

Aromatherapy In Dementia Care - Part 1

Citation:

Lanza S. (2007) Aromatherapy in Dementia Care. The Dementia Caregiver's Toolbox, Parts 1, 2 and 3. November 18, 20 and 23, 2007.

http://nurturingnuggets.typepad.com/the_nurturing_nuggets_blo/2007/11/aromatherapy-in.html

When you burned your cinnamon candle last night after dinner, did you realize you were using a form of *aromatherapy*?

Around for centuries, *aromatherapy* is a technique of using plant materials in liquid form called, "*essential oils*" to improve physical and psychological well-being.

Roman, Chinese, Egyptian, Greek and Indian cultures all discovered the use of scents derived from plants to provide stimulating or relaxing properties to individuals. Even during the Black Plague in the Middle Ages, the burning of certain plant materials was found to help stop the spread of the deadly plague infection.

Aromatherapy came back into style in the 1930's and has been talked about ever since. Some view it as an offbeat, unorthodox treatment method but for those of us who work with people with dementia, aromatherapy has many benefits.

Communication is always challenging between a caregiver and a person with dementia, so having a way to "trigger" feelings without words is a plus and that's just what *aromatherapy* can do. Fragrant candles (when you are able to use them safely), the scents from a fragrant flower garden, the smell of a favorite meal, the breeze off the ocean or even a simple pot of coffee brewing, can generate and unlock memories.

In addition to stimulating past experiences like a reminiscence program, *aromatherapy* can be used by dementia caregivers as a method of soothing and comforting by using scents such as lavender or cedarwood.

Next time, we'll learn more about *essential oils* and how to use them in aromatherapy.

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