

AROMATHERAPY



Stress is part of the price we pay for twentieth-century living: its damaging consequences are now widely-recognised by doctors and laymen alike. But stress can be positive as well as negative. Often it's the magical ingredient, the adrenalin creator, that pushes athletes to success, or enables a mother to sprint to the rescue of her child. It is also important to realise that stress is not uniform. Each individual has a unique reaction to a stress situation, and responses vary greatly even to the same amount of pressure. If this response is correctly channelled, negative stress can be used to your advantage.

It is important to recognise your own symptoms of negative stress – they are Nature's signal to you that something is going wrong. Try these questions. Do you:

- have difficulty concentrating, decision-making or feel you are not achieving enough?
- watch the clock, and drink and smoke more than you did?
- feel you are not appreciated, and worry about what you must do tomorrow or failed to do today?
- keep losing your temper, burst into tears easily, or take your frustrations out on others?
- find you have lost interest in your work, and spend a lot of your free-time sleeping?
- stay away from work with minor illnesses, or dread seeing a particular person?
- consistently get to work late, and day-dream about a completely different lifestyle.

Honestly now – how did you score? Any “yeses” probably mean that you are suffering from negative stress, both at work and at home. *Libas International* has received many letters from young Asian readers who feel that they are at a cultural crossroads between East and West. They are growing out of their own culture, and their parents are fighting to hold them back. This confusion and conflict often comes during adolescence when young Asians are already experiencing their own individual difficulties.

Shirin Naidoo, a 36-year-old Indian living in London, has had tremendous success in treating such problems. As a trained aromatherapist, hypnotherapist and psychotherapist she combines these three skills with great effect. As she talks about her use of aromatherapy, her face lights up. “Plato says that the cure of the part should not be attempted without treatment of the whole. Also, no attempt should be made without the soul, and therefore if the head and body are to be well you must begin by curing the mind: that is the first thing...”

For Shirin, these words, written 2000 years ago, hold more meaning today than ever before. So much of orthodox Western medicine “separates the soul from the body.” Aromatherapy itself dates back to ancient Egypt, Rome, China and Greece. It is an ancient healing art using the properties of essential oils derived from plants, flowers, fruits and trees. This “life-force” of the plant acts as a “vegetable hormone” with regenerating effects on specific organs or bodily functions.

These essential oils are blended to suit the individual's personal requirements, then massaged into the skin. The massage is an important part of the treatment as a potent therapy, not simply a mere indulgence. Touch can comfort and soothe an overwrought nervous system, while sophisticated methods of stroking, pressurising and pummelling unearthen buried tensions, melt aches and pains, flush out toxins, and refine muscle tone. Shirin, like many professional aromatherapists, applies her knowledge of acupressure (or *Shiatsu*, the Japanese version) to work on channels of energy and pressure points.

After one aromatherapy treatment, Shirin gives her clients a specifically-prescribed blend of her own oils for use at home, either to put in the bath, or to massage into face and body.

The aroma of the oils travels through the olfactory cells and links directly with the limbic area of the brain, which governs emotions, memory, and intuition, as well as the hormonal balance of the body. The massage works on de-stressing the body, releasing energy blocks and allowing the body's own energy or “prana” to flow freely.

A visit to Shirin would involve an initial consultation where her psychotherapy training comes into play. Having discussed details of your age, job, diet, exercise, physical and mental well-being, including topics you may not have shared with anyone before, she establishes the underlying stress factors in your life. With the discovery of the root problem, the aromatherapy treatment can begin.

Shirin has trained with Pierre Franchomme of the College of Initiation into Medicinal Plants in France, one of the most respected teachers of aromatherapy in the world. He has travelled worldwide to study the various characteristics of specific essential oils. For example, there are more than 600 varieties of eucalyptus, of such biological complexity that each possesses multiple therapeutic properties, while some even contradict each other. His discoveries include the vast difference between oils that have been carefully grown on healthy soils without artificial fertilisers, and the cheaper essential oils that are

Continued on p.108.

**Aries:***March 21-April 20*

June is likely to be the most frustrating month of the year bringing excessive demands on your time and energy. Home and career pull you in every direction except the one you want to take. You will be full of great ideas that may seem impossible, and – peace and rest will be difficult to find. Patience, the only answer will bring resolution to your problems from the middle of July. By the end of August, you will have boundless energy for your aspirations.

**Taurus:***April 21-May 21*

Whilst many about you may be in panic and chaos, you will be accumulating and consolidating resources in pursuit of your goals. There may be some change of plans over the summer and someone close to you may be upset and prove unreliable. At least one rewarding journey is likely. Major decisions, particularly those which rely on others, will best further your plans if made after July 10th.

**Gemini:***May 22-June 21*

June is a dynamic, rewarding time. Those born at the end of May are in for the first stage of a very fortunate, positive phase as blessings begin to flow. Your mood will be appropriately optimistic by the end of summer. If you were born June 17-20, your life is likely to be in a turmoil of challenging, changing patterns; a frustrating and deeply testing time on the most essential levels. A judicious silence after mid-July will pay dividends.

**Cancer:***June 21-July 22*

The urge to abandon home and work for greener pastures is very strong and may continue for months, despite opposition. Although new dreams may be seeded, patience can make them come true. "Moonchildren", born June 20-22, are under challenging influences. The year represents a turning point and personal and professional changes must be expected. Remember, even the most difficult moment of this painful time will pass, enriching and strengthening you.

Leo:*July 23-August 23*

Few clouds should hinder your progress, welcome news after the recent appallingly-difficult times. Your social life is enhanced throughout the summer and a very special opportunity may come through a friend or associate. This is not a time to hibernate. Accept as many invitations as possible. A journey in the second half of summer will leave you revitalised and ready for great responsibilities. Your natural courage, leadership qualities and your many other talents, will attract deserved attention.

**Virgo:***August 24-September 22*

Crisis at home and/or at work will be very unsettling in the early part of the summer. Don't be surprised if June is particularly frantic and insecure. You will be irritable and restless, but patience will see you through the challenges. A partner may be obstructive and relatives will demand valuable time and energy. Tensions will pass and, if your criticisms have been fair, a position of strength will unfold. In August you will be especially prolific creatively – whether in private hobbies or business endeavours.

**Libra:***September 23-October 23*

The summer months find many of you happily travelling, leaving behind responsibilities of home and work which have weighed heavily in recent months. You certainly deserve a break and, though it may not seem so, your career is making steady progress and well-earned rewards should soon be forthcoming. A partner may upset you in August, but don't get too worried or carried away; a calm, balanced approach will resolve the problem.

**Scorpio:***October 24-November 22*

Issues regarding an important relationship and your personal resources come to a head in the summer months. A great many temptations to wind up situations and make others squirm will arise. You would be wise to recognise the bottom line and bring mad ideas and people back down to earth. You may find yourself in an exaggerated emotional state, ready to fly off the handle. Keep your temper and your tongue under control or you may lose out. Romance is in the air, but choose carefully.

**Sagittarius:***November 23-December 23*

For those born December 17-21 pressures are enormous as you enter one of the most challenging phases of your life, now and through the autumn. Expect the unexpected; opposition to your plans is likely and will bring a loss of vitality and enthusiasm. Some of you will have a feeling that all is lost. It is not so. Take courage; this time of trial will serve only to strengthen and awaken you to brighter days in the near future.

**Capricorn:***December 24-January 20*

A dynamic 18-month cycle is underway, the beginning and the end of a major phase in your life. Your naturally cautious, practical approach will strengthen your resources and help to deal with increased responsibilities. Your most important relationships will be in sharp focus through most of the summer. It is important for you to give as much attention and concentration to your personal needs as you do to your professional life before things get out of control.

**Aquarius:***January 21-February 18*

A lovely summer season awaits most of you. Pleasurable pursuits abound and romance is in the air. After a rather trying patch you are ready to enjoy yourself. Children and relatives will be quite demanding, but your good humour will ensure that the interruptions are hardly noticed. Your workload will be increased, but renewed energy will see you through with ease. The last year has been challenging, particularly in relationships. Now is the time to go forward positively.

**Pisces:***February 19-March 20*

The early part of the summer will be somewhat anxious and frustrating as conflicting emotions pull in opposite directions, testing your inner resolve and understanding. You are usually sensitive to the needs of others, often at your own expense. Now you must realise your own dreams. Temporary self-doubt will pass and by the second half of July you will be heading for clearer, calm waters. Your angst and fears will disappear leaving you free to pursue the happiness that is rightfully yours.

widely available.

As aromatherapy grows in popularity, more and more fake oils appear on the market. One of the easiest tests of the authenticity of the essential oil is the price. Be suspicious of a bottle of Neroli (orange blossom) if it costs only £2.00, when kilos of the flowers are needed to extract one single drop! Sadly the pure oils are much more expensive, costing from £6.00 for a small bottle. Franchomme has also charted scientifically the ancient teachings of "yin" and "yang" substances (a belief that health is the result of a balance between negative and positive forces), by measuring the electropositive and electronegative characteristics of some essential oils.

Shirin has also been taught by Dr Daniel

Penoe, a medical practitioner and a colleague of Franchomme, who has been treating both chronic and acute illness with aromatherapy in France and Australia. Dr Penoe's written reports and the progress of his treatments, recorded on film, are frankly amazing. Even the most hardened sceptic must wonder why in the search for an alternative to drug therapy with all its dangers, it has taken us so long to rediscover the vital essences of plants for medicinal use.

Shirin Naidoo is available for consultation on 01-740 4253 and works from a clinic in the Harley Street area. Prices start at £50 for initial consultation and treatment. She also gives courses in aromatherapy at the Yoga

Centre, Notting Hill Gate, London where you can learn about the oils, how to blend them and massage techniques. The course is twice weekly for six weeks and is excellent value at £49. These courses are designed for private use or as an introduction to a professional qualification in aromatherapy.

Michele Lavery

Libas International Magazine Limited would like to apologise for the error in the article "Designs on Food" (Spring issue) where we referred to the restaurant "The Last Days of the Raj" as a restaurant offering good food and attractive surrounds. We wish to clarify that this is at 22 Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and not in Soho.