

follow your nose...

writer Louise Renwick

No one smells like you do. Your natural scent is as personal as your fingerprints and we've been subconsciously using its invisible power to attract each other for generations.

"A newborn baby smiles when it recognises the smell of its mother for the first time and scientists even believe that fetuses can smell in the womb," says Russell Brumfield, a scent expert who dives deep into the power of our olfactory system in his book *Whiff!*. "Throughout our lives scent memories are being made for recall in later life and emotional imprints are created with each and every new experience", he says. "Good times and bad, happy and sad are stored away complete with an emotionally scented connection."

So whether the smell of coconut sunscreen takes you back to your last beach holiday or there's a certain aftershave that reminds you of an ex-boyfriend, all the aroma connections you have are entirely unique.



"Smell is a potent wizard that transports you across thousand of miles and all the years you have lived"

HELEN KELLER (THE WORLD I LIVE IN)

BUT HOW DOES IT ALL WORK?

"The nose has direct access to the amygdala, the portion of the limbic brain that controls emotional response," says Harald Vogt, founder of the Scent Marketing Institute and an expert on the power of scent.

"When we breathe in, odours travelling into our nose hit nerve receptors which go to the brain to stimulate the olfactory bulb which in turn stimulates the hypothalamus and the limbic system. From here we then naturally interpret what we smell as good or bad, offensive or pleasant," further explains Dr Alan Hirsch, the founder and neurological director of the Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation in Chicago, and specialist in the evaluation, diagnosis and treatment of many smell and taste related disorders.

"You may be unaware that you're doing it but when you follow your nose you literally follow your instincts", says Hirsch. "Unlike our other senses which link to the logical left side of the brain, our noses tap in to the intuitive right side of the brain where we store memories and how we behave and feel is controlled."

GETTING EMOTIONAL

"What we see and hear slowly grows dim in memory, but what we smell lives on and can be easily recalled," confirms Brumfield. "While visual, auditory, tactile and taste imprints have quite a significant influence upon our behaviours, studies have shown that aromatic imprints have an even more compelling effect on our perceptions, emotions, opinions and behaviours." And after absorbing the amazing examples which fill not only every page of *Whiff!* but an extremely comprehensive website with amazing olfactory facts he's someone who knows.

Unless you're bunged up with a cold or allergies, it's impossible to switch your nose off and you use it subconsciously to detect thousands of different smells in every breath – 23,040 smells in an average day. Besides the constant barrage of aromas from the

sweet smelling lotions and potions applied to our bodies, the aromas in our homes, cars, offices and if we're lucky, spas, bombard our noses every day. It's pretty amazing to realise that everything that gets up our nose has the power to transform our mood.

As far back as the ancient Egyptians who created the first perfumes using essential oils from plants, believing they contained the powerful spirits of nature, we've applied scent to our bodies. And our mood isn't just affected by what's applied directly to our skin. "The smoke given off in incense burning contains psychoactive, physical and emotionally effective substances that alter mind, body or spirit," says Premchit Saithong a Thai Aromatherapist whose family have specialising in studying plants and their benefits since the 1770s. Traditions of burning different plant derived materials to fragrance homes and meeting places have been used throughout history. Incense certainly isn't just for hippies, *Koh Doh* (incense appreciation) is still a strong tradition in Japan, while across the Pacific indigenous American Indians even now burn plants in traditional smudging ceremonies to scent homes and ward off evil spirits.

PUTTING SCENTS TO WORK

The pros have been the masters of this for centuries. "A perfume is a second of tiny particles of emotions caught by the perfumer and sculpted into a perfume" says Ms Sandra Dziad, a 'nose' at Gilmard and someone who knows only too well that the success of creating an appealing aroma is all about harnessing the emotive power of scent. "Fragrance certainly invokes personal memories", agrees Jo Malone's fragrance and lifestyle director Debbie Wild.

"WOMAN APPLYING PERFUME ON HER WRIST" ©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/CATALIN PLESA

“Success is a great deodorant
– it takes away all your past smells”

ELIZABETH TAYLOR

“A person may be drawn to a particular scent because it reminds them of a certain moment, person or place.”

Places where aromas affect us aren't only the ones where we decide on the fragrance ourselves. “The way we smell effects the way we feel, but changing the smell of a room can completely change the ambience of a place and the feelings of the people in it,” says Hong Kong aromatherapist Shireen Calucan. “Spas have been doing it for years in their own way but retailers and hotels are realising the potential of being able to influence our mood by connecting to us through our noses”, says Simon Faure-Field, whose scent marketing company Equal Strategy specialises in creating ‘signature scents’ for different brands, who he says are realising the power of tapping into us through our noses. “Some hospitals release aromas to calm patients and the smell of the

the truth stinks

- Men's body odour and breath are perceived on average as more unpleasant than women's
- By age 80 approximately 80 percent of people have some major smell dysfunction and 50 percent are close to anosmic (odour-blind)
- Asians lead the way in the ability to detect odours and have the lowest level of body odour production
- Only half of the Vietnamese and Korean populations have sweat glands under their arms
- The way to a man's heart really is through his stomach – a mixture of pumpkin pie and lavender can increase male sexual arousal by a whopping 40 percent

Courtesy of *Whiff!* For more bizarre olfactory facts check out www.whiffbook.com

hot towels on Singapore Airlines flights has also actually been purposefully fragranced to calm and relax you. Even some stores are releasing aromas that are proven to make you linger longer,” he explains.

So can one smell guarantee the same universal influence on all of us or is it more complicated? “Unless there is a direct connect between a scent and a product it is supposed to sell like cinnamon buns or coffee etc, the choice of a ‘signature scent’ for a brand becomes a matter of style, taste and culture. There's no automatic success in scent marketing,” says Vogt who has been working with another successful scenting brand Air Aroma. “Judgements affected by scent involve both comparison and evaluation, and congruency or context comes into play, meaning that a Christmas scent in summer confuses the consumer's brain (unless she's in the Southern Hemisphere) and a scent considered too feminine turns off male shoppers. Same, if the scent is too weak or too overpowering.”

aromatics for pets

Aromas don't only affect humans. Shireen Calucan, a Hong Kong based qualified holistic aromatherapist also studied with the Ingraham Institute of Animal Aromatic Science & Research and now specialises in calming hyperactive hamsters and placating petulant poodles.

Making a home visit to meet owner and pet and find out about their environment and lifestyle is the first step to determining the cause of a problem. Providing there are no serious medical problems Shireen individually offers your pet several oils and observes the reaction.

Animals know what they need intuitively and despairing pet owners have reported amazing results after trying the treatments and learning how to apply the oils. Scents for treating hyperactivity may include some gentle sedatives like mandarin and neroli to start with, followed by ylang ylang and roman chamomile – though we don't advise attempting to treat a pet's potentially serious condition on your own or before consulting a qualified veterinarian.

To learn more about her essential oils, request a consultation for your pet, or find out about treating yourself with custom blended perfumes and lotions visit www.earthgirlcreations.com.



GOING BEYOND EMOTIONS

The scent marketing companies have a host of major hotels and retailers convinced by the results of their scent applications and Hirsch has some pretty incredible results in other fields too. "Exposing bowling teams to jasmine has improved hand-eye coordination, green apple and cucumber can affect how the size of a room was perceived and people in a stationary bicycle test exposed to the smell of strawberry and butter popcorn burnt 18% more calories," he reports. Add to this the evidence that mint aromas increased concentration in office workers and that scents have reduced pain in patients with arthritis.

Understanding more about the power that lies in our nose confirms what philosophers and aromatherapists like the family of Premchit have known for centuries – smells go far deeper than we realise. Whether or not we like them, they really do have the power to affect our behaviour. Brumfield has pages more about the incredible applications of scent technology to modern life in *Whiff!* from the fascinating to futuristic.

Though I think there's no need to worry just yet that we will need to walk around with a peg on our noses to block the incredible number of stimulating smells, as anyone who knows how good a spritz of your favourite perfume makes you feel understands, you can choose to change the smells that surround you as often as you change your mind.

timeless scents

When a journalist asked Marilyn Monroe what she wore to bed and she answered "Just a few drops of N°5" the Chanel fragrance became legendary. Perfume tends to have more of an association with vanity than aromatherapy but taking a closer look at the ingredients which Chanel perfumier Mr Ernest Beaux picked to mix for fashion icon Gabrielle Chanel – sedating ylang ylang, heartlifting may rose and stress, irritability and fatigue fighting jasmine – he clearly created not only a distinctive scent but one with powerful therapeutic properties.
www.chanel.com

marketing scents

Spas aren't the only ones tapping into our emotions through our noses. Scent Marketing companies like Air Aroma and Equal Strategy are working commercially with retailers and hotels to harness the power that aromas have in influencing how we feel. Air-aroma's website even has a fun tool to help select the right aroma depending on the location and purpose.

Both brands work to create unique signature scents, which although you may not have realised it ensure the reassuring smell of Mandarin Oriental hotels is identical anywhere in the world, and the smell of Shanghai Tang in Hong Kong or Tokyo matches their other stores.

Awareness of the ability to influence consumers through the power of aroma is exploding. Brumfield has dedicated an entire chapter of *Whiff!* to examples and the potentials for other applications of scent technology on a large scale.

www.air-aroma.com
www.equalstrategy.com
www.whiffolutions.com

for more information

- Premchit and Norman at Premchit Saithong Natural Artisanal Aromatics www.premchitsaithong.biz
- Russell Brumfield author of *Whiff!* www.whiffbook.com
- Dr Alan Hirsch, The Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation www.smellandtaste.org
- Shireen Calucin MFIPPA, Earthgirl Creations www.earthgirlcreations.com
- Ms Sandra Dziad, Nose for Galimard Perfumes www.studiogalimard.com
- Chanel Fragrances Hong Kong www.chanel.com
- Air Aroma www.air-aroma.com
- Simon A. Faure-Field, Equal Strategy www.equalstrategy.com
- Harald H. Vogt, Founder & Chief Marketer, Scent Marketing Institute www.scentmarketing.org

rescue remedies

Essential oils are divided into 12 families each with their own unique healing properties:

BALSAMIC

Aroma: Rich, sweet, balsamic
Benzoin – relaxing
Opopanax – peaceful
Peru Balsam – comforting

CAMPHORACEOUS

Aroma: Penetrating, stimulating, menthol
Eucalyptus – stimulating
Nerolina – enlightening
Rosemary – energising

CITRUS

Aroma: Fresh, light, zesty
Lime – refreshing
Orange – uplifting
Yuzu – reviving

EARTHY

Aroma: Heavy, earthy, sensual
Arnica – soothing
Patchouli – helps concentration
Vetiver – grounding

FLORAL

Aroma: Sweet, sensual, floral
Boronia – alluring
Rose – increases sensuality
Ylang Ylang – aids self-confidence

FRUITY

Aroma: Fresh, sweet, fruity
Bergamot – motivating
Mandarin – tranquil
Tangerine – brings integrity

GRASSY

Aroma: Fresh, green, grassy
Palmarosa – motivates enthusiasm
Jamarosa – for loyalty
Palmarosa – invigorating

HERBAL

Aroma: Fresh, aromatic, herbal
Basil – purifying
Melissa – for cheerfulness
Tarragon – restoring

MINTY

Aroma: Penetrating, camphoraceous, minty
Peppermint – revitalising
Spearmint – brings clarity

MUSKY

Aroma: Heavy, sensual, musky
Ambrette – works as an aphrodisiac
Labdanum – for joy
Oak Moss – protecting

SPICY

Aroma: Warm, aromatic, spicy
All spice – helps with creativity
Bay – inspiring
Nutmeg – calming

WOODY

Aroma: Fresh, sensual, woody
Fir – harmonising
Rosewood – balancing
Sandalwood – for serenity

www.premchitsaithong.biz

THIS PAGE: *Rose petals* by Galimard; PREVIOUS PAGE: *Creating fragrances* by Galimard.