



Essential oils for better sleep

Guest: Jodi Cohen

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Alex Howard - [00:00:15]

Welcome, everyone, to this interview where I'm super excited to be talking with Jodi Cohen. Firstly, Jodi, welcome and thank you for joining me.

Jodi Cohen

Oh, it's always a pleasure to connect with you.

Alex Howard

So in this interview, we're going to be talking about the relationship between the parasympathetic nervous system and sleep. And towards the end of last year, Jodi did a fantastic online conference, very similar to this, on the parasympathetic nervous system.

Just to give people Jodi's background, Jodi Cohen is a best selling author, award winning journalist and functional health practitioner, and founder of "Vibrant Blue Oils", where she has combined her training in nutritional therapy and aromatherapy, to create unique proprietary blends of organic and wild crafted essential oils. She has helped over 50'000 clients heal from brain related challenges, including anxiety, insomnia and autoimmunity.

For the past 10 years, she has lectured at wellness centers, conferences and corporations on brain health, essential oils, stress and detoxification. She's been seen in the New York Times, Wellness Mama, Elephant Journal and numerous publications, and her website is visited by over 300'000 natural seekers every year. She's rapidly become a top resource for essential oils education on the Internet today.

So, Jodi, I'd like to just start a little bit with giving people some context of, when we're talking about the parasympathetic nervous system, what are we talking about, what is it and why is it so important?

Jodi Cohen

Yeah, your nervous system is basically your body's operating system, right? Your autonomic nervous system controls your automatic functions. So all the things that happen to keep you alive that you don't have to consciously think about: your breathing, your heart rate, your ability to digest foods, your ability to detoxify, your ability to anti-inflate for your immune system to turn on. It's really the system that keeps you alive and it has different speeds, so to speak.

You know, think about changing gears on a bike. If you're going downhill, you want to be kind of in a high speed. If you're going uphill, you want to downshift. So if there is a threat to your survival, be it an animal chasing you, someone changing lanes and not seeing you and about to hit you, or even something emotional, like a fear over finances, a relationship, your own health, all of those things shift your body and shift the chemicals that you release into what's called your sympathetic nervous system.

So when there's a threat of danger, either physical or mental and perceived, your hormones change, you're releasing cortisol, which helps to boost your energy so you can flee and survive and run fast. Your focus changes. You suddenly can't contemplate the universe. You have to focus on your next best option to keep you alive. Anything that's not really critical to surviving that moment kind of down regulates. So your ability to digest your food, to detoxify, to turn on your immune system, to have a thoughtful conversation, to reproduce.

And so that's supposed to be kind of a short and acute stress. And then you're supposed to be able to shift gears, you know, and start with the cleanup, the rest, the repair, the heal. That's your parasympathetic nervous system. That's where all of the blood flow is routed back to your organs of digestion. So you can digest, absorb and assimilate your food, the raw materials and the building blocks for your health, so that you can get rid of the waste that's building up in your system, so that your immune system can turn on and kind of take care of things, so that you can actually focus on the people in your life and make valuable connections and process emotions and really be in the present moment.

Basically, the parasympathetic nervous system is what lets you feel safe. It's kind of the critical foundation to all healing. And the really sad thing is that most people do not really access the parasympathetic branch of their nervous system enough. They're really stuck in that sympathetic survival, fear and anxiety state. And so it's kind of the most important thing that no one really even knows about.

Alex Howard - [00:04:41]

I think one of the things that for me was really fascinating about your online conference is that you were coming at it from so many different perspectives. There are so many different elements that influence and shape what's happening with our nervous system. And for someone to be able to cultivate and sustain being in a healing state, it's actually quite a lot that has to happen to support that. What are some of the key ingredients that support our parasympathetic nervous system being able to activate and function in a healthy way?

Jodi Cohen

Yeah, that's a great question. So the on off switch between your sympathetic fight or flight and freeze state and your parasympathetic rest, digest and heal state is the longest nerve in your body that most people have never heard of. It's your vagus nerve. It's cranial nerve number 10. Just to get a little anatomical and just so you can kind of track it, it starts at the base of the skull, splits, goes around each side of the neck, right behind the ear.

If you feel behind your ear, on that bone, that's your mastoid bone. That's where it's the most accessible to the surface. And then it winds through your mouth, your larynx, your heart, your lungs, your stomach, your liver, your gallbladder, your intestines, every organ of digestion. And it's kind of the highway between your brain and your body, to kind of tell your body, oh, you're hungry, you need to eat; to tell your brain, you're full. You know, there is a pathogen we detect that you need to respond to.

All of these things, it really keeps us healthy. And because it's two way communication, any area that it innervates, that it touches, like your lungs, you can engage your lungs to turn on your vagus nerve and activate your parasympathetic nervous system. You can take probiotics in your gut. You can give yourself a coffee enema. You can laugh and smile or gag and gargle, you know, or you can stimulate kind of this place right behind the ear lobe.

And in 2012, there was a neuroscientist out of New York named Kevin Tracey, who started playing with stimulating the vagus nerve right there, using kind of an electrical implant, a pacemaker-like device that he surgically implanted and found amazing results, because when the vagus nerve is stimulated, the anti inflammatory neurotransmitter, acetylcholine, is released and that can really shift your health. For example, the FDA approved this electrical device for depression, epilepsy and migraines. And so what I found, there are a variety of ways to activate the vagus nerve. Some people, you know,

gagging yourself with a tongue depressor, not high compliance. Using your tongue like a paintbrush to paint the roof of your mouth, more compliant. You know, taking an essential oil blend and dabbing it behind your ear, very high compliance. So it's kind of, you know, it's like make your own adventure. Different people want to do different things.

But to answer your question, anything that you do that kind of activates any of your organs - breathing techniques are fabulous - helps you literally shift gears. Think of it like a gear shift on a bike, you are changing from, the world is overwhelming, I'm afraid I'm paralyzed, to, I feel safe and I can survive this, I can be OK because I can control how I respond in this moment.

Alex Howard - [00:08:15]

And often, to reshape and to change what's happening in our parasympathetic nervous system, we need to come at it from those different perspectives, right? We need to be doing psycho-emotional work sometimes, to deal with the things that are triggering and stimulating and sort of wiring our sympathetic system. We need to deal with, you mentioned probiotics in the gut and what's happening physically. And some of these physical stimulation techniques can also be very helpful as well. We'll come back to this in a moment.

But I also want to just take another step to the side. We can talk about sleep. Why is sleep so important? I think when people don't sleep for a sustained period of time, they realize why it's important. But what's the impact of sleep on the rest of our body and our well-being and our health?

Jodi Cohen

Yeah, I mean, sleep is foundational. If you're not sleeping, it's pretty impossible to heal. It's when your whole body resets and detoxifies and cleans house, especially the brain. You know, when you're awake, your brain needs to be on and it's only when you're sleeping that it can actually clean out the metabolic waste and any toxins.

So there's a system called the glymphatic system. It's a combination of your lymphatic system and your glial cells. And it's almost, like think of a car wash, your brain actually shrinks and the cerebral spinal fluid washes through the brain and kind of clears out all the waste, that if it stays in the brain, it triggers an immune response and then triggers inflammation.

And inflammation of the brain can present as fuzzy thinking, poor memory, fatigue, the inability to recall words or remember where you left your keys, that kind of stuff. And it also, if you're not sleeping, you can be really tired. And fatigue causes your body to release chemicals like cortisol, that kind of give you energy. But then that throws off your metabolism, it throws off everything else. It's kind of one of those foundational pillars, that when you're sleeping, everything else works better.

Alex Howard

So you touched on it a bit there, but let's come to more about this relationship between when our sympathetic nervous system is overstimulated or our parasympathetic system is not kicking in, how does that affect our sleep? How does that relationship work?

Jodi Cohen

Yeah, it's two things, actually. So another aspect of being in the parasympathetic nervous system relates to your heart rate, and specifically your heart rate variability, which is really a measure of resilience. If you've ever been to the doctor's office, you know they put the stethoscope on your heart and then they have you breathe in and breathe out. What they're really looking for is how your heart rate changes between the in-breath and the exhale. It's supposed to accelerate a bit when you breathe in, and calm down when you breathe out.

That out-breath is kind of activating your parasympathetic nervous system. And the difference, your ability to be resilient and toggle and adjust, is really a measure of health. And so what's interesting is

when you're in that stress state, that sympathetic state all the time, it compromises your heart rate variability. So your heart rate is supposed to relax when you're sleeping and when it's beating too fast, you never really get into those REM restorative states. So that's one aspect of it.

Alex Howard - [00:11:45]

I was just going to say, and that's when people can sort of sleep through the night but wake up feeling unrefreshed and unrestored from that sleep. Which, as I often say to people, it's not how many hours of sleep you get, it's the quality of sleep you get in those hours.

Jodi Cohen

Exactly. Quality, not quantity. Yeah. The other challenge is that your body doesn't work in isolation, your nervous system talks to your endocrine system and your endocrine system is what's in charge of releasing certain hormones.

So, for example, the sleep hormone is melatonin. And that works in tandem with your energy hormone, your stress hormone, cortisol. Ideally, it's supposed to be like a teeter totter, when melatonin is high, cortisol is low. Ideally, cortisol is high in the morning so that you wake up and you don't sleep in past your alarm. And then as the day wears on, it gets lower. And by nighttime, cortisol is low, which allows melatonin to be high. But if your body thinks it's in danger, you know, it needs to stay alive. So it needs to release cortisol to give you the energy and the focus to survive.

So high levels of cortisol at night, throw off sleep; the sleep hormone melatonin. And that might be like, you're physically exhausted, but your mind is racing. You're thinking about things that are making you more worried and causing a greater release of cortisol. And it becomes this vicious cycle.

Alex Howard

And I think having awareness sometimes that that's what's going on, in and of itself can be very helpful, right? Because I think it can be quite crazy making when someone is realizing, I'm not sleeping, I can't switch off, I can't rest. What's wrong? When they can see, actually, there are real hormonal imbalances which are underpinning what's actually going on.

Jodi Cohen

I love that. I think awareness is so important. Because once you're aware of it, then you can make a different choice, right? It's a pattern interrupt. Oh, gosh, look at me, I'm worried about something that I can't...

My daughter has this funny line. She's like, "that's not a today Carly problem, that's a tomorrow Carly problem".

Alex Howard

That's great!

Jodi Cohen

I love it because it's kind of, like, I don't need to spend energy worrying about, like, homework that's due in a week right now. I can do that tomorrow.

Alex Howard

That's great. That's really great. I'd love to break down a bit more, some of the - we'll come to things people can do about this in a little bit - but to break down some of the factors or some of the variables that can be causing one's parasympathetic system to be out of balance and therefore impacting their sleep. So almost, to explore a bit of a checklist of some of those areas, what are some

of the things that people watching this interview should be paying attention to?

Jodi Cohen - [00:14:38]

Yeah, it can be physical, mental and emotional. And trauma actually can be a huge trigger for a kind of sympathetic dominance, because you can get, there's a bit of a loop, right. You know, the problem starts, you resolve it, it comes to completion and then you move on.

But what can happen in trauma, especially trauma that we're unable to process so we disassociate or freeze, we can't really lean into it and complete it. So it's kind of like background noise that never goes away and kind of keeps turning on our stress response because we haven't really processed it because it's too much for us to step into.

Alex Howard

And that trauma, again, as we talked about in the Trauma and Mind-Body Super Conference, there's so many facets and ingredients to that trauma. And I think when it comes to conferences like this on fatigue, people can often go, oh, well, trauma is not important, I have energy issues. But as you say, trauma has a big impact on the nervous system and the nervous system has a big impact on sleep and our overall energy as well.

So going back to the physical, the mental, the emotional, what are some of the physical variables that can be impacting someone's system?

Jodi Cohen

Yeah. Toxicity plays a really big role. For example, most people don't really think about this, but there's a lot of toxicity in the mouth that can physically kind of block the vagus nerve. So we talked a little bit about how the vagus nerve travels down the neck.

The neck is a really big bottleneck in the body. You know, there's a lot going on in the neck. You have your structure, you've got your muscles, you've got your nerves, like your vagus nerve. You've got your veins, you've got your lymph. And they can all kind of compress into each other.

Like, think of being in the middle seat in an airplane, with two linebackers next to you. Like, you're not getting the armrest! You know, imagine that your toxins are trying to drain down and everything's congested and compressed.

It's interesting because a lot of the practitioners that I work with, and some researchers have identified, Michael VanElzakker calls it "vagus nerve infection hypothesis", which I'll get into.

But the majority of people with any kind of chronic ailment have some kind of vagus nerve toxicity or compression where the vagus nerve is congested and so therefore not compromised. And that can be, you know, we have a lot of pathogens in the mouth. It's not just dental amalgams that are off gassing metal, which is a neurotoxin. It can also be cavitations, it can be root canals, it can be any kind of gum or mouth disease. And all of that's draining along your trigeminal nerve, which then intersects with your vagus nerve and can kind of cause congestion and compression.

This is the reason that I actually like essential oils and topically applied remedies, because when you topically apply something, especially in areas where the skin is really thin, like behind the ears or above the ears, it gets into the system really quickly. Whereas when you ingest things, it has to go through the digestive process and the liver before going back to the blood, to the lymph.

So even castor oil, something that you can get in a really accessible way, that helps to kind of decongest the lymph. You know, mint oil, spearmint is a really good one. Any oils that are kind of grounding and so pull directionality. Lymph flows in a one way direction and that's oftentimes the bottleneck. So, like, vetiver is a great one. Anything that you can topically apply to your neck and help to move out the bottleneck. Think of it as a traffic accident. You need to clear away the blockage in

order for everything to properly drain. And so that's one of those underlying issues.

Talking about fatigue, chronic fatigue syndrome is often correlated with some kind of vagus nerve infection. Because it's this low level infection that's sending out that sickness response. And what happens when we're sick? We get fatigued, we get immobilized, we have pain. It's all designed to kind of keep us still, so that we can heal and move out of it. But if we never quite complete that loop of healing and there's always this low level infection, especially on the information highway where the nervous system sends a lot of its signals, then that can compromise everything else.

Alex Howard - [00:19:10]

And I'd just love to take a sidestep for a moment, just to say a bit more about essential oils, because I think there'll be people watching this that won't be familiar with essential oils. And we should say that you're the founder of Vibrant Blue Oils and I'm a fan because you very kindly sent some free samples, which I brought home from work. My wife is really into essential oils, so suddenly they were wafting around the kitchen.

So, just say a bit for people that aren't familiar with essential oils, sort of what they are and just a few of the key principles about how they can work with them.

Jodi Cohen

Essential oils are basically the distilled essence of plants. So it can be flowers, it can be barks, it can be trees. And what most people don't realize is, over 50 percent of our pharmaceutical drugs are derived from plants. They have powerful healing constituents. White willow bark has evolved into aspirin. Valerian root is Valium. They can be very calming for our nervous system. And they work. They work by putting the body back in balance, by basically allowing the body to function in its best capacity so then it heals itself.

They're not really designed to treat symptoms, but because they're so concentrated and also they're really, really small and fat based and so that allows them to both get into the bloodstream. You know, when you put something on your skin, it gets in your system in twenty minutes. When you smell something, smell keeps us out of danger, we can smell predator odor, that gets into the brain - actually [into] the amygdala, which is the fear center - immediately. You know, most people don't realize that nose cells are brain cells.

And also because they're so small and that soluble, they can pass the blood brain barrier, into the brain. This is the biggest challenge with treating the brain, is that it's really hard to get things through the blood brain barrier. Like, they can't do chemo in the brain because the molecules are too large.

So it's just, it's a wonderful adjunct to what you're already doing. I don't know that it's a replacement but it can serve a really valuable purpose, to kind of support your health and get access of remedies into your brain and body.

Alex Howard

And I think health is never just one thing anyway, right? And particularly when we're talking about calming and switching off the sympathetic nervous system, part of that is, how do we come at that from different angles and perspectives to create an overall experience that allows and helps the system to settle?

So I'd love to hear a bit more about some of those other ingredients. So when you're working with someone to help them activate more of the parasympathetic response, what are some of the - we've talked about essential oils - what are some of the other tools that you would use to help support that?

Jodi Cohen - [00:22:01]

I really try to meet them where they're at. Like when my kids were little, one of the preschool teachers used to say, "connect before you correct". You know, we'd be at the playground, my son would throw sand, and instead of yelling at him in that moment where his pupils were really dilated and he was really sympathetic, I'd scoop him up, take him over the swings, calm him down, make sure the pupils were small and then say, listen, if we can't play nice, we can't play. We're going to have to either go home or you're going to have to promise you're going to behave better.

And when they can hear you, you know, it's a much better connection. So if you're dealing with chronic fatigue, whatever you're dealing with, let's get you kind of in that balanced state first.

So I like a combination of clove and lime, for two reasons. Clove is super stimulatory and really high in this really healing constituent called eugenol. So it gets into the system really quickly. I combine it with lime because it has super small molecules and then I dilute it with fractionated coconut oil. Dilution, there are different carrier oils that you can use with oils to kind of slow the speed or increase the viscosity of how you get things into the skin. Fractionated coconut oil is thin, so what you want to do with stimulation, think of it like an acupuncture needle, you're really trying to do a quick hit. Oil like jojoba is more of a slow release supplement. So you use oils differently.

Another really good technique if someone's feeling very anxious and overwhelmed, you know, the brain, which is your expertise, there are different areas of the brain, it's not just one organ. Like your frontal lobe does something different than your amygdala. And there's a whole branch of chiropractic called functional neurologists who are looking at and assessing what area of the brain is overactive and how do we balance that by stimulating the other hemisphere?

And your nose, your olfactory channel goes directly to the forehead, which is kind of, your prefrontal cortex is your executive function area, but it's also kind of the calming to the amygdala, which is the danger reception. And I'm sure you can explain this better than I can, but I love...

Alex Howard

You're doing great, keep going!

Jodi Cohen

OK! You know that example of, you're walking in the woods and you think you see a snake, that's your amygdala sensing danger, you jump back before you're even consciously registering it and then your frontal cortex does a second look and says, oh, no, that's a stick, you're safe. So the frontal cortex is kind of the gauge that keeps you calm, keeps you from overreacting.

If you're chronically in a stressed state, it's almost like you're building the muscle of your amygdala. So it's called amygdala hijack. You can overreact to things more often. And so one of the ways to unravel that pattern is to engage your frontal cortex more. And one of the easiest ways to do that is just to smell anything. It doesn't need to be a specific oil. If you like lavender, that's great. If you like citrus, that's great. If you don't own oils, but you happen to have a tangerine, just peel it and smell it. You know, the oils live in the peel.

And another great hack that I learned from our colleague, Titus Chiu, he's a functional neurologist. He was telling me that when you're having any kind of anxiety attack, that is your right frontal lobe that's overactive. So to balance that, you want to stimulate the left frontal lobe. So the easiest way to do that is literally plug your right nostril with your thumb and smell anything through your left nostril. And just like food, you know, if you're ravenous and then you have a couple of bites, you feel better.

There's kind of this off switch for smell. So usually if you hold... I'll show you, if you hold a bottle like just a couple inches below the nose, usually by three to five breaths, you stop smelling, you're kind of complete. And you'll notice, I used to have anxiety attacks all the time, and it's really easy to carry an oil in your pocket or your purse. So the more I did it, the less often I would have them. So I speak both from personal and professional experience, it's a really good way to kind of shift gears in your brain.

Alex Howard - [00:26:24]

I think what's also really powerful about that is, often with anxiety attacks, the anxiety about the anxiety is almost the worst piece. It's like the anticipation of, I'm going to have an anxiety attack and I can't do anything about it. When you know that you've got a reliable strategy that the vast majority of the time, you know is going to help calm things down, it takes the kind of anticipation away, which then means you're less likely to have them in the first place. So it really helps break that cycle.

Jodi Cohen

It completely breaks the cycle. And I also think that it helps... You know, it's interesting, I didn't realize how anxious I was until I started unraveling it, and how much it interfered with my productivity, because I think it gets in the way of your ability to focus. So that's been a huge help.

Alex Howard

So coming back to some of the specifics around sleep, I'm thinking someone that's watching this and is kind of tracking along what we're saying around the role of the nervous system and they're hearing that essential oils can be a really helpful way to work with calming and settling the system. What are some of the other practical things that someone could do, specifically to help with either preparation for sleep or as we were talking about earlier, encouraging depth of sleep?

Jodi Cohen

So, melatonin is the sleep hormone, and that's released by the pineal gland in response to darkness. It's actually right in the middle of your brain, between your eyes. And so anything you can do to create more of a natural light, dark situation. So not watching your screen or if you do need to do work, there are blue light blocking glasses. Maybe not engaging in stimulatory activities right before bed. Anything you can do to calm your system.

I actually love epsom salt baths with lavender. I do two cups of epsom salts and one cup of baking soda. And then I literally use the bath as my mixing tub. I drop about three drops of lavender in and just mix it in the tub before adding water because, you know, water and oil don't mix. You don't want the oil floating on top. But that's a really nice kind of relaxing ritual. I like to read before bed, which makes my eyes tired.

We have a formula that we call circadian rhythm that helps detoxify the pineal gland and trigger the natural release of melatonin. And anything that you're topically applying, this point right above the ear, the skin is really thin and also it's kind of eye level, as you can see, so it just helps it track towards the pineal gland quickly.

Alex Howard

For someone that's watching this and thinking, well, I've had sleep issues for years and nothing's going to work and it's not possible for it to change. With all the experience you've got, both working with people, but also the dozens of people you've interviewed through the conference that you did, what would you say to that person in terms of that there is hope? How would you encourage someone that it is possible to change, potentially even years of bad sleep patterns?

Jodi Cohen

There are two things. First of all, anything you can always unravel... You know, we live in Seattle and one time we were going on a road trip and we drove probably twenty miles in the wrong direction before we realized it. And we were still able to turn around and make that happen. And so I would say, anything's possible, of course, you could turn it around. And then also, embrace the small wins. Rome wasn't built in a day. Weight Watchers is so cute, you know, if you lose a pound, they're like, yay!!

If you've been struggling for sleep for years, and there are different aspects of sleep, there's kind of the inability to fall asleep, which is high cortisol levels at night, and then there's different kinds of night

waking. I have a really good guide on what is the underlying sleep issue, because sometimes I think people just try to tranquilize. You know, like lavender, it's interesting. It's like Benadryl. Benadryl can knock you out or it can make you hyper. Lavender, it doesn't work for everyone. For some people, it's very relaxing. For other people, it's very stimulatory.

So if you've just been trying kind of general tranquilizing techniques, if your issue is that you're exhausted but you can't fall asleep, you can't calm your mind, melatonin, sublingual melatonin gets into the brain easier, again because you're trying to get things into the brain and it's fat soluble and oil based and small. We have a circadian rhythm blend.

If you're waking up at 1:00 in the morning and you're wide awake, that's nocturnal hypoglycemia. That's often that your blood sugar dipped too low and then your adrenals kind of release emergency energy and then anything you can do to support your pancreas, like rose geranium is a really good oil because the pancreas releases the hormone, insulin. It helps carry the sugar back into the cells so that you're less awake and sleepy.

If you're waking up around 3:00 and maybe you need to use the bathroom, 3:00 is kind of when your liver is the most active. So there are a lot of things you can do to support your liver. There are supplements like milk thistle, you can put castor oil over your liver. Castor oil has become kind of complicated, they've made it into a whole pack that requires time. Or you can just wear like a grotty t-shirt and just put it in your body and, you know, the t shirt might get stained.

We have liver oils, too. You can take things like binders that grab toxins in your gut and make sure they're carried out, so that they're not reabsorbed. It's a little bit like Sisyphus, the liver pushes the toxins out and then if they get reabsorbed, they have to keep working through the same issue.

Alex Howard - [00:32:12]

And for people that are perhaps a little nervous around using essential oils because they're not recommended necessary for them by a practitioner, can you just say a few words about giving people some confidence in working with them, by themselves?

I suppose in a sense, what's the worst that can happen and what are the things that one should avoid? You know, for example, not ingesting them.

Jodi Cohen

Yeah, I mean, honestly, I've been doing this for over 10 years and if you're worried, start very slowly. Topically apply it to the bottom of your feet, for two reasons. There's some oils, like clove, oregano thyme, that can feel kind of hot, which means that they make your skin look a little red and they might feel warm, but the bottom of your feet has really thick skin so that's a really good place to apply them.

Don't use it on children under the age of two, but for kids that are over two, you can dilute [the essential oils], you can cut them with another oil. It can be something you already own in your house, like olive oil or coconut oil in your kitchen.

You can just start by smelling them. You know, citrus is a really good one to start with. Orange in fact. A lot of the citrus, like neroli and bergamot are known for lifting your mood, but they're a little expensive. Orange is like the cheaper cousin and it's usually very affordable and kids really like it. So just play with it, just smell it and see if it helps you feel better or calmer.

And also sleep, yes, it happens at night, but what you do during the day kind of affects your sleep at night. So maybe, like you were saying, shift the focus. One thing I've integrated in 2021 is kind of, schedule joy, because I was reading that book Radical Remission, that you don't just want to eliminate the negative emotions, you want to crowd them out with positive ones. So I actually have a timer on my phone and at three o'clock every afternoon I play one of my favorite songs and sing at the top of my lungs and dance around my living room.

Alex Howard - [00:34:12]

I've got to ask you what the song is, Jodi, because we need the visuals!

Jodi Cohen

I love Abba, actually. Abba is a good one. Any 70s music. I watched that BeeGees documentary recently, you know, it's just, it's nostalgic and it's silly.

Alex Howard

Yeah, it's great. You know, my wife is currently being a superhero, homeschooling three kids. And that's one of the things that she started doing - homeschooling because of lockdown obviously - and one of the things that she started doing is just putting on random songs at certain points in the day and just making everyone get up and dance, because you've just got to break the energy sometimes of what's happening.

Jodi Cohen

Yeah, my daughter is studying for her SATs, she likes Macklemore, and we've even, she's had me do some Tiktok dances, I'm not good, but it's just fun, you know.

Alex Howard

And just coming to a few really practical things with essential oils, so maybe say a bit about why it's important to buy from a good source and also say perhaps a little bit about, just that people shouldn't be swallowing them and ingesting them, just a few of the very basic key principles for people.

Jodi Cohen

I would never tell anyone to ingest them, mostly because I don't think it's efficient. Inhalation is the most efficient way and it doesn't need to be complicated. You can literally smell directly from the bottle, that's called direct inhalation.

Topical application I think is the second best way. Certain areas, the skin is thinner and it's kind of near the veins. So applying it on the pulse points will get it into the system faster. So when you're starting, maybe don't use those, start on the bottom of the feet.

Peppermint is a really easy one to start with, it both kind of suppresses your appetite and can be energizing and clear the sinuses, and you can just smell it or you can put a little bit on the bottom of your feet. And often, you can see how quickly it gets into your system because you can taste it in your mouth really quickly.

In terms of quality, I think there's a lot of fear tactics that are used. My number one thing is really just try to buy it organic, you know, because they're highly concentrated. So if they're grown with pesticides, you're concentrating pesticides.

But to get started, that feels like a barrier to entry, so just smell them. If they smell like the weird candle store in the mall and completely synthetic, they're not your thing. But as long as it smells good to you, I really do think there's kind of an innate intelligence, you know, for what we're attracted to. We crave hamburgers when we need iron. We might crave chocolate when we need magnesium. If it smells good to you, that's a good choice.

Alex Howard

That's awesome. Jodi, for people that want to find out more about you and your work, I know you've got a book that will have come out at the time of broadcasting this. So talk a bit about that, because I think it's also a great way for people to go deeper into this.

Jodi Cohen - [00:37:06]

Yeah, Random House have priced it really affordable. It's like twenty dollars. It's "Essential Oils to Boost the Brain and Heal the Body". And what I really try to do is go deep in explaining why and how essential oils work and also how to use them. I don't think that you need to use them for everything, but I think that there are a couple of things that they're particularly well suited for. And if you were interested in learning more about how to activate your parasympathetic branch of your nervous system, I have a free twenty five easy ways to do it.

And again, avoid overwhelm, just pick one. One of them is like using your tongue to paint the roof of your mouth, like that's easy, you don't need to own anything to do it. But go to boostthebrainbook.com/gift

Alex Howard

That's awesome. Jodi, it's always a pleasure. Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it.

Jodi Cohen

Thank you.