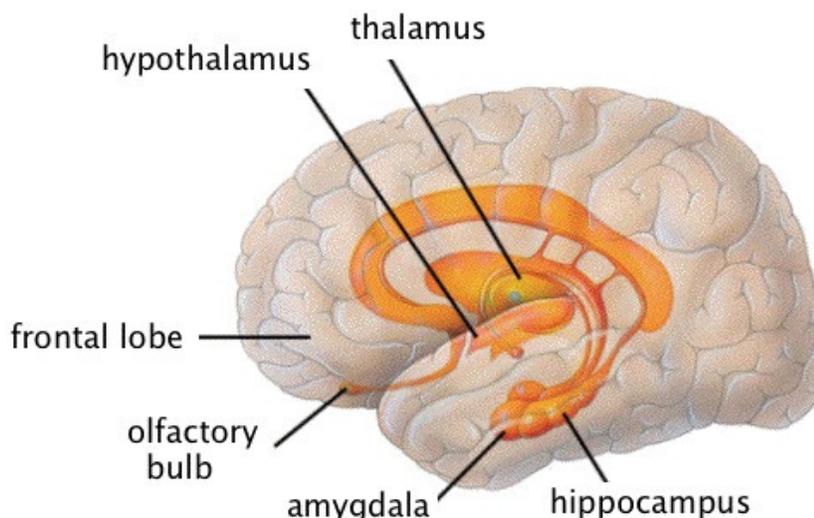
There are so many definitions for that single word. This is possibly because there is no scientific consensus on a single definition. Emotion represents a mental state associated with thoughts and feelings. It is a conscious experience with intense mental activity and a high degree of pleasure or displeasure. Emotion is often intertwined with mood, temperament, past experiences, personality, disposition, and motivation.

The Limbic System: Emotional Center of the Brain

The limbic system, often referred to as the “emotional brain”, resides within the cerebrum. This portion of the brain handles emotional response, hormone function, behavior, motivation, long term memory, and sense of smell. Several other specialized areas reside within the limbic system, including:

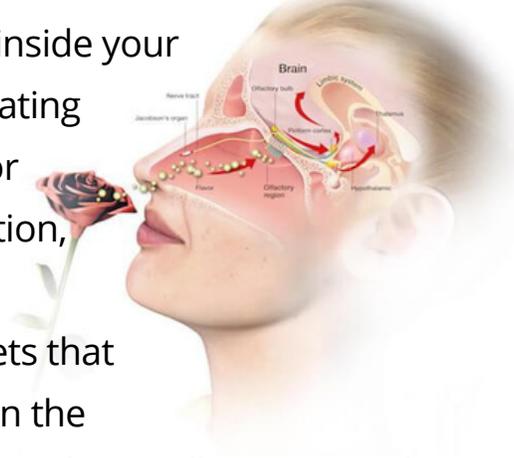
- Hippocampus – responsible for forming short- and long-term memories
- Amygdala – perceives emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness; plays a role in controlling aggression; helps store memories of events and emotions; also plays a role in sexual activity and libido
- Hypothalamus – controls reproduction, sleep patterns, and body homeostasis
- Thalamus – relays sensory information to the cerebral cortex

In addition to being closely tied to the sense of smell, you can see why our emotions can affect so many other things in our lives. The portion of your brain that governs emotions also plays a part in memory, sexual desire, reproduction, sleep, and overall homeostasis.



How do essential oils impact emotions?

The exact details of how smells impact emotions are difficult to define. But let's consider what happens when we inhale an aroma. When an odorant molecule floats through the air into your nose, it lands on tiny hairs inside your nose called cilia. The cilia then start to vibrate, generating an electrical signal. The signal travels up to a receptor cell, which starts to bundle packets of smell information, and sends projections into the olfactory bulb. The smell information is even further bundled into packets that travel to the limbic system via pyramidal cells. Here in the limbic system, an emotional shift occurs in response to the smell. For example, we all know the experience of smelling something that triggers a memory, or knowing that you do not want to date a certain person because you can't stand the way he or she smells. Although it is not exactly clear how the emotional response forms, it is very clear that it does. Furthermore, studies show that olfactory-evoked memories often create a higher emotional arousal than simply recalling a memory with no associated olfactory stimuli.



How can we change our emotions using essential oils?

As the name indicates, aromatherapy is a therapy that uses aromas. More accurately, aromatherapy is a branch of botanical medicine using volatile and aromatic plant compounds. Because of the unique direct relationship between emotions and olfaction within the brain, essential oils can help “unlock” stored memories and emotions. When you breathe in an essential oil, molecules enter the limbic system and elicit an emotional response. An aversion to a particular oil may indicate something more than just personal preference. It could actually be stirring an unpleasant emotional response. Conversely, oils that bring about positive emotions are likely favored.

Intentional Imprinting the Limbic System using Essential Oils

1. You will be choosing (4) different essential oils and/or essential oil blends to correspond with one of the following emotions:

- Anger/Frustration
- Sadness
- Overwhelm/Stress
- Anxiety/Fear

2. Now, keep these oils on you or in places where you experience the opposite of the emotions above. You will inhale your selected oil in order to start imprinting your limbic system to illicit the particular emotional response you want to occur in times when you want the emotion experienced.

- For example: The opposite emotion of anger/frustration is calm. I choose to use lavender essential oil in times of calm or when I experience a sense of calm in my life.

Examples of calm moments in my life might be in the evenings when everything is begins to wind down or when I am in the shower taking a few moments to myself for selfcare and relaxation. I will inhale lavender at these moments of calm as consistently as I can.

Now, when I am feeling angry or frustrated then I need to take my bottle of lavender and inhale deeply. If I have been consistent for about 30 days, then my limbic system should be triggered by the lavender aroma to bring about a feeling of calm.

3. Be consistent. Try to inhale your chosen oil when you are feeling calm, happy, peaceful, or courageous every time you feel that emotion. It will take about 30 days to imprint your limbic system. Be patient with yourself if it takes longer. You need to remember to be intentional and conscious of your use of oils with your emotions.

Below are listed the (4) emotions we will be focusing on and their opposite emotions that we want to illicit. There are also suggested essential oils and blends for your consideration. Honestly, there is no right or wrong oil to pair with an emotion. I suggest trying to pick oils that you are drawn to.

- Anger/Frustration – Calm: lavender, bergamot, cedarwood, cypress, rose, melissa, orange, frankincense, geranium, helichrysum, lemon, mandarin, sandalwood
- Sadness – Joy, happy, blissful: orange, geranium, helichrysum, joy, lime, lemon, citrus fresh
- Overwhelm/Stress – Peace, tranquil, relax: stress away, vetiver, peace & calming, cedarwood, lavender, tangerine
- Anxiety/Fear – Courage, valor, bravery: valor, peace & calming, sandalwood, bergamot, clary sage, geranium, juniper, marjoram, orange, Roman chamomile, myrrh, rose, ylang ylang

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Books to Check Out

Dr. Benjamin Perkus

- The Aroma Freedom Technique

Karol Truman

- Feelings Buried Alive Never Die

Carolyn Mein

- Releasing Emotional Patterns with Essential Oils

Susie Larson

- Fully Alive

Resources

<https://lindseyelmore.com/emotions-and-essential-oils/>

Jen O'Sullivan: VLC - Vitality Lifestyle Coaching Program – The Limbic System