

# The Power of Touch

## In a High-tech World, It Pays to Reach Out

Nora Brunner

Physician and holistic health pioneer Rachel Naomi Remen once confessed that as a pediatric intern she was an unrepentant baby kisser, often smooching her little patients as she made her rounds at the hospital. She did this when no one was looking because she sensed her colleagues would frown on her behavior, even though she couldn't think of a single reason not to do it.

The lack of basic human contact in our high-tech medical system reflects a larger social ill that has only recently started to get some attention--touch deprivation. The cultural landscape is puzzling. On the one hand, we are saturated in suggestive messages by the

skin-to-skin contact is beneficial to human health, American social norms inhibit this most basic form of human interaction and communication. Despite our supposedly enlightened attitudes, we Americans are among the most touch-deprived people in the world.

"Touch deprivation is a reality in American culture as a whole," writes Reverend Anthony David of Atlanta. "It's not just babies needing to be touched in caring ways, or the sick. It's not just doctors and nurses needing to extend it. It's all of us, needing connection, needing to receive it, needing to give it, with genuine happiness at stake."

*"Nothing is impossible. In fact, the word itself says I'm possible."*

-Audrey Hephburn



High-tech can mean low-touch. Ensure you're getting the tactile connection humans require.

mass media; on the other hand, the caring pediatrician is afraid someone might look askance at her planting a kiss on a baby's forehead. What's wrong with this picture?

### Social Norms

Unfortunately, touch has become, well, a touchy subject. Though there's growing scientific evidence that

### Distant, Disconnected

How did we come to deprive ourselves so tragically? According to Texas psychology professor David R. Cross, PhD, there are three reasons Americans don't touch each other more: fear of sexual innuendo, societal and personal

Continued on page 2

#### Office Hours and Contact

**Cypress Moon Healing Arts, LLC**  
**Heather A O'Neill**  
**215-820-6463**  
**By appointment**

#### In this Issue

**The Power of Touch**  
**Lavender**  
**The Art of Aromatherapy**

Continued from page 1

disconnection aided by technology, and the fact that the ill effects of non-touching are simply not that obvious and don't receive much attention.

It's no surprise Americans are often afraid physical touching signals romantic interest, which leads to the twin perils of either having our intentions misunderstood or wondering if someone's gesture is an uninvited advance. This ambiguity is more than enough to scare most people from taking someone's arm or patting them on the back.

The potential for the loaded gesture is further complicated by our litigious society in which unwelcome touch can mean, or be interpreted as, dominance, sexual harassment, or exploitation. People in the helping professions are regularly counseled on how to do their jobs without creating even a hint of ambiguity. In one extreme example, counselors at a children's summer camp were given the advice that when kids proactively hugged them, the counselors were to raise both arms over their heads to show they hadn't invited the contact and weren't participating in it. One wonders how the innocent minds of children will interpret this bizarre response to their spontaneous affection.

Another reason for touch phobia, according to Cross, is that we live in a society with far-flung families and declining community connections. Technology plays a significant role in the way we communicate, and it seems we move farther away from face-to-face communication with every new invention. How ironic that the old telephone company jingle that encouraged us to "Reach Out and Touch Someone" gave way to the slew of electronic devices we have today, all ringing and beeping for our attention. While these devices were invented to improve communication, some people wonder if the net effect is lower quality in our exchanges of information.

While there is scientific research showing non-touch is detrimental to health, Cross says those negative effects aren't obvious. The effects of a lack of touch are insidious and long-term and don't amount to a dramatic story for prime time.

"Humans deprived of touch are prone to mental illness, violence, compromised immune systems, and poor self-regulation," Cross says. So serious are the effects of touch deprivation, it's considered by researchers to be worse than physical abuse.

## Benefits of Touch

Stated more positively, science does support the preventive health benefits of touch. For example, Tiffany Field, PhD, founder of the Touch Research Institute, notes that in a study on preterm infants, massaging the babies increased their weight and allowed them to be discharged earlier. Discharging babies earlier from expensive neonatal intensive care units could save the healthcare system \$4.7 billion annually.

In other research, scientists at the University of North Carolina found the

stress hormone cortisol was reduced with hugging. Cortisol is associated with anger, anxiety, physical tension, and weakened immunity.

Massage therapy has been found useful in reducing symptoms such as anxiety, depression, pain, and stress, and is helpful for those suffering with a variety of illnesses, including anorexia nervosa, arthritis, cancer, fibromyalgia, and stroke. While more research is needed, massage therapy has also been shown to reduce symptoms associated with alcohol withdrawal and smoking cessation, and can strengthen self-esteem, boost the immune system, increase flexibility, and improve sleep.

As a nation, we are still finding our way in terms of increasing our touch quotient; but those who make their way into a massage therapy room are farther along than most.



**Massage helps boost self-worth and contribute to emotional well-being and connection.**

# Lavender

## An Essential Oil for Fundamental Health

Laurie Chance Smith

Lavender essential oil is a one-stop medicine chest, helping to reduce anxiety, fatigue, and stress and balance hormones, increase the immune response, lower blood pressure, and relieve pain. To utilize lavender's healing benefits at home, mix five to 10 drops of lavender essential oil in one ounce of jojoba oil or unscented lotion. (Essential oils shouldn't be applied directly to the skin; it's best to partner them with a carrier oil, liquid, or lotion.)

### EARACHES

For earaches, dab one drop of lavender massage oil behind the ear and rub gently. Alternatively, place one drop of lavender oil on a cotton ball and carefully place inside the outer ear.

### HEADACHES

Inhaling lavender is also effective for headache relief. Add a few drops to a bowl of warm water and breathe. Gently rub lavender massage lotion on the temples, forehead, and base of the neck.

### COLDS

Lavender oil can also help break up coughs and clear sinuses. Colorado-based holistic aromatherapist Nicola McGill suggests the regular home-use of antiseptic essential oils such as lavender to help avoid colds and other infectious diseases. Add a few drops to a vaporizer to help clear colds and infuse the home with lavender's scent.

### STRESS

At night, six to eight drops of lavender added to a warm bath helps melt away stress and relieve fatigue. Blend a footbath by adding three drops of lavender to a bowl of warm water, sink your feet in, and relax. For help inducing sleep, add two or three drops of lavender essential oil to the underside corner of your pillow.

### TRANQUIL AROMA

A human takes 23,040 breaths a day, and each inhale floods the system with scent. Rely on lavender's tranquil aroma

to clear the way toward peaceful days.



Lavender is loaded with wellness properties.

# The Art of Aromatherapy

## Essential Oils Provide Healing and Balance

Aromatic essential oils extracted from herbs, flowers, resin, wood and roots have long been a source of healing, aiding in relaxation, circulation and wound healing. However, the use of these medicinal oils declined as the modern pharmaceutical industry developed. In 1928, French chemist Rene Maurice Gattefosse revived the use of essential oils and developed the art and science of utilizing naturally extracted aromatic essences from botanicals to balance and harmonize the health of body, mind, and spirit. Gattefosse coined the practice aromatherapy.

Because of aromatherapy's affect on emotional health, many practitioners incorporate this noninvasive treatment into their practices. Dispensers or diffusers filled with aromatic essences

may be used to scent the room, and specific essential oils are used on the client's skin during massage. Because each oil has unique characteristics and benefits, the choice of oil or oils can be customized to the client's needs and emotional state. Whether inhaled or applied topically, aromatherapy requires an understanding of how each essential oil interacts with the body, as well as the mind. Many pure essential oils need to be diluted, as they can cause irritation when applied directly to the skin, and training is necessary to guarantee safe and correct usage.

The emotions listed below can be gently eased by one or a combination of the following essential oils:

Anxiety: bergamot, cedarwood, clary sage, frankincense, lavender, patchouli,

Roman chamomile, rose, sandalwood.

Fatigue, Burnout: basil, ginger, grapefruit, jasmine, lemon, peppermint, rosemary, sandalwood.

Stress: bergamot, frankincense, geranium, lavender, mandarin, neroli, patchouli, Roman chamomile, ylang ylang.

Anger: jasmine, neroli, orange, patchouli, petitgrain, Roman chamomile, rose, vetiver, ylang ylang.

*Try to be a  
rainbow in  
someone's cloud.*

-Maya Angelou

Hello everyone,  
I hope you have enjoyed the information in this newsletter. I would love to assist you in your health needs. Please feel free to e-mail me with any questions.

If you mention reading this newsletter you will receive 10% off any service.

#### Contact Information

Phone: 215-820-6463

E-mail: [cmhealingarts13@gmail.com](mailto:cmhealingarts13@gmail.com)

---

## Cypress Moon Healing Arts, LLC

Shawnee Sq. Buttermilk Falls Road  
Shawnee on the Delaware, PA 18356



**Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals**