

Enhancing
Psychedelic
Assisted Therapy
with Aromas
Getting Started

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You're interested in psychedelic therapies, yet you feel something is missing...

You're interested in psychedelic therapies and you may have already tried some of them, but you're concerned about their *limitations*.

You're concerned that the experience could be *scary* or you could get *lost* in it.

You have experienced *limited benefits*, because a certain part of your mind (let's call it your ego) really *resisted*, creating *fear* and other *barriers*.

You're *frustrated* that the *benefits* are *temporary* and soon we go back to the mental business-as-usual. You wish you *wouldn't forget* those shifts in perspective.

You wish the experience could be more reliably *profound*.

You've heard that psychedelic therapies can lead to lasting change but that *hasn't been your experience*.

You want your psychedelic experiences to be more *consistent* and *healing*.

Do you wish you had more holistic support during and especially after a psychedelic therapy experience, to address what's missing?

Psychedelics have been called '*non-specific amplifiers*,' a term first coined by Stan Grof, MD, meaning that they can result in a wide range of experiences, including frustrating or negative ones. As Humphrey Osmond, MD, an early psychedelic therapy pioneer said in the 1950's, "*to fathom hell or soar angelic, just take a pinch of psychedelic.*"

Both journeyers and guides have been **frustrated** by this non-specificity and have explored various ways to attempt to make the experience more reliable, including music, supportive environments, attitude, and other factors. These aspects have been grouped under the phrase "Set & Setting," with "Set" referring to the attitude of the journeyer and "Setting" referring to the environment. Still, the unpredictability can be a **challenge**.

The main reason the experience can be unpredictable is because our ego, our conscious sense of self, and our unconscious, aren't on the same page. Our unconscious is far wiser than our ego. At the same time, our ego tricks us into thinking it's the boss.

We need a **holistic view of our own psyche**.

We need holistic allies. Natural aromas, the aromatic molecules created by certain plants for communication are such **powerful allies**. In many traditional settings for psychedelic therapy, this is known, and various incenses are used. When we smell a natural aroma, this helps us get out our ego-mind, bypass the invisible ruts of the Default Mode Network, experience genuine connectedness and maintain lasting change.

Are you tired of the possibility of
yet another frustrating or
underwhelming psychedelic therapy
experience?

We all know people who keep hoping their next psychedelic therapy experience will be **different**. They'll have a **breakthrough**. They'll experience a profound shift that **changes their lives** from that day forward.

And yet, their hopes keep getting thwarted.

This even plays out in how psychedelic therapies, in particular ketamine, are being marketed. The behavioral health industry that's adopting ketamine has also adopted a model of maintenance treatment. People get told they need a certain minimum number of treatments and then maintenance. To me, this expresses a certain therapeutic pessimism or nihilism, and is also inevitably influenced by economic motives. The idea that more than one treatment is needed for lasting benefit makes me ask: **What else could we be doing instead, so each treatment offers the maximum potential for benefit?**

When you do psychedelic therapy, you want **lasting change**. You don't want to be stuck in the 'patient' role indefinitely.

I've been on both sides of psychedelic therapy and found a better way

I've been interested in aromas since I was a kid and experienced their power to change my mind first-hand throughout my life.

Later I trained as a psychiatrist and at first felt that if I could learn how to make the proper diagnoses and learn all about the prescription medications, I could help people. Over time, I got **disenchanted**, because I saw the limited benefits of medications, the often serious and enduring side effects and the overall negative effects on people, who became permanent patients.

By the time I opened my private practice, I wanted to offer a different approach, that did not disempower them, and that honored their challenging experiences, often perpetuated by the behavioral health system. This **different approach** included working with **aromas** which I saw **rapidly change** people's states, but for which there was no clear, in-depth guidance. I had to

figure out how to work with aromas for the psyche and I learned a lot.

I also learned about ketamine as a new treatment, back in 2010. From the beginning, when I offered my clients ketamine, it was *always in combination with smelling an aroma*, working with an aromatic ally in the form of an essential oil. **The results were powerful.** People felt less afraid of the experience, would ‘ooh’ and ‘aah’ during, and felt more connected in their lives for longer periods afterwards. People saved the scent strips I gave them for their ketamine journeys so they could smell them afterwards and remember and stay connected. While some of my colleagues felt ketamine was ‘weird,’ I had been shown **a better way by combining it with essential oils.**

In my own life, I did a few ketamine therapy sessions while smelling essential oils and my experiences were profound. First, like so many, my ego and intellect had a hard time letting go as the ketamine took effect, resulting in resistance and fear. **By smelling an essential oil, I felt another, larger part of me, my soul, my wisdom, take over, reassuring my ego and easing me into journey.** Instead of the journey being weird or hard to make sense

of, the aromas helped me feel more connected to myself and the world around me. The greatest benefit was afterwards, when I was much more able to stay connected and feel awe.

I want more and more people to have this experience, this lasting benefit.

How to get started

You probably can't wait to get started or deepen your practice of enhancing psychedelic therapy sessions with essential oils. There are both practical and deeper considerations.

You Need an Alive Essential Oil

The first consideration is how to select the essential oils. First, as mentioned above, the essential oils you intend to work with have to be of sufficient quality, and **alive**. Most essential oils are mass-produced and dead. While these are useful for many indications, including cosmetics and perfumery, mass-produced, dead essential oils don't allow soul-to-soul communication. Such a dead essential oil may smell nice, but it doesn't move you emotionally.

One way to tell if an essential oil is alive is to smell it, and let it touch you on a feeling level. If it doesn't touch you emotionally, or move you to feel emotions, this is not an essential oil to use. It does take practice to learn how to really allow this connection through smell. I've certainly smelled many essential oils that were esthetically pleasing, meaning they smelled great, but they did not move me emotionally.

Based on our years of experience, we offer both a curated selection of high quality, alive essential oils, that we have worked with and can vouch for. We also offer trainings that help you connect more deeply with essential oils, which we call our aromatic allies.

You can find the essential oils we have curated at our website cathysattars.com. We created an easy-to-use "[Psychedelic Therapy Support Kit](#)" of 5 essential oils and an in-depth manual. We have found that these five oils are powerful allies for the most common themes and intentions in psychedelic assisted therapy and are a great way to start.

We have a variety of [trainings](#). The easiest way to access the trainings and get ongoing support is our [In The Knows membership](#).

How to Select the Right Oil

Once you have access to alive, high-quality essential oils, the next question is **how to select an oil** for a psychedelic therapy healing session. There are a number of considerations. For example, for a briefer experience, such as intravenous (iv) or intramuscular (im) ketamine, a single essential oil is often enough. In longer experiences, such as psilocybin or sublingual or intranasal ketamine, there is usually time to work with several essential oils. The details of these considerations are honestly too complex for getting started. Nevertheless, we can say with confidence that if you work with a single essential oil, e.g. rose attar, you can learn a lot. *It's better to start with one, or a no more than a handful of essential oils, so you can really deepen your ally-ship with them.* Each essential oil can be used repeatedly across sessions and will continue to guide and teach. So start with one oil, or our kit. As you decide to go deeper into our training, you'll be able to

build on this foundation and introduce additional aromatic allies.

The **relationship** you develop with the essential oil, your aromatic ally, is the foundation. You should develop this relationship by smelling the oil deeply and mindfully, in meditation, before you proceed with psychedelic therapy. Continuing to smell the oil deeply after your session will help you stay connected and have more visceral access to the shift in perspective you experienced.

While we are reluctant to say ‘this oil is good for this, and that oil is good for that,’ because what the oils teach is holistic and multi-faceted, and based on your relationship, it’s helpful to have a starting point. See below for a few suggestions.

Practical Considerations

In our experience, the best way to allow a **soul-to-soul connection** is to smell an essential oil during a psychedelic therapy session. For us, the most practical way to do this is to use *scent strips*, which are also called perfume test strips. They are convenient to use. Simply dip one end in the vial of essential oil briefly. The aroma of the oil is much better able to unfold from the tip of a

scent strip than from a vial. During the journey, a scent strip is easy to keep near the nose, e.g. if someone is reclining, on their upper chest, and the scent strip can easily be removed if necessary. Working with vials is challenging. It's harder to smell and position correctly, and easier to spill. We do not recommend using diffusers, because the design of most diffusers (water and/or heat) can change the chemical make-up of the essential oil. Furthermore, it's easy to overfill the room with an aroma and then you can't change the aroma easily and clear out the scent from the air in the room. Bottom line: use scent strips.

It's also really good to have a *standard procedure*, whether you are the journeyer or the guide. First, if you are the guide, you need to discuss the use of essential oils, by scent only, with the journeyer ahead of time. In our experience, the vast majority are very eager and excited. Conversely, if you are the journeyer and want to work with scent, tell the guide ahead of time. Have your oils and scent strips near you.

For im or iv ketamine, you can dip the scent strip as the proper amount is drawn up. You don't want to scramble to make sure the scent strip has the right oil on it and is in

the right place after the medicine has been administered. With slower acting plant spirit medicines (see above) you can prepare the scent strip after administration. Regardless, think about it and **plan it** ahead of time, so it doesn't cause stress or confusion at the beginning of the journey.

A SIMPLE CHECKLIST

- Alive, high quality essential oil(s): 1-5 to start
- Scent strips
- Write down what oil was used (for later, especially for integration)
- Think about the 'standard procedure' ahead of time

Essential Oils to get started

Our [Psychedelic Therapy Support Kit](#) contains 5 essential oils: Rose Attar, Galbanum, Helichrysum, Labdanum, Ruh Khus (vetiver). It also includes an in-depth manual and scent strips. We selected these 5 essential oils, because they are very powerful and help common intentions. Here are brief suggestions for when to consider each.

[Rose Attar](#): The fragile aroma of roses is distilled into sandalwood essential oil, in an ancient technique. Rose is very heart-opening and anxiety-relieving, while sandalwood is grounding and centering. This is a great aromatic ally for inexperienced and experienced journeyers alike, helping us to overcome ego barriers and fully surrender to the psychedelic experience.

[Galbanum](#): An essential oil produced from an ancient aromatic resin, that was already prized during biblical times. Galbanum is the aromatic ally that helps us commit to the path forward, if we're struggling with indecisiveness. You can imagine how this can be helpful in psychedelic therapy, to commit to the experience.

Helichrysum: An essential oil produced from a plant that's also known as Immortelle or Everlasting. It helps us unearth and explore long-buried traumas, such as during childhood. It helps us feel the feelings and cry the tears we never allowed ourselves to cry until now.

Labdanum: An essential oil from the resin of cistus. The resin was already used by the ancient Egyptians and is very powerful for revealing what's hidden in the unconscious, often called our Shadow. Remember that our Shadow is often misunderstood as aspects we don't like about ourselves. Actually the shadow is what we don't know about ourselves and sometimes our greatest powers and gifts are hidden in our Shadow.

Ruh Khus: Is the essential oil of wild vetiver and is very grounding. This is very helpful at the end of a psychedelic therapy session to come back into our physical bodies safely.

Remember, each oil is an ally. It can teach us many things and show different people different understandings they are ready for. The above are just starting suggestions.

Above all, work frequently with the aromatic allies by smelling them extensively and meditating with them.

Work with aromatic allies before, during and after your experiences. Especially after, during integration, a process that is finally being recognized as the most important, aromatic allies can help you recall the shifts and understandings of your therapeutic experience more fully and help you make the changes in your life you have been called to make.

Why Aromas? Isn't that just like music or eye masks or soft lighting?

I've heard people who feel that aromas are just one of many ways to enhance psychedelic therapies. Let me tell you why I think **aromas are unique**. Aromas come from plants and evolved as *molecules of connectedness*. Plants created them to communicate with each other and with other species. Just think of pollinators, that are attracted to flowering plants not just by the appearance of the flower and the promise of sweet nectar, but by the scent that they can detect from much further away.

Our brains and bodies literally evolved over many millennia in a world filled with aromatic molecules, through which we were in deep communication with the plants around us, long before we developed modern consciousness. In modern society, the sense of scent has become overlooked and unconscious, but it is no less powerful.

What makes aromatic allies unique, in my opinion, is that they touch our brains, our bodies and our psyches deeply. Stan Grof, MD, psychedelic pioneer, stated a long time ago that in psychedelic therapy, there are three wisdoms in the healing space: The wisdom of the client, the wisdom of the guide or therapist, and the wisdom of the psychedelic substance. When we work with aromatic allies, there are **four wisdoms**: *The client's, the guide's or therapist's, the psychedelic substance's and the aromatic ally's.*

Aromatic allies are a uniquely powerful way to deepen the experience, alleviate the common barriers and offer more benefits.

Imagine:

Having consistently **profound** psychedelic therapy experiences.

Having an ally that proverbially guides you into the psychedelic experience, alleviating common barriers.

Feeling **more connected** during and especially after your experience. More connected to parts of yourself you had been unaware of. More connected to people around you. More connected to nature. This enhanced connectedness, especially nature connectedness is correlated with lasting benefits from psychedelic therapy.

Developing **deep relationship** with aromatic allies and **reawakening** your own sense of scent.

If you're ready, here's the next
steps you can take:

Keep smelling high quality, alive essential oils.

Trust your sense of scent.

Deepen your practice.

Consider our [Psychedelic Therapy Support Kit](#).

Consider [more training with us](#), that gives you more scientific understanding of how aromas and psychedelics interact and first-hand experience with aromatic allies.

The Science of the Synergies between Aromatic and Psychedelic Molecules

"Nature is trying to tell us something." --Sasha Shulgin
(PIKHAL, footnote to entry #157)

It's easy to think that pleasant smells of course enhance psychedelic therapies, but there is a lot more scientific evidence how aromas and psychedelics interact and synergize. I wanted to give you a brief taste of the scientific evidence for the synergy between aromas and psychedelics. What follows is just one domain of synergy. There are many more, including the same areas in the brain touched by both.

The legendary psychedelic chemist Sasha Shulgin, who re-discovered MDMA and single-handedly created dozens of novel psychedelic compounds (e.g. 2-CB)

thought about this connection and his path was deeply shaped by this. As he describes in PIKHAL, which includes autobiographical chapters, along with detailed descriptions of many of the psychedelic compounds he invented, his work for a number of years before he turned towards psychedelic molecules was focused on essential oil constituents and to him his earlier work naturally led him to his later work.

For example, in the chapter in which he discusses 3,4,5-TMA ([PIHKAL #157](#)), which is a powerful psychedelic amphetamine, he wrote an extended footnote, in which he observes the very close similarities between some aromatic and psychedelic molecules. The most famous is, of course, the aromatic saffrole and the entactogen MDMA. He mentions a number of others, that he calls the 'aromatic amphetamines.' Most importantly, the footnote ends with him stating "**Nature is trying to tell us something!**" This is just one example. Plants evolved aromatic and psychedelic molecules, really as molecules of communication and connectedness and both alter our states of mind. They are cousins, or letters in the same alphabet, which is an oversimplification.

There are a number of brain pathways that react to both aromatic and psychedelic molecules and there are a

number of research articles that delve into this. You can think of it in this way: Our brains, as part of our organisms, evolved in a world full of aromatic and psychedelic molecules. Over the millennia, most cultures forgot about psychedelic molecules and they and their proper role have only been recently rediscovered. Similarly, most cultures have become unaware of the power of scent and aromatic molecules. There are several more areas and levels of synergies between aromatic and psychedelic molecules, which we discuss more in-depth later on, but for now we hope you appreciate that the synergy between aromatic and psychedelic molecules is deep and powerful.

For more information, visit [AromaGnosis](https://aromagnosis.com).

If you have additional questions, please email us at info@aromagnosis.com

Florian & Cathy

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