ETHICS IN THE PRACTICE OF AROMATHERAPY
What Every Aromatherapist Needs to Know

Linda Lee Smith RN, MS, HN-BC, HTCP, HTSM-CP/I, CCA
Institute of Spiritual Healing and Aromatherapy, Inc.
Disclaimer

The material in this book is a guide to the practice of aromatherapy. It is not a replacement for traditional health care, medical diagnosis, or medical treatment for illness. Refer to a licensed medical practitioner for medical care.

About the Author

Linda is President of the Institute of Spiritual Healing & Aromatherapy. She is certified in holistic nursing, Healing Touch, Healing Touch Spiritual Ministry, holistic health and in aromatherapy. As creator of a certification in clinical aromatherapy program, Linda has produced a unique offering that enhances the study of clinical aromatherapy by adding the study of vibrational frequencies of the oils, emotional and spiritual aspects of healing with oils, and energetic healing techniques. When students graduate from this 300 hour course of study, they will have learned much more than the national requirements to become an aromatherapist. Linda lives in Arvada, Colorado but can be found most weekends teaching somewhere throughout the world. Her “calling” is to help restore healing in Christianity and so she takes a Christian approach to the presentation of essential oils—God’s healing pharmacy.

Linda is also an expert article writer on the internet and has published well over 250 articles for ezine articles primarily on aromatherapy and topics concerning Healing Touch Spiritual Ministry. To see a list of her published works you can google Linda Lee Smith or go to http://www.ezinearticles.com/?expert=Linda_Lee_Smith For more free aromatherapy education, you can go to Linda’s blog at http://EssentialOilEducation.com for the latest news and short articles on aromatherapy.
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Introduction

What Is Acceptable Aromatherapy Practice Today?

Before looking into the ethics of an aromatherapy practice, it would be helpful to define what is acceptable aromatherapy practice today in the U.S. and in Australia—the two countries where ISHA’s aromatherapy certification in aromatherapy program is taught.

Aromatherapy came to both the United States and Australia (as well as to Canada) from England where aromatherapy is practiced as a self-help modality based in massage therapy. Essential oils are usually diluted to be rubbed on the body and never used internally and only rarely used undiluted on the skin. In contrast, aromatic medicine as taught in France is “used confidently and efficaciously in the most appropriate way for any presenting condition.”[^1] That would include internal use and undiluted oils on the skin by properly educated healthcare providers. It is built on the knowledge of the therapeutic actions of the chemical components that make up essential oils, plus an understanding of the synergy within a single oil and the synergy potential within blended oils. As taught in our program, it also includes an understanding of the physics or vibrational frequencies underlying the chemistry of each essential oil. The ISHA program does not teach internal use of oils since this is interpreted as practicing medicine which is illegal unless the person has a proper license to prescribe.

At present, legislation has not gotten involved with defining the profession of aromatherapy in the U.S., Australia or Canada. When enough of the public start using essential oils for healthcare choices, legislation will certainly follow to protect the public from the “untrained” lay practitioner of aromatherapy and charlatans, quacks, and simply the naïve user of oils.

So for clarification, the ISHA program teaches both an English style of aromatherapy diluting the oils to rub on the body, and an aromatic medicine approach which requires greater knowledge of chemistry and vibrational frequencies in order to advise and educate clients about the healing properties of essential oils and their safe use. It is a responsibility that is not taken lightly and
presents with many ethical concerns that an aromatherapist must weigh. Now, let us consider the ethical practice of this evolving modality—aromatherapy.

“Ethics is the study of the appropriate choices to be made by an individual in relationship with others.”

Dorothea Hover-Kramer

Ethics is always about relationships. Our values play a role in our ethical behavior towards others; for instance respect and concern for others. As aromatherapy practitioners and energy healers we may have already identified core values that underscore our principles of behavior in our practice of aromatherapy and energy healing.

Compassion, trust, respect, integrity, responsibility, competence, humility, and knowledge may be at our core.

And, as practitioners we desire to act in integrity meaning in harmony with our values, principles and code of ethics. Being in touch with your own core values can lead to a more satisfying and balanced life as you sense the best course of action for your clients. Kylea Taylor puts it this way, “ethics is the process by which we sort out what best creates inner and outer harmony in our lives.”

Ethics deals with the moment-to-moment decisions one makes when no one is looking on says writer Dorothea Hover-Kramer. So ethics go beyond what can be legally enforced. One’s ethics requires working from a place of integrity, speaking truth but with kindness, treating the relationship with clients as a sacred contract.

I find it interesting that in my search for ethics in the practice of aromatherapy among published books and in the curriculums of aromatherapy educational programs I found little, if anything written. Therefore, my purpose for this ebook and the teleseminar by the same name is to discuss ethical behavior specifically for aromatherapists in the practice of aromatherapy where clients are seen for healthcare issues. Most people who incorporate aromatherapy into an already existing healing practice such as massage therapy, nursing, medicine, chiropractic, energy healing, counseling or other professional practice—already subscribe to a

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code of ethics. This ebook will then serve to broaden their understanding of ethics to include the practice of aromatherapy.

Second, we will look at ethics in research as it pertains to research in aromatherapy. Again, I have found nothing written specifically regarding research behavior in aromatherapy. It is expected that the reader or listener has already read ISHA’s Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice printed both on our web site and in each student manual. A copy is added here in the appendix.

I recognize that many students who are enrolled in a certification program in clinical aromatherapy program have no intention of establishing a private practice in aromatherapy. They are studying for their own knowledge or for the status that a certification affords them. However, all clinical aromatherapists need to be aware of the ethical issues impacting the practice of aromatherapy whether on self, friends, or clients.

“Professionalism” and “legitimacy” of aromatherapy as a practice—private or within healthcare settings—requires a deeper understanding of how aromatherapy relates within the orthodox medical world, the complementary or integrative health arena, and in the marketplace. Professionalism legitimates the practice of clinical aromatherapy “by calling into question the motives and ethics of the “quack” who is motivated by lucrative prospects and the naïveté of the amateur who is driven by altruistic values and enthusiasm”4 but who simply lacks a solid knowledge base of essential oils.

A Code of Practice

One would hope that those who have completed a rigorous training program in aromatherapy subscribe to a code of ethics for the practice of aromatherapy. Legally of course, this is not enforceable. However, we have a duty to ourselves, our profession and most of all to our clients to respect and adhere to a code of ethics. In the long run, it will help the professional development and reputation of aromatherapy as a healing art.
How Does Ethics Affect Us as Aromatherapy Practitioners and as Essential Oil Researchers?

Ethics implies morality of our actions. How should aromatherapy practitioners behave towards their clients and aromatherapy researchers towards their research subjects? What character traits should practitioners and researchers cultivate as virtues? And what traits should be avoided?

There are advantages in understanding ethics. Ethics provide us with:

- A structure for analysis and decision-making
- Support and a reminder to protect human subjects and clients
- A workable definition of benefits and risks, along with guidelines for evaluating and balancing the benefits and risks of our treatments and our research studies.

What is a “Benefit?”

A benefit is a positive value or advantage. For instance, a benefit to the client is that their pain is relieved or their depression is lifted. For the person participating in a research study, the benefit may be the likelihood that the good therapeutic outcome may be personal. Or it may be more intangible—for example—the results from a study could be crucial to understanding the anti-inflammatory actions of an oil.
What is a “Risk?”
Risks generally are evaluated according to the probability and magnitude of any harm that might occur. For a client, the risk might be that the oil doesn’t help. In a research study, the risk is that an individual may be one that the study doesn’t help or that there will be an adverse reaction.

Because the field of clinical aromatherapy is new and not well defined at all, there are a number of risks that practitioners may stumble into—but with proper precautions—can be avoided.

- Offering essential oils whose healing properties and safety issues have not as yet been established
  - Example: Using a new essential oil with a client with only knowledge heard at a conference or received in an email. You have no written information on the safety or even proper uses for that oil and so you “experiment” on your client.

- Failure to know a client’s medical issues, failure to confirm the presence of adequate medical care, failure to know the client’s medications or supplements before using essential oils
  - Example: Not keeping professional notes as a practitioner so you don’t know all of the client’s health conditions—for instance—you fail to find out that the client has a heart condition and high blood pressure and you choose oils that raise blood pressure and may affect the heart rhythm based solely on the symptoms they described or on your “intuition.”

- Recommending or selling supplements, medicines, essential oils or devices within one’s practice (unless you are a licensed healthcare provider)
  - Example: You tell the client to take a certain supplement that has essential oils in it for their particular medical diagnosis as identified by a physician. The client may misinterpret your message as somehow solving their health issue.
• Example: You tell the client that you want them to take the oils that you sell or use the oil blend that you make and sell but give them no choice as to where they can obtain these oils other than from you.

• Failure to use an informed consent
  o Example: You don’t like to keep records so you don’t ask for a signed informed consent and the client later is upset because they didn’t “understand” what all was involved in being treated by you with aromatherapy. They complain to their doctor or worse yet, sue you for unconventional care.

• Financial impropriety like fee-splitting when making a referral or other forms of profit-sharing
  o Example: You make a referral to a massage therapist and in return you expect that therapist to pay you half of their initial fee for your referral.

• Making claims in marketing materials, including website, brochures, publicity or public presentations that are inconsistent with the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) and FTC (Federal Trade Commission) guidelines (U.S.)
  o Example: You publish on your website that pure essential oils are known to cure cancer or heart disease or any number of physical problems.
  o Example: You print on your brochure that you treat high blood pressure, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, or other health diagnoses with essential oils which are not approved by the FDA or other regulatory agency for those conditions.

• Promising more than you can deliver
  o Example: You state that a particular oil will give your client a good night’s sleep or completely stop their pain or other physical symptom for which they sought your help. The client interprets this as somehow magically changing their life for the better and is disappointed when this does not occur.
• Forming unhealthy attachments based on practitioner needs
  o Example: Being overly attached to a particular outcome and thus keeping a client beyond what is reasonable and necessary.
  o Example: Keeping a client dependent upon you to meet your own emotional or financial needs.

• Neglecting to have a current business license in the community in which you practice
  o Example: This is just plain stupid! The IRS will eventually come knocking at your door or someone will report you to the Better Business Bureau.

How Do We Balance Potential Benefits and Risks?

We weigh the risks against the potential benefits. The probability of harm relative to the probability of benefit should be determined. This is true every time you see a client for treatment or those who consent to be part of your research study. Neither the potential benefits nor the risks can be known completely ahead of time.

Some Safe Risk Management Practices

• Keep backup files of literature and research that you have studied that can be used to educate your clients
• Provide clear informed consent to your clients based on your specific practice that considers both aromatherapy and your other healing modalities (see appendix B for a sample consent form)
• Keep good client files that document the fact that you discussed your methods and that the client has given permission freely without coercion
• Support the client’s conventional diagnostic and therapeutic regimens, monitor any new symptoms and evaluate carefully
• Seek consultation for complex client issues beyond your skill or knowledge level
• Refer to other practitioners for client needs when necessary
• Maintain clear, professional and therapeutic boundaries—don’t coerce clients to buy your oils, attend your educational classes, socialize with clients or drive them in your car
• Seek legal consultation on all publicity about yourself and your practice
• Maintain a current business license

Informal sharing about aromatherapy happens briefly with friends and family. However, when you are engaged in an endeavor that is available to the public, including any form of advertising or publicity (even a business card), or any activity that has a marketable value—you are functioning as a professional practitioner. Therefore, you are open to legal liabilities in relation to your actions.  

Ethical Problems That Can Arise in the Practice of Aromatherapy and/or Other Healing Modalities

1. Lack of informed consent—see previous section.
2. Coercion or undue pressure on clients to follow a certain essential oil protocol or on volunteers for a research study
3. Using your influence as a practitioner for the purpose of “selling” oils to a client
   Example: Using your aromatherapy practice as a “front” for building an essential oil business or selling your custom blends or other medical devices.

4. Overpowering vulnerable clients with your “intuitive” abilities regarding their health
   Example: Telling a client that your “intuitive guidance” or your “energy-assessment machine/computer program” states that they require certain oils and supplements in order to achieve a healthy
state of being. You convey your “concern” for their well being and emphasize the need for them to follow your directions.

5. Exploiting vulnerable clients or a vulnerable population for a research study
   Example: convincing a vulnerable client to be part of a research study with the promise of “free” oils or “free treatments” if they participate.

6. Withholding information
   Example: Not being forth coming about the risks versus benefits of using essential oils for a particular condition.

7. Withholding available treatment
   Example: Failing to refer to an appropriate healthcare provider when aromatherapy is inappropriate.

8. Deception
   Example: Purposely withholding information or giving misleading information in order for the client to sign up for additional treatments or oils.

9. Violation of rights
   Example: You convey your negative feelings concerning other healthcare choices a client may make like chemotherapy and radiation and in essence violate someone’s right to choose for themselves their health options.

As aromatherapy practitioners, you have a responsibility to protect your clients from harm—this is the principle of respect for persons. You need to conduct initial and continuing informed consent and evaluate whether the subject is benefiting from your treatments with essential oils and/or energy healing. In a research study, this means evaluating whether the research allows subjects to withdraw from the research.

From the principle of beneficence, you need to evaluate the physical/emotional/psychological benefits of your treatment for the client. In research, you evaluate the social and scientific value of the research and the risk/benefit ratio.
From the **principle of justice**, aromatherapy practitioners need to evaluate whether what they are offering the client is in their best interest or whether another form of healthcare would be better. In research, the principle of justice is about evaluating how you fairly selected your subjects and your method of recruitment.

**The Golden Rule**

The ethics of caring about another person requires us to think beyond just avoiding harm or focusing on what one should not do and to direct attention toward becoming client-centered. How do people want to be treated? Practically all cultures and religions will quote some aspect of the “Golden Rule” as the basis for societal treatment of one another. It is the closest thing we have to a universal guideline for ethics a person can follow.

**Christianity:** “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.”

**Islam:** “No one of you is a believer until he loves for his neighbor what he loves for himself.”

**Judaism:** “What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.”

**Buddhism:** “Hurt not others with that which pains yourself.”

**Hinduism:** “This is the sum of duty; do naught unto others what you would not have them do unto you.”

**Zoroastrianism:** “Whatever is disagreeable to yourself, do not do unto others.”

**Confucianism:** “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.”

**Bahai:** “And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou choosest for thyself.”

**Jainism:** “A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated.”

**Yoruba Proverb (Nigeria):** “One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts.”

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Being an ethical caring person, following the Golden Rule of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you, means meeting the challenge of doing the right thing when that will cost more than what you may want to pay. It calls for discerning right from wrong, good from evil, propriety from impropriety. Most importantly, being ethical calls for commitment to do what is right, good and proper.

Here is a short list of things that author John C. Maxwell identifies that all human beings have in common when it comes to how they want to be treated:7

- I want to be valued by others
- I want to be appreciated for what I can do
- I want to be trusted
- I want to be respected
- I want to be understood
- I do not want others to take advantage of me

The Golden Rule can be a moral compass for one’s path in life. Maxwell quotes Ted Koppel who said “There’s harmony and inner peace to be found in following a moral compass that points in the same direction regardless of fashion or trend.” So the Golden Rule begins with you—with each one of us. Figure out how you want to be treated by others—with dignity, respect, understanding, and trust—then you should be able to figure out how to treat others.

An Ethical Principle We Are All Called to Practice

Aromatherapy practitioners consider each client’s needs—physical/emotional/mental/spiritual as their priority when providing care.

How do we live this out in our individual practices is by calling ourselves to higher standards of practice that are an extension of the Golden Rule of how we treat one another. Here are some related standards to this ethical principle:

- The aromatherapist sets their intention at the beginning of a client session for the highest good for that client, letting go of their own needs and
personal agendas and even letting go of any specific outcomes for the client. The aromatherapist asks to be a conduit or instrument of healing for this client.

- Aromatherapists base their care on theory, knowledge and research of essential oils, and on an understanding of the subtle energy body and how essential oils and/or energy healing can correct imbalances to a place of harmonic resonance.

- Aromatherapists base their interventions on assessment—health information obtained through interview and energy assessment to determine energy blocks—which allows the aromatherapist to make a mutual plan of care with the client’s participation.

- In ongoing care, the aromatherapist continually evaluates client responses and adjusts the plan of care accordingly, seeking supervision and/or consultation as needed.

- Aromatherapists are clear about boundaries, gains permissions for care and touching, keeps confidentiality and maintains clear and precise records of all client contacts.

- Aromatherapists educate clients and do not indicate that essential oils can remedy any physical, emotional, or spiritual issues but that these essential oils can support various systems within the body, are mood elevating and help manage stress, and promote overall health.
Some Guidelines for Care

Aromatherapists rely not only on science and knowledge but on the art of aromatherapy which means utilizing one’s intuition and inner guidance as to which oils to use, how often and in what application form. Caroline Myss describes intuition as “an expression of power” therefore ethical concerns can arise from unscrupulous influence over others. Even though the aromatherapist may be coming from a place of compassion and client-centered care, clients will still relate to the caregiver as an empowered being or authority figure. For this reason, clients will follow the directions and suggestions of the care provider who is the professional in charge. The aromatherapist must then be careful to examine not only the client care provided but also personal intentions and any hidden agendas. One suggestion is to reflect on and evaluate the care you provide. Here are some thoughtful questions that come from Dr. Dorothea Hover-Kramer for your consideration:

1. How did I empower the client to make choices for him/herself?
2. Did I present several methods from which to choose?
3. How did the method [oil(s) chosen] help the client?
4. Did I have a personal agenda in suggesting it?
5. What alternative approaches might I use in a future session?
6. How often did I ask the client for his or her opinion or feedback?
7. Was rapport present in the session?
8. Were there times I became distracted?
9. Did my enthusiasm for [aromatherapy] come from a desire to demonstrate what I know?
10. Was there clear agreement to use the selected method?
11. How did I encourage and give room for a reluctant or passive client to express his/her feelings and attitudes?

Self Care

Care of others begins with care of self first. The more you do your own self-care you will begin to notice an increase in intuitiveness coming through. When you are centered and in balance with self and others, a knowingness or intuitive perception will come quite naturally as you tune into your clients’ energies and

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needs. Whatever the client presents to you, you are able to access your inner wisdom through a sense of calm and peacefulness.

Staying balanced and taking care of one’s body, mind and spirit, the professional aromatherapist does not use mind-altering drugs or alcohol prior to seeing clients. Using therapeutic medicinal oils is however a mark of self care. An excellent way of knowing the healing properties of an essential oil is by using them on yourself for your own balance and healing.

**Aromatherapist Burnout**

Yes, burnout can occur when the aromatherapist is not doing sufficient self-care. Kylea Taylor tells us that “burnout diminishes authentic caring and makes therapists vulnerable to unethical behavior.”\(^{10}\) What are some of the causes?

- Too many clients
- Too much stress in one’s life
- Not enough recreation
- Not enough attention to self care and personal psychological growth
- Not enough attention to personal spiritual path or practice

What I see happening all too often is the amount of personal stress in one’s life—relationships, money, and lack of time are at the top of the list—preventing the aromatherapist from giving enough attention to self. Where is the balance in life? We have an ethical obligation to ourselves to balance workload, family, recreation, self-growth, professional continuing education and personal spiritual practice.

**Staying Grounded and Maintaining Healthy Boundaries**

Be in your body—stay grounded! You cannot do this healing work unless you are in your body— and it cannot be any clearer than this. When you see clients, you do not want to take-on someone else’s pain—you are to be a vessel in this work—you are not the source of healing and you are not all-powerful. Learn to listen to the client’s needs.
and respect where they are on their healing journey.

Strengthen your own boundaries—put up a shield or a screen at the edge of your field. Know what is yours and what belongs to another. When you are doing energy healing balancing with essential oils as taught in ISHA’s aromatherapy program, keep your eyes open. This will help you stay grounded and aware of the fact that your client is the focus of your work. Know your essential oils—ones that help you stay grounded and in your body—so you are protected from taking on the client’s issues.

Your intention of caring for others requires an attentive awareness to your every choice. Your interactions with others need to be of the highest integrity and in keeping with a high standard of values. This is wisdom gained through experience. An ethical approach takes into consideration caring connections with clients that set clear boundaries regarding touch and deeper levels of intuitive sharing.

Your Motives

Aromatherapy consultations and applications are about SERVICE to others. It is not about feeling power over someone or feeling morally superior to anyone. Be clear about your deepest motives in this work. Unconditional acceptance of your client’s state of being and non-judgment will serve your ability to assist another. Real caring is always heart work. Remember the Golden Rule—do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Humility needs to be a hallmark of this service to others. One other caveat is that as your compassion towards yourself unfolds, compassion for those who suffer physically or emotionally will also expand.

Service to others is not just a social ideal—it is a spiritual necessity for our own growth as spiritual beings. All spiritual traditions tell us that we serve the divine through caring for other people. We are therefore responsible for one another and we are meant to discover and nurture the divine that exists within each person. Just remember that caring is not a foolproof protection against unethical behavior. Aromatherapists can “fool” themselves into believing that their actions
are caring when they are not in the best interests of the client but are self-serving.

Your motives should also include how you as an aromatherapy practitioner conduct yourself in public. An aromatherapist complies with the highest standards of moral behavior and integrity and upholds the dignity and status of the profession of aromatherapy.

**Respect Others**

Just as you respect your own path in life, respect that of others as unique for them. This means keeping out when you haven’t been invited in. If someone does not ask for information, the general rule is to keep quiet. Or, if someone wants to make healthcare choices that are different from what you would do, respect their right to choose. Do not try to reform or conform others to your particular way of thinking or believing. It will not work and may only be a source of distress for you. Sometimes it is helpful to share a personal story with a client on how a particular essential oil helped you. Let the story illuminate a point—but not as an opportunity to impress. There is also a fine line between keeping quiet about any intuitive messages you may have received and withholding information that would be helpful to the client’s decision making. Quoting from resources or looking up information for the client will help them make informed decisions.

Pay attention when you feel “compelled” to share an insight or offer an essential oil to another. Where is this “sense of being compelled” coming from? Is it from Spirit/Universe/God/Source or your own ego? Honor and respect the other person’s right to refuse. You are not responsible to heal everyone. Misuse of intuitional powers is a well-known trap and the inappropriate sharing of material may cause clients to feel invaded. Everything you say or do in some way has the power to influence. Remember—everything we do for someone else is ultimately empowering or disempowering.

**Quality and Cleanliness**

All reasonable care must be taken to ensure that the quality of the essential oils used in treating clients meets the highest standards. To choose essential oils based solely on their affordability and not on the highest quality standards is a
breach of ethical practice. Proper hygiene and cleanliness of equipment like diffusers, or bottles, pipettes, and other essential oils equipment are a consideration as well.

**Ask Permission**

Consultation, assessment and treatment should only be carried out with full consent of the client. Always ask permission after you have explained what you will be doing. This calls for respecting the boundaries of others.

Getting an informed consent means that the client has a clear idea of the methods you will be using. Another aspect of this informed consent is to give clear information about the risks and benefits of the methods used.

The **benefits of aromatherapy** appear to be quite positive—

Release of distress, decreased anxiety, increased sense of well being, enhanced self-esteem, pain relief, rest and relaxation are but a few. There may also be wound healing and increased or accelerated physical healing.

But what about the **risks of aromatherapy**?

Have you explained the safety factors associated with the oils you have chosen? The primary action of essential oils is actually on the energy body—the subtle energy field and energy centers. We must always be on the lookout for potential problem areas and unexpected consequences of our actions. Scientific research is constantly bringing new information to light. It is your responsibility as an aromatherapist to stay current regarding new discoveries—this means continual learning in your field.

**Some questions to consider:**

- Has the client clearly and freely made a choice to receive an aromatherapy consultation or energetic intervention with aromatherapy?
- Is there any way I could be considered negligent?
• Have I done what other aromatherapy practitioners would do to meet my duty to help the client?
• Have I performed anything that could be considered malpractice?
• If licensed, am I functioning within my state’s practice act for my profession?
• If unlicensed, have I done everything that a comparable aromatherapy professional would do to help this client?

Don’t Give More than What Is Asked for

We can err by overwhelming someone with more than they asked for in coming to you. Healing generally takes time and in increments. In your enthusiasm to share with others what you have learned in this aromatherapy certification program, you could overwhelm by sharing too much at one time. Your listeners have not gone through the gradual experience and expansion that you have. Be careful not to impose your agenda on others. Use careful discernment when you learn something during a healing treatment as to whether it should be shared with your client. Keep treatment simple and loving; focus on client-centered care; let the client talk; and listen with compassion. This also means that as an aromatherapy practitioner you cannot mislead a client seeking your advice or treatment for your own personal gain.

Identify a Mentor or a Resource Person in Your Community

You have resources—use them. No one can be expected to always remember everything about every essential oil. There are times when another person’s view can help shift you into proper insight. Sometimes just another perspective on a situation can help you to make proper decisions. Consulting another experienced aromatherapy practitioner will help you to check your insights against your value system, common sense, and truth.
Confidentiality

A healing relationship is based on trust. It is not appropriate to talk to anyone else regarding someone’s healing session except where required by law without their permission. A signed release form will grant the practitioner permission to release information to a specific professional—such as the client’s doctor or counselor.

The professional aromatherapist maintains a complete record on each client that is kept in a secure location either in a file cabinet or electronic file. This should include permissions, demographic information, assessments and treatments.

Know and Own Your Feelings in Relation to the Client

When you are caring for another person, your own feelings may come up which could lead to the client’s dependency on you or your need to “rescue.” On the other hand, you may become aware of romantic emotions toward your client or vice versa. Be vigilant about promising something to a client that you may not be able to deliver. Do not forget that your energy fields are intertwined during the session which could lead to the client having expectations that exceed what you can realistically provide. Issues are not always clearly defined. This is where consulting a trusted mentor is extremely helpful.

When clients seek treatment and defer to the practitioner as the “authority” or “parent” figure by giving up their personal power, it is said that transference occurs. On the other hand, when healers become too enmeshed in the client’s problems and loose objectivity, counter-transference occurs. Whenever there is a power differential in a relationship, there is a strong potential for transference and counter-transference to surface. Maintaining clear boundaries is absolutely crucial for handling these situations.

Dual Relationships

When you have two roles, you need to be very clear about which role you are fulfilling. For instance, you are friend and an aromatherapist or a massage therapist and an aromatherapist or an energy healer and an aromatherapist or an aromatherapist and a close relative.
(spouse, parent, aunt, etc.) This is not to say you cannot do a healing session or an aromatherapy consultation on a friend or a relative but it may not be appropriate to see your friend or relative as a client for ongoing healing sessions. You take the risk of role shifting to a point where you lose the relationship. Needless to say, the professional aromatherapist does not enter into sexual relationships with their clients. When in doubt, refer the person to another aromatherapist. These complex relationships are difficult to avoid in smaller communities and require careful consideration.

Dual relationships also include obvious overlaps when there is a conflict of interests. For example, you recommend selling an essential oil or device like a diffuser when you are the treating practitioner. This puts you in the roles of therapist and salesperson. The conflict of interest exists because of your empowered place as the caregiver. The position of power often makes clients willing to follow your suggestions but they may have regrets later especially where money is involved.

**Healer—Know Thyself**

Do you know yourself—do you know your true mission in life? Your own continued healing is so important as you develop your skills as an aromatherapist and as a healer. The more you do healing work your own issues will start to surface and will challenge you to continue your own personal healing. Practitioners who neglect to do their own inner work will soon find themselves spiritually depleted.

Know your assets as well as your limitations so you can take corrective action when necessary. How does stress affect you? Does it cloud your ability to think clearly or make wise decisions? There are NO emergencies with this work, so rather than making snap decisions, take time to think about your answer or your actions with a client—rely upon your strengths—don’t play to your weaknesses and limitations. You might regret your statements or your actions later when you act in haste or under stress. Remember—honor the ethic of caring for others by first caring for yourself. A commitment to self-care is a manifestation of our ethic of caring at the deepest level.
Do No Harm

Ethics author Kylea Taylor borrows a phrase from Albert Schweitzer to describe appropriate ethical behavior—*reverence for life*.[11] We are here to serve, not to harm. Aromatherapists treat clients in accordance with holistic principles and recommend treatment based upon the specific needs of the client. The professional aromatherapist does not make false claims as to the potential benefits of aromatherapy. Rather, the aromatherapist participates in community education as to the true benefits of aromatherapy. To this aim, the aromatherapist practices honesty in advertising and promoting their services ethically.

Practice Good Essential Oil Safety

Every professional aromatherapist should know the safety parameters of the essential oils they use in their practice. This would include oils that can cause skin and mucous membrane irritation or redness; oils that cause phototoxic effects; oils that have the potential for causing allergic type responses; oils that are not used during pregnancy; and oils that should not be used with children under the age of 6.

Know Your Scope of Practice

Energy practitioners and aromatherapists who hold a license in some field know they must practice within a scope of practice and standards of practice for their particular field. These are defined by each state’s statutes and regulations. Adding aromatherapy to a plan of care may be interpreted as operating outside the defined scope of practice for some professions and could lead to probation, suspension, or revocation of the practitioner’s license. Subscribing to a work that has a certification program or a certificate of completion program, internal standards of practice and a code of ethics are helpful should the practitioner be summoned by a regulatory board.

A non-licensed practitioner of aromatherapy is not subject to professional discipline by a licensing board. However, there could be claims that the individual is practicing a licensed profession without a license and could be charged with a

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crime. Non-licensed practitioners need to tread very carefully in the conduct of their practices. For instance, recommending essential oils in place of prescribed medications could be construed as practicing medicine without a license. Counseling a client who is in emotional turmoil could be construed as practicing a licensed therapy (psychology or psychiatry) without a license.

What can an aromatherapist safely say to a client? Rather than diagnosing and prescribing which is considered to be the practice of medicine, the aromatherapist can research the problem, give personal testimony or testimony of other clients. The aromatherapist can also consult with the client’s personal physician.

In short, the professional aromatherapist provides services within the scope and limit of their training. They do not employ techniques for which they have not been adequately trained and they represent their education, training, qualifications and abilities honestly. The professional aromatherapist refers clients to other appropriate healthcare practitioners when the client clearly needs more than what aromatherapy can address.

**Know your Limitations with Aromatherapy**

The perceptive practitioner will do their best to find out what brings the client to seek their expertise. Have they come to you because they have exhausted traditional medical or psychological resources or that they don’t “believe” in allopathic approaches? The practitioner needs to obtain as complete a history (medical and psychological) as possible. Patterns of injury may become apparent even though the various diagnoses may be different. Since essential oils primarily work on the subtle energy field, our interventions may cause energetically blocked areas to release and resume a healthy flow of energy and symptoms may disappear. But what if this is not the result or that the essential oils used or recommended are only a temporary fix? How open is the client to participating in their own healing? Are they willing to set realistic goals? Is there openness to doing self-exploration? Is there openness to traditional health care
options? When did the client last receive a physical or psychological workup? Have you informed the client of the limitations of aromatherapy?

Is this client suitable for your aromatherapy practice? They may not be. Referral to an appropriate specialist or practitioner is part of effective treatment planning. Know your limitations and when to refer to other experts. Is this client already under the care of a physician for the problem they have brought to you? Working with the approval of the client’s physician would be the ideal situation and is gaining popularity in some circles.

Has the client or the client’s family requested that you bring essential oils to a hospital or other healthcare facility in order to treat the client? This is a sticky issue. The hospital may not have policies in place to cover your actions. Always check with the hospital authorities before acting. Some healthcare institutions are actually hiring aromatherapists as equal members of the healthcare team. In this case, there are policies and procedures in place to cover the actions of the aromatherapist. But what if you wish to volunteer your services at the local hospice and you want to offer your skills as an aromatherapist? The hospice would have to have policies and procedures to cover you practicing aromatherapy and would most likely request your credentials showing adequate educational training.

It is important to remember that in our current world view, “healing is a participatory process in which caregiver and client collaborate to find optimal outcomes and insights.”12 The more you can get the client to participate in making energetic shifts in their own life, the more successful they will be in their personal healing. We are to simply be conveyors of hope—not claimers that we can cure disease with aromatherapy healing.

**Recommendating Essential Oils or Treatments**

It is the responsibility of the aromatherapist to educate clients as to the quality and availability of aromatherapy products and services. Clients have choices and these choices are to be honored. Clients will often be easily persuaded by us because they
perceive us to have more knowledge than them or may also feel an obligation to us because we have provided a nurturing experience for them. This is called transference as already discussed. When we try to combine this with selling oils (or any other products) we need to keep in mind whether we are selling this for our benefit or theirs. When we ask clients to purchase something, we are asking them to further trust us.

This is especially true in cases where the aromatherapists creates their own essential oils or products for sale or is a distributor of a particular company’s oils. In these cases, there is a conflict of interest present and this should be declared to the client. The client’s choice as to whether to purchase oils from the aromatherapist or seek them elsewhere is to be respected.

Seeking Further Education

As the practice of aromatherapy continues to grow and become more popular and widespread, ethical and legal concerns will also emerge. There will be some who will question your training, your competence, your scope of practice and possible misuses of the work for personal gain or manipulation. And there will be those instances when a practitioner steps over the line of what is ethical practice. The field of aromatherapy is based in science which is constantly changing. An aromatherapist has an obligation to continue their learning and to keep up with the latest research and use of essential oils.

Sharing Knowledge with Others

The aromatherapist shares professional knowledge, research and experiences with other aromatherapists and colleagues which supports the advancement of the profession of aromatherapy. This can include writing articles, doing research, giving talks in the community, leading workshops, and speaking at conferences.
Liability Insurance

The professional aromatherapist will carry liability insurance when in a practice open to the public. This should be kept up-to-date at all times and list all modalities that are covered, ie, aromatherapy, energy healing, plus whatever else you are combining in a healing practice.

The issues raised in this ebook/teleseminar are not meant to scare you away from doing the work of aromatherapy—but simply to be a sobering look at the integrity as well as humility required to be aromatherapy practitioners in a hurting world today.

Resources of a Professional Organization

A professional organization that has research information, approves schools of aromatherapy and has an internal code of ethics and standards of practice is a credible witness and can fulfill the evolving legal theory called the “respectable minority defense.”13 With that said, are there professional aromatherapy organizations available in your country that support both the English style of aromatherapy and the “aromatic medicine model” of aromatherapy? The French style teaches not only dilution of oils for massage but also application of undiluted oils to treat specific physical and emotional problems. Most aromatherapy organizations support an “English style” approach to essential oils which disallows undiluted (neat) application since they are primarily massage and esthetician based. A French approach also teaches the internal use of essential oils which because of liability issues cannot be taught in aromatherapy curriculums nor practiced by aromatherapy practitioners unless they have a license to do so.

Until such time as there may be a professional organization supporting the particular style of aromatherapy you desire, your choices of a professional organization is as follows:

NAHA National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy (U.S.)
http://www.NAHA.org

AIA Alliance of International Aromatherapists (U.S.)
http://www.alliance-aromatherapists.org

IAAMA International Aromatherapy and Aromatic Medicine Association (Australia)
http://www.iaama.org.au
Footnotes

2Dorothea Hover-Kramer, Creating Right Relationships, p.34.
5Dorothea Hover-Kramer. Creating Healing Relationships, pp.50-51.
6John C. Maxwell. There’s No Such Thing as “Business” Ethics, pp.22-23.
7Maxwell, Ibid. pp.38-49.
9Hover-Kramer, Ibid., pp.130-131.
10Taylor, Ibid. p.158-159.
11Taylor. Ibid. p. 9.
12Hover-Kramer, Creating Right Relationships, p.102.
13Hover-Kramer, Creating Healing Relationships, p.54.

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http://books.google.com/books?id=h9vxVYxQSOAC&lpg=PA116&ots=wOk96WvzNq&dq=ethics%20in%20practice%20of%20aromatherapy&lr&pg=PA116#v=onepage&q=ethics%20in%20practice%20of%20aromatherapy&f=true


Appendix A

Scope of Practice
Two Levels of Practice

I. The CCA student is someone who has taken at least one CCA course taught by an approved CCA instructor.

II. A Certified Clinical Aromatherapist is someone who has met all the requirements as set by the CCA program and has received certification as a clinical aromatherapist by completing the core curriculum of 300 hours of course work, homework, research projects and written tests.

Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Students and Practitioners of the Institute of Spiritual Healing and Aromatherapy

- The healing practitioner/aromatherapist will not discriminate against others because of race, sex, creed, religious beliefs, illness, social/cultural situation or sexual orientation. The client’s humanness is to be respected at all times. Each person is considered whole and holy.

- The healing practitioner/aromatherapist conducts self in a professional and ethical manner in relation to clients, health professionals, and the public.

- The client is part of a family unit or support network system. This unit is to be considered in understanding the health/healing needs of the person. The individual rights are upheld at all times. The explanation given to the client is individualized according to the expressed need, context and personal situation within the parameters of complimentary healthcare. The explanation about the treatment should be conveyed at the level of the client’s understanding without false claims as to the outcomes of treatment.
• Client’s choices regarding health care are to be honored. Client interventions are based on the knowledge level of the healing practitioner and on energetic findings from the assessment of the client’s Energy System followed by evaluation. All treatment findings are documented appropriately and in detail specific to the student/practitioner’s background and under the guidelines of Healing Touch Spiritual Ministry and clinical aromatherapy practice.

• Confidentiality of the client is to be respected at all times except when failure to take action could constitute a danger to others. Data is stored in such a way as to protect the anonymity of the person and will not be used beyond the caring for the client unless permission is obtained in writing from the client.

• Energy healing and/or essential oils are offered only for the benefit of the client and in accord with the principle: do no harm. Only essential oils of the highest quality available are used.

• Conditions where limited ability to make one’s own judgments, such as those very sick, and those with impaired decision-making ability, are approached appropriately.

• Clients are referred to appropriate health care professionals as needed.

• The healing practitioner/aromatherapist practices within the scope of his/her background and training within state laws. Practitioners meet all obligations required by that background.

• The healing practitioner/aromatherapist assumes accountability for his/her actions with conscious intent to facilitate health and healing for the client and refrains from making specific wellness outcomes. Good judgment and appropriate touch is to be used at all times with any therapeutic application.

• The healing practitioner/aromatherapist shall use good judgment regarding the application of therapies taught in the HTSM and CCA programs.

• The healing practitioner/aromatherapist provides a safe, clear boundary environment. Touch is appropriate for client needs and is non-sexual. Clients are clothed except in therapy contexts involving physical or clinical

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interventions requiring appropriate draping. Healing practitioners/ aromatherapists shall wear appropriate clothing at all times.

- The healing practitioner/aromatherapist has a thorough understanding of the importance of personal and professional hygiene including hand washing as taught in the ISHA programs.

- The healing practitioner/aromatherapist obtains supervision and consultation as needed and does not assume primary responsibility for a client’s health.

- The HTSM/CCA practitioner:
  - Participates in maintaining high Standards of Practice and subscribes to this Code of Ethics.
  - Contributes to the ongoing development of ISHA and represents ISHA to the public.
  - Contributes to ongoing knowledge through data collection, research and documenting findings.
  - Visibly displays this code of ethics in a practice setting.

- Information about the Institute and its programs, the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for healing practitioners is available to the public at large through the ISHA website.

**Standards of Practice for Graduates of ISHA’s CCA Program**

These Standards of Practice were specifically written to aid in the practice of clinical aromatherapy within an integrated practice of essential oils, prayer and energy healing. Graduates of the CCA program are expected to abide by these standards of practice. Standards are dynamic, and subject to evaluation and subsequent change through time as practice norms evolve.

**Standard 1**

A Certified Clinical Aromatherapist who has graduated from the Institute of Spiritual Healing & Aromatherapy practices within the scope of his/her background. This background is clearly represented to the client and the public in an appropriate manner such as a flyer or brochure outlining one’s credentials including the successful completion of approved courses in the CCA program as taught by approved instructors in the CCA program. The Certification in Clinical Aromatherapy granted through the Institute of Spiritual Healing & Aromatherapy is
appropriately displayed on request. The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice are available for client/public inspection.

**Standard 2**
The certified clinical aromatherapist abides by individual state laws regarding touching the human body and receiving payment for services. Therefore graduates of the institute obtain the necessary licenses to touch the human body when charging for services. The certified clinical aromatherapist obtains liability insurance through a reputable source that covers both energy healing and aromatherapy.

**Standard 3**
A certified clinical aromatherapist is a resource within his/her community to represent the practice of clinical aromatherapy and its relationship to other related individual practitioners, professions, institutions and organizations.

**Standard 4**
A certified clinical aromatherapist operates from a theoretical knowledge base of aromatherapy and maintains a commitment to continual learning and growing as a practitioner well grounded in the art, and the beginning scientific basis of essential oils as well as energetic principles. The art and science of Aromatherapy is characterized by the application of relevant information that provides the basis for a skilled use of essential oils and subsequent evaluation of the outcomes.

**Standard 5**
A certified clinical aromatherapist who combines knowledge of essential oils along with prayer and energetic principles in a healing practice, first obtains health information and performs an energy assessment that serves as background for understanding the parameters of the current health/healing need(s) of the client. The certified clinical aromatherapist does not diagnose or prescribe.

**Standard 6**
The certified clinical aromatherapist always ascertains whether the client has any allergies, or sensitivities to any known substances. When sensitivities to particular essential oils and/or the plants that produced them are known, that essential oil and any blends that contain that oil are not used.

**Standard 7**
The certified clinical aromatherapist is knowledgeable of toxic and phototoxic effects of certain oils and uses them with proper precautions as taught in the CCA program. When working with pregnant women in the first trimester, the certified clinical aromatherapist uses therapeutic essential oils judicially as taught in the CCA program.
Standard 8
The certified clinical aromatherapist in a healing practice gives an explanation regarding what is going to be done, how and why, based on the energy assessment and the knowledge of the aromatherapist. The health problem may be researched and more information may be offered. Personal testimonials may be given on how the essential oils work physically, emotionally and spiritually. The client is a fully knowledgeable participant in the health/healing process based on his/her ability and chooses whether to receive prayer, hands-on healing along with the use of essential oils. The individual need for an explanation, including depth and scope, is to be honored. Some want more explanations and some want less. However, all certified clinical aromatherapists are grounded in being able to explain to the client what he/she is doing and why. As the scientific basis for clinical aromatherapy is established, the certified clinical aromatherapist is knowledgeable and able to share that information.

Standard 9
The certified clinical aromatherapist explains the various differences between the British and French models of essential oils to clients. The client chooses whether to receive therapeutic essential oils diffused in the room, neat or diluted on the body or used only in the energetic field.

Standard 10
The treatment given by a certified clinical aromatherapist in a healing practice is based on the client’s individual need and established from the assessment of the energy system as outlined in the teaching materials produced by the CCA program. At no time should a certified clinical aromatherapist indicate that essential oils can remedy physical, emotional or spiritual issues. They can however share with the client that essential oils support the various systems within the body, support the body’s natural defenses, aid in maintaining normal cellular regeneration, are immune enhancing, mood elevating, help manage stress and frustration, help reduce the appearance of aging, improve mental clarity, are oxygenating, are aromatic, are high in antioxidants, boost stamina and energy, and promote overall health, vitality and longevity.

Standard 11
After the healing treatment, the energy system is reassessed to determine the effect of the treatment and need for further treatment of the energy system and/or referral. The certified clinical aromatherapist does not discuss diseases unless medically trained and does not make false “disease claims” regarding essential oils, herbs, or supplements. Whether the client chooses to continue using essential oils, herbs or supplements is a personal decision.

Standard 12
A confidential record is maintained on each client documenting the history, presenting need, assessment, findings, treatment—use of essential oils, prayer, energy treatments, evaluation, and follow-up plan.
Standard 13
Referrals are made to other professionals as needed. Certified clinical aromatherapists practice within the scope of their background, training, knowledge and experience.

Standard 14
The Certified clinical aromatherapist is committed to quality care and leadership. This requires a commitment to operate from a Code of Ethics. Graduates of ISHA’s certification in clinical aromatherapy program have read and subscribe to ISHA’s code of ethics and standards of practice and to those of the Alliance of International Aromatherapists and the National Association of Holistic Aromatherapy.

Standard 15
Certified Clinical Aromatherapists receive supervision and consultation for their healing practice as needed from qualified ISHA resources.

Standard 16
The certified clinical aromatherapist assumes personal responsibility for his/her own continuing education and professional development through available conferences, conventions, workshops, graduate courses, journals, teleseminars/webcasts, webinars and research. Through additional education, the certified clinical aromatherapist modifies his/her practice to assimilate new knowledge gained from continuing education.

Standard 17
The certified clinical aromatherapist seeks opportunities to participate with other health care providers to develop an integrated plan of care, as possible. The certified clinical aromatherapist communicates the benefits of essential oil use to the public and health care providers. The certified clinical aromatherapist is valued as a health team contributor.
Appendix B

Sample Release Form for Aromatherapy

I understand ___Practitioner Name___ is a ___Certified Clinical Aromatherapist___ and as such does not diagnose or prescribe for those issues, diseases, disorders or conditions that I may present.

I understand that ___Practitioner Name___ is certified in ___name all your certifications and/or licensures. I understand that ___Practitioner Name___ can through the use of prayer/intention, hands-on and hands-off healing methods, and anointing/applying therapeutic essential oils from nature help me achieve balance and harmony in my physical, emotional and spiritual body. Anointing/applying may include application of essential oils diluted or undiluted to the soles of my feet, hands, brow or other parts of my body that I deem acceptable. I understand that these methods can possibly reduce stress, provide comfort, improve my quality of life, enhance peak performance and detoxify my body of environmental toxins that I may have eaten, drunk, inhaled or absorbed. These certifications qualify her/him to help me make more informed decisions about my own life and health care.

I understand that I am responsible for my own health, healing and well-being; and that ___Practitioner Name___ cannot diagnose, treat, heal or cure me of anything. I also understand I have the ability to heal myself by taking care of my body, resolving my emotional issues, changing my thinking, believing my intuitive insights and surrendering to the Creator of all things and accepting Divine healing. I further understand it is my responsibility to advise ___Practitioner Name___ of any medications I take, any therapies I am undertaking and any allergies or sensitivities I have. I further understand alternative healing is not a substitute for adequate medical care and I intend to remain under the care of my primary healthcare provider.

I understand all healing may cause me some minor discomfort in the form of aches and pains, headache, emotional release or increased emotionality. I also understand that essential oils may provoke allergic type responses in the form of a rash or redness on the skin, shortness of breath and/or other allergic type responses. I have a responsibility to let ___Practitioner Name___ know if I experience any such responses.

I understand ___Practitioner Name___ will keep all information she/he learns about me completely confidential unless I release her/him in writing or as required by law. I understand ___Practitioner Name___ charges a session fee payable by cash, money order or check at the time services are delivered. I also understand she/he does not accept credit cards at this time. In the event my check is not honored by her bank, I agree to pay an additional fee of $20 for this inconvenience.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand this form. I agree to allow ___Practitioner Name___ to help me learn to heal myself using the natural healing techniques and modalities herein listed.

Name of Client ____________________________________________________________
Address ___________________________________________________________________
State ___________ Zip Code ___________

Signature _____________________________________________________________ Date __________________
Name if other than client ________________________________________________
Relationship to client __________________________________________________

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