



more than a scent

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When walking by Beth Carlson's office in Grand View's Student Life Office, it's hard not to stop and take a deep breath. Aromas of orange, patchouli and sage waft out the door and provide a sense of calm. Beth Carlson, a whole degree planning director at Grand View, has made essential oils part of her daily routine for years.

"I think it's a centering thing for when I'm feeling stressed or when things are getting busy," Beth Carlson said. "It's a nice reminder to take a minute in your day and treat yourself in a way that's not expensive."

Essential oils have become increasingly popular over the last few years, but what are they? According to the National Institutes of Health, essential oils are essences extracted from plant products such as flowers, herbs and trees and then bottled. Aromatherapy uses essential oils to alter one's mood or for cognitive, physical or psychological well-being.

Maria Campbell, an independent distributor for Young Living Essential Oils, has been using aromatherapy in her home for nearly 15 years, since she started reading product labels.

"As people realize the side effects of many of the medicinal options available, more and more people are seeking natural alternatives that actually work," Campbell said. "This is where essential oils come in and much of the reason why they are becoming more mainstream."

Campbell has had the opportunity to teach a class geared toward emotional health to Grand View senior nursing students. She said she uses essential oils in her teachings and stresses that scents have a powerful effect on the human body.

Companies such as Bath and Body Works have released aromatherapy products that incorporate oils. Titles such as Stress Relief, Focus and Sleep attract customers to what they need most, whether it's in the form of lotion, soap or candles.

Aromatherapy has also been adopted into massage practices by aestheticians around the world. Brenda Carlson is an assistant nursing professor at Grand View and a massage therapist. She said she enjoys using oils such as lavender and

Young Living's PanAway on clients because both are proven to relieve muscle aches and tightness, which makes them especially attractive to athletes.

"I have definitely used them for sore muscles; it numbs and takes away the pain," said Meagan Miller, a member of the Grand View women's volleyball and tennis team.

Essential oils can be used for many reasons. According to Campbell, there are oils that can help ease muscle fatigue and soreness, boost energy, maintain overall health, assist with breathing during exercise and more. She said she recommends researching oils before purchasing them and being educated on their effects.

Young Living and doTERRA advertise topical oils, bottles that roll onto the skin, and ingestible oils that can be added to drinks and recipes.

An easy way to reap the benefits of essential oils is with a diffuser. Just mix a few drops in some water, turn on the diffuser, and let the scent fill the room.

One of the most attractive elements of essential oils is the calming effects they provide. Miller said that when she was stressed last semester, she put lemongrass oil in her diffuser and immediately felt relieved.

Brenda Carlson recommends investing money into quality oils as opposed to an expensive diffuser.

Diffusers can be found online and in most chain department stores. Natural Grocers has begun stocking essential oils on their shelves, but both Brenda Carlson and Campbell suggest only investing in pure oils from companies such as Young Living and doTERRA.

"Don't settle for inferior oils because of the price," Campbell said. "You could do more harm than good."

Though more expensive than off-brand oils, these companies ensure that their products are top quality and don't contain unnecessary chemicals or additives.

"Essential oils are everywhere these days, but you get what you pay for," Campbell said.

They can be used to calm, uplift, relax and much more.