

An Overview of Alchemical Tools

Anything that stirs the qi and moves the soul can be used as a tool in Alchemical Healing. Following this basic principle, we can bring many diverse techniques, medicinals, and practices into our work as Alchemical Healers. From an ephemeral image to a subtle flower essence to an obviously palpable touch or needle, we can call on all our skills and tools as they are needed in the treatment room or in our personal lives.

In the Mentorship, we focus on specific tools and practices and work with them in different ways throughout the year. Below is a list of the primary tools we consider:

- language, story, myth, and metaphor
- touch, sight, breath, and movement
- intention
- points, needles, and moxa
- Deep Listening, Inner Sensing, Active Imagination, amplification, and dream work
- Images and archetypes, including Elements and Spirits
- Meditation, ritual, and encounters with the natural world
- Medicinals, including flower essences, essential oils, and herbs

Introduction to the Alchemical Use of Medicinals

A medicinal becomes an alchemical tool if:

- it is used to promote transformation as opposed to restoration,
- its provenance is known, and its production is free of toxins and negativity,
- we bring relationality and intention to its use,
- we create a field where the subtle energy of the medicinal can be activated, and
- we invite the spirit and essential wisdom of the natural substance to become an active part of the healing process.

Flower Essences

Flower essences contain the vibrational or soul imprint of the plants they were created from but almost no material residue of the plant itself. They were first developed by Dr. Edward Bach, an English bacteriologist, pathologist, and homeopath, in the 1930s. Dr. Bach originally developed a repertory of 38 remedies that addressed basic issues of the body, mind and spirit. Today, there are hundreds of other flower essences that have been developed by practitioners around the world, and we can create our own from the plants that grow in our local environments.

Flower essences play an important role in Alchemical Healing. They can be viewed as the quintessential spirit level remedy as most are made from flower blossoms, the part of plants related most closely to the Fire Element and to the *shen* or spirit. Many essences are produced by shining sunlight through the plant material as it floats in a bowl of water; thus, sequestering the plant-activated light in a material substance.

Flower essences are gentle yet powerful allies to patients at every stage of the healing process. They are safe for patients of any age and level of health or illness. They are non-toxic, have no side effects, are not habit forming and do not interfere with any other medications or treatments. There are many ways they can be used and only a few caveats that should be observed when considering them.

Flower essences are a powerful intervention in emergency situations. They are equally effective as a support in transforming long entrenched psychological patterns and character traits as well as passing moods and temporary emotional challenges.

For emergencies and passing moods

Add 2 drops of each chosen remedy to a small glass of water.

Sip at intervals throughout the day until emotions settle.

In emergencies, Rescue Remedy can be given straight from the stock bottle.

For transformation of long-standing issues

Fill a 30 ml dropper bottle with pure spring water. Add 3 - 7 drops of each chosen remedy (with a maximum of 6 remedies). Add 1 tablespoon of brandy as a preservative. Take 4 drops under the tongue at least 4 times a day. Take flower essence daily for 2 - 3 weeks and then re-evaluate your situation. Depending on response, make changes as necessary.

In addition, flower essences can be applied full strength to specific acupuncture points or diluted 2 - 4 drops in 4 - 6 oz. water and applied with cotton ball to entire meridian. Apply essence and allow patient to rest for ten minutes. The essence and point will join vibrations and change will be initiated.

Caveats

- Take care not to let glass applicator touch skin, tongue, or mouth – dip applicator in alcohol to clean in this case.
- If recipient is alcohol sensitive, the essence can be dropped in a bit of boiling water to evaporate alcohol before taking. There are also essences that are preserved in glycerin rather than alcohol. In addition, a company called Tree Frog Farm in the States produces flower essences preserved in red shiso and organic vinegar.
- Negative treatment responses are rare. In general, when the remedy is "not right" for the recipient there is little or no response to the treatment. If there is no change after two weeks, a remedy should be discontinued, and a different essence considered.
- It is important to stay in communication with patients while they are using the flower essences, as the relationship between patient, practitioner and flower is an important part of the alchemy.

Essential Oils

The distillation of essential oils from aromatic plants has been an important part of alchemical practice for centuries. The complex technology of distillation was developed

sometime in the 6th century, most likely by Persian alchemists. Later the technology spread to Europe and India. Distillation of herbs, flowers and aromatic woods began in China around the same time and may have come to China from the mid-east.

Essential oils are more yin than flower essences. This description means they are heavier, have more residue of the base material and are less volatile. While flower essences enter our being directly at the light or spirit level, essential oils vibrate at a lower frequency and tend to activate the mental/emotional or soul level of being.

Correctly used, essential oils offer a safe, effective, and fast-acting way to work with *wushen* - the Five Spirits.

- At the *shen* and *hun* levels, they calm the emotions and shift states of mind. They help regulate sleeping and dreaming but also support focus, alertness, and energy.
- At the level of the *yi*, they support clarity of thought and strong intention.
- At the *po* level, over time, they can help clear toxins on both physical and emotional levels, support immunity, and relax the autonomic nervous system.
- At the deepest levels of our being, at the level of the *zhi*, they calm and strengthen the adrenals, and strengthen a person's sense of self and well-being.

From a physiological perspective, fragrance - the therapeutically active aspect of the oil - bypasses the digestive organs and tissues and enters through the respiratory system and olfactory senses. The primary entry point for essential oils is the sinuses. From the sinuses, the active molecules in the oil activate the olfactory nerves. The stimulus travels from there to the olfactory bulb and into the limbic system where it effects the emotions as well as the endocrine system. In addition, the sinuses are surrounded by rich capillary beds, which provide a secondary pathway for the aromatic molecules. Many essential oils bypass the blood brain barrier and pass directly into cerebral circulation. Thus, essential oils are not only absorbed through the skin and the lungs but can also enter directly into the brain and have almost immediate effects on our emotions, our perception, and our sense of self.

Although essential oils, when correctly administered, are non-toxic, safe, and have relatively few negative side effects, they must be used with great care. Improper use can result in dermatitis, nausea, and allergic responses. These are powerful, fast-acting medicinals with strong personalities that call for respect and wisdom!

There are three basic safety guidelines for using essential oils.

- Do not take essential oils internally.
- Except in specific, supervised situations, do not apply essential oils directly to the skin.
- Always discuss with patients the first time an oil is used. Ask about allergies or environmental sensitivities. Go slowly and err on the side of caution. Use extra caution during pregnancy and postpartum when women are particularly sensitive to fragrance. Uterine stimulant oils such as Angelica must be avoided during pregnancy.

Safe ways to bring essential oils into the treatment process include:

- Direct palm inhalation. A few drops of oil are sprinkled on the palms, which are rubbed together and offered for inhalation or used to massage the back of neck and shoulders. This method is safe for oils that do not have a strong irritant effect.
- Massage and body oils. The best carriers are coconut, jojoba and sesame oil, although again, check in to make sure the recipient is not sensitive to any of these carriers. Use a 2 - 4% dilution or dilute until the correct level of fragrance is achieved.
- Baths are a wonderful way for patients to continue treatment at home; however, it is important not to drop essential oils directly into bath water where it will collect in droplets and possibly irritate the skin. Essential oils can be emulsified with milk or honey or dispersed into salt. In this way, the oil will diffuse evenly into the bath water and be safe for the skin. The doses used for aromatic baths is very low, in the range of 5 – 10 drops, depending on the oil.
- In the treatment room, oils may be applied with care full strength to an acupuncture point. In this case, one drop on a cotton swab can be applied before needling or held in place for a few minutes as an alternative to needling. This second method is useful for children or patients who are very sensitive to needling.
- Aromatherapy. 5 - 10 drops of oil added to a half ounce of carrier oil can be given to patients to use at home. Application to specific points can be suggested or the oil can be inhaled as needed.
- Steam inhalation. 2 - 4 drops in a basin of hot water. Form a tent with a towel and inhale.

Resources

Below are listed some of the main online resources that Lorie and Benjamin use to obtain flower essences, essential oils, herbs, and spagyrics. There are many more, of course, and we encourage you to exchange your own resources with other members of the group.

Flower Essences

Flower Essence Society, www.flowersociety.org/

Tree Frog Farm, www.treefrogfarm.com/

Lindsay Fauntleroy's Elementals line, www.thespiritseed.org/elementals-essences

LOTUSWEI, <https://www.lotuswei.com>

Essential Oils

Floracopeia, www.floracopeia.com/

Original Swiss Aromatics, <http://www.originalswissaromatics.com>

Snow Lotus, www.snowlotus.org/