

The background image features a large, clear glass jar filled with dried, yellowish-brown herbs. To the right of the jar is a smaller, dark amber glass bottle with a black cap. In the foreground, on a light-colored wooden surface, are three small piles of fresh herbs: a bunch of green leaves on the left, a cluster of small white flowers in the center, and a pile of dried orange and yellow flowers on the right. The background also includes green foliage and orange flowers on the left side.

# HERBAL BODY OILING



**Ancient Sacrament,  
Modern Necessity**

**by Amber Magnolia Hill**

# **Herbal Body Oiling:**

## **Ancient Sacrament, Modern Necessity**

*Calm Your Nervous System, Enhance Your Immunity, and Practice Sacred Self Care with Herb-Infused Oils*

by Amber Magnolia Hill



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# Introduction: Welcome Home

Most deep life shifts happen not when new information triggers a novel epiphany, but when we remember a basic fundamental truth. And one of the most fundamental truths of being embodied as a human being is this:

*We cannot live a truly fulfilling life, or love those around us to our full abilities, if we are not practicing self care on a regular basis.*

Using herb-infused oils is a profoundly healing, deeply sensual, easily accessible form of self care.

When we think about taking herbal medicine, we tend to picture teas, tinctures, or some other way of ingesting the medicinal benefits of the plant through the mouth. But the skin is our largest organ and is incredibly absorbent, with direct access to the nervous, lymphatic, and immune systems. By keeping the body hydrated with fat (oil) as opposed to water (like in lotion), we keep these systems nourished, running smoothly, and functioning at the highest possible level.

**In this ebook** I will share with you the many health benefits that herb-infused oils bring directly into the body, practical tips for making body oiling a regular part of your self care routine, and detailed instructions on how to make your own fresh plant infused Herbal Body Oils so that you can save money and focus on the plants that work best for you & your loved one's needs.

The benefits of Herbal Body Oiling are tangible; you feel the difference immediately. There's no magical thinking or placebo effect here; the results are quick and undeniable. The medicinal chemical constituents of the plant infuses into the oil, and those molecules are transferred directly into the depths of your body when you rub it on your skin.

Humans, and women especially, have evolved to work with plant medicines in order to bring nourishment and healing to ourselves, our families, and our communities. I address parts of this ebook to women, because they make up the vast majority of my network and of people interested in plant healing, but of course this medicine is not exclusive to one gender.

**Herbal Body Oiling** is a simple but profound way to bring back the ancient practice of integrating plant medicine into your life. I oil my body almost every day (most herbalists I know do) for the main reason that it is the quickest way I've found to drop the nervous system into a state of immediate calm and relaxation, and to help *sustain* that state of relaxed calm over time.

As a struggling single mom who can't afford all the body work I dream of, a gym membership for sauna access, or even a bottle of wine sometimes, Herbal Body Oiling has been my #1 method of deep nervous system relaxation and full body resetting.

**I began my herbal studies in 2005**, and over the years came to realize that I used Herbal Body Oils much more than any other form of herbal medicine, because the effects were so profound. In one of my apprenticeships, I remember sharing that oiling my body relaxed me more fully and immediately than any internally-taken herb ever did. My teacher gave me a knowing smile and said she'd found that to be true for herself as well.



### Commonly reported effects of consistent oiling include:

- relaxed muscles
- better sleep
- increased immunity
- softer, healthier skin
- calmer nerves
- better movement and less stiffness in the joints
- pain relief
- increased warmth & circulation
- clearer thinking
- feeling more centered
- increased energy and stamina
- deeper self-knowledge and greater self-love

“I LOVE USING HERBAL BODY OILS. EVER SINCE I BEGAN WORKING WITH HERBS I ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT APPLYING THEM ON THE BODY DIRECTLY IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO INGEST THEM. YOU ARE INFUSING NOT ONLY THE NUTRIENTS CONTAINED WITHIN THE PLANTS, BUT THE ESSENCE AND HEALING ENERGY THAT LIES WITHIN THEM.

PLANTS HAVE A WISDOM FAR BEYOND WHAT WE CAN ONLY BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND AND USING OILS INFUSED WITH MEDICINAL PLANTS CAN ONLY SERVE TO BENEFIT NOT ONLY OUR BODY BUT OUR MINDS.

BODY OILING IS A SMALL RITUAL THAT WE CAN SET ASIDE IN OUR DAY TO LOVE OUR BODIES AND SET FORTH INTENTIONS WHILE THE MEDICINAL PLANTS WORK THEIR MAGIC!”

- ALLY SANDS OF

AQUARIAN SOUL DESIGNS

Every year after that I harvested the tiny yellow flowers and perforated leaves of St. John's Wort in the Sierra foothills of Northern California where I live, and each year I increased production a little bit to share some with friends. In 2012 I decided to buy bottles and get fancy labels and make enough oil to sell some through my Etsy vintage clothing store.

**My customers loved them**, and I loved being able to connect people with plants in such a tangible, effective way. I sometimes feel this secret guilt about all the thanks and praise I receive from the people who use my oils, because I know that it's the plants who are providing the healing and the relief they're experiencing, not me. I'm just a go-between, introducing people to plants through this deeply healing medium. (I do love to get good feedback but please, don't neglect the plants when you're sending out your waves of gratitude!)

In the years since I started sharing these oils with others I've continued to up my production of sustainably harvested, wildcrafted plants steeped in organic olive oil. In 2015 I took a leap of faith and stopped selling vintage in order to focus exclusively on expanding my line of oils (now called [Mythic Medicinals](#)), and to start teaching the basics of herbal self care to others.

I love making and selling these oils, but I'm much more interested in teaching others how and why to make their own Herbal Body Oils.

# What Others Have Had to Say After Using Herbal Body Oils

***"Just want to say a huge thank you for your magic St. John's Wort oil! I used it last night and slept better than I have in months." -Erin***

"I purchased the Pine Needle Herbal Body Oil for my husband who plays sports. At times he comes home with sore muscles and pains in his joints. He has been using the oils after his workouts and it has helped him tremendously. My mom has arthritis in her finger, and the day after I massaged the wonderful oil on her finger the pain hasn't come back." -Melissa

***"I used up all of the St. John's Wort oil I got from you. It was a part of a self love routine that helped me out of the biggest depression of my life." -Katie***

"Around the time of my baby's 1st year birthday I began to feel shifts in my energy levels. As I am still breastfeeding through the night I often wake in the morning with sore muscles from lying on my side. The interrupted sleep means that I sometimes find it difficult to return to a deep dream state. Once I became aware that my energy levels were decreasing I knew it was time for self care. I ordered the Mugwort Herbal Body Oil from Mythic Medicinals and created a new dreamtime routine. As evening approached I started to drink tea, take a warm shower, dim the lights and ask my husband to rub the Mugwort Oil on my neck, shoulders, lower back and hips. I immediately felt a warming vibration and opening of my heart space after using the oil. As a mother of 3, I am continuously nurturing and giving with my body, my consciousness, and my energy. The release of so much physical tension is profound." -Genevieve

***"In addition to the mundane delight of oiling sore muscles, I find the Mugwort oil a most excellent addition to my ritual work." -Paige***

The benefits lauded in these testimonials run the gamut from enhanced self care to better sleep to augmented ritual work to peace of mind to acute physical relief. Adding to this myriad of possible uses are the countless herbs that can be made into a body oil and their many respective benefits. This is a truly versatile and effective herbal preparation.

# What the Ancients Knew

Somehow, we in the modern world have largely forgotten about this simple home remedy. Modern herbalism focuses much more on teas, tinctures, and essential oils. But the ancients knew it, and their wisdom has come forward to us in their writings.

The Old Testament gives instructions for adding myrrh, cinnamon, and other herbs to olive oil to be used as “a sacred anointing oil” (Exodus 30:23-25), and the act of honoring a person using oil is mentioned many times throughout the rest of The Bible. This was obviously a sacrament much revered by the ancient desert nomads, whose constant sun exposure and dynamic relationship with the supernatural gave them many reasons to utilize herb-infused oils as both practical remedy and ritual tool.



**The ancient Egyptians used oil** as a way to protect the skin from the sun and nourish it after exposure, and as the base for most of their cosmetics.

In King Tutankhamen’s tomb was found a perfume made from a fragrant resin (believed to be Spikenard) and a rendered animal fat (which is what oils and salves are made with wherever people don’t have access to, or don’t wish to use, plant-based fats, such as almond, coconut, or olive oil).

The ancient Egyptians understood well the importance of scent in ritual work, and utilized fragrant herbs to help transport the consciousness to other dimensions of awareness.



The tradition with the most codified system for utilizing body oils is Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of health and healing. They even have a special English name for it, “oilination.” One source I found quotes an unnamed traditional Ayurvedic text as saying:

*“Give yourself a full body oil massage on a daily basis. It is nourishing; pacifies the doshas; relieves fatigue; provides pleasure, stamina, and perfect sleep; enhances the complexion and the luster of the skin; promotes longevity; and nourishes all parts of the body.”*

If you receive an Ayurvedic treatment today, chances are an Herbal Body Oil will be a central part of regimen (often as Shirodhara, or the practice of pouring warm oil continuously onto the forehead at the third eye center).

## My Story: Overwhelmed Mama Desperately Seeks Relief

Before we get into the specific medicinal benefits, practical uses, and how-to's of Herbal Body Oiling, I'd like to share a bit more about how my life circumstances over the last decade and the underlying wiring of my body system have led me to seek a reliable, affordable, and truly effective method of stress relief.

I have always needed to go to drastic measures to recover from the stress I experience from normal, day-to-day living. I love being alone. I prefer a bathtub, desolate river spot, or my bed to almost any other place on earth. I am quickly depleted by too much social interaction. I function best on 9-10 hours of sleep a night, but my high strung nervous system has taken hours to relax enough so that I can fall asleep for as long as I can remember.

I was grateful to learn about introversion as a teenager and saw how that framework could explain parts of myself, but it was learning about the [Highly Sensitive Person](#) in my 30's that really helped me to understand just why the world seems so overwhelming to me at times.

The nervous systems of HSPs (who make up about 20% of the population in any given species<sup>1</sup>) process sensory input differently, more intensely, than others. We're not just over-reactive crybabies (an image the word "sensitive" tends to bring up), we have "the innate trait of high sensory processing sensitivity."<sup>2</sup>

Lights seem brighter. Sounds seem louder. Crowds seem more crowded. Withdrawal and recovery are necessary. For me, a central part of that recovery is the nourishment and replenishment of my nervous system.

Let me make clear though that the benefits of Herbal Body Oiling are by no means limited to HSPs or introverts. We all have super attuned nervous systems, the most evolved of any creature to ever walk the earth, and we are all bombarded in this modern life by a roaring cacophony of sensory stimuli that automatically and unconsciously activate our stress responses.

I share this aspect of myself merely to set the scene for why it's been so important for me to find a source of comfort, recovery, and relaxation. On top of this underlying sensory processing issue, my life circumstances (having a baby before I was ready and years of struggling financially, things I've shared extensively about on both my [blog](#) and [Instagram](#)) have had me living well below the poverty line in a state of constant fear and overwhelm for many years now. How am I gonna pay the rent next week? Can we survive on quinoa and squash for a few days? Do I have enough gas in my car to get my girl to school tomorrow?

**Single motherhood + lack of time and money + a nervous system on the brink  
= Depleted Mom Unable to Fulfill Her Obligations. Unacceptable.**

Hence the necessity of finding a soothing self care ritual and an effective remedy for inducing relaxation, nourishing my nerves, and building up my immune system so I can continue to mother my daughter and pay the bills without further setbacks. Herbal Body Oiling has covered all of those bases. And here's why.

## The Nervous System

*"Whatever your philosophy of life, the nervous system is your only means of connecting and interacting with your world. If you treat your nervous system like the sensitive system it is, it will play back the finest music to enrich your being. Keep it tuned and healthy, feed it well, and protect it from overuse and exploitation, and your reward will be a life of exquisite quality. Through even the most stressful events, you will feel centered and empowered."*

*-Rosemary Gladstar<sup>3</sup>*

### **The nervous system is your body's interface with the rest of the world.**

It is the Master Control Headquarters for your whole organism. Every muscle, organ, and tissue in your body relies on nerve impulses to communicate and function properly. It's where you and everything outside of you meet. It affects your perception, your sense of well-being, and your reactions to stressors.

The sympathetic nervous system is what controls the "fight or flight" reflex, and the parasympathetic nervous system stimulates the "rest and digest" or "feed and breed" state. The first is all stress and anxiety, the second is all serenity and love.

If you are constantly in a state of stress and/or your nervous system is depleted, you are in what is called a "sympathetic dominant state" and, no matter how many green drinks you imbibe or massages you receive or workout sessions you complete, your body's systems and tissues are so compromised that health and healing are all but impossible.

“LET’S FACE IT — WE ARE ALL TRYING TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE. OUR SOULS REMEMBER A DEEP FEELING OF INTIMACY, CONNECTION, AND COMMUNITY FROM OUR TRUE HOME THAT IS BEYOND THIS WORLD, YET IN ORDER TO FEEL THAT COMMUNION WE SO LONG FOR IN THIS LIFE, IN THESE BODIES, WE MUST KEEP OUR MINDS RELAXED AND OUR HEARTS OPEN IN THE FACE OF UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF SENSORY OVERLOAD. I TRY TO REMEMBER THAT OUR NERVOUS SYSTEMS HAVE ALWAYS CARRIED A HEAVY LOAD, LIKE THE ANCIENT NORM OF WOMEN HAVING 10 CHILDREN, OR THE REALITY THAT TIGERS MIGHT EAT SAID CHILDREN. SO THE QUESTION BECOMES NOT WHY IS IT SO VERY HARD TO BE ALIVE, BUT WHETHER OR NOT THOSE WHO HAVE COME BEFORE US HAVE FIGURED OUT ANYTHING THAT CAN MAKE OUR SITUATIONS FEEL JUST A BIT LESS PRECARIOUS. THAT’S WHERE THE ANCIENT PRACTICE OF BODY OILING COMES IN. FOR ME, EVEN TO BE IN THAT HOLY GRAIL STATE OF FLOW, MOTIVATION, AND JOYFUL CO-CREATION CAN, IN THE HANDS OF OUR ADRENALINE FAVORING CULTURE, QUITE EASILY SLIDE OVER THE LINE INTO MANIA.

SO WHETHER WE ARE EXPERIENCING EXISTENTIAL PANIC OR THE PREFERABLE, YET STILL ULTIMATELY UNSUSTAINABLE, HIGH OF “JOY OUT OF CONTROL”, BODY OILING REMAINS MY TOOL OF CHOICE FOR SHORT CIRCUITING THE ADRENALINE RUSH BEFORE IT OVERTAKES ME. AND IT IS A CHOICE, TO STEP OUT FROM UNDER THE BURDEN OF A BROKEN, HAND-ME-DOWN MODE OF BEING SUCH AS THIS CYCLE OF PUSHING AND CRASHING THAT HOLDS NO PLACE FOR SELF CARE. AND MORE THAN A CHOICE, IT ALMOST FEELS LIKE AN ACT OF REBELLION, TO REFUSE TO RIDE THE CHEMICAL WAVE TOWARD SOME VERSION OF SUCCESS THAT IS EASY TO QUANTIFY ON PAPER BUT IMPOSSIBLE TO TRULY ENJOY BECAUSE WE ARE SO BURNT OUT.

IT PROBABLY MAKES ME AN OLD LADY TO SAY THIS, BUT THE MOST RADICAL THING I CAN THINK OF TO DO A LOT OF THE TIME IS TO STOP WHAT I AM DOING, RUB WARM SESAME OIL ALL OVER MY EVERYTHING, AND GO TO SLEEP AT 9P.M.”

- ERIN RIVERA MERRIMAN OF ACTIVE CULTURE FAMILY



In today's world, with so much sensory stimuli coming at us all the time, most of us are constantly on the verge of being sympathetic dominant. Nourishing the nervous system and gently prodding it toward the parasympathetic state is a necessity.

The Central Nervous System, which is comprised of the brain and the spinal cord, accounts for about a quarter of the body's weight and uses up a significant portion of the body's nutrients and energy to maintain its functioning. If we are nourishing our nervous system with Herbal Body Oils, we free up a lot of energy that can be directed to other parts of the body in need of healing and regeneration.

**Oiling the body brings immediate relaxation to the nervous system.** You can literally feel it within moments of starting to rub the oil in. Our skin is primed to take in fat-based substances, and the nerves instantaneously absorb the medicine of the herbs (I absolutely recommend oiling your whole body in order to reap the most benefits- [see instructions below](#)).

By making Herbal Body Oiling a regular practice, you create a layer of nourishing protection around your body. This ambient aura is both subtly etheric and physically powerful. It's as if the oil on your skin extends its energy outward to fill up the space around you, ensuring that whatever comes your way is processed first through

“HERBAL OILS FOR THE BODY ARE ONE OF THE SIMPLEST YET MOST PROFOUND FORMS OF PLANT MEDICINE. THEY PROVIDE NOT ONLY HEALING FOR THE BODY BUT EARTH-BASED RITUAL AND VITAL SELF-CARE. SOMETHING AS BASIC AS ROSE PETALS INFUSED IN COCONUT OIL CAN REDUCE INFLAMMATION AND SWELLING IN THE SKIN, HELP ELIMINATE INFECTION FROM A WOUND, AND EVEN LESSEN NERVE PAIN. THIS SWEET PAIRING IS ALSO A FRAGRANT CONNECTION TO THE WILD BEAUTY OF MIDSUMMER AND A WAY OF SLIPPING INTO A MORE RELAXED STATE THROUGH THE HEALING AROMATICS OF THE ROSE.

CRAFTING THESE REMEDIES -- THESE TANGIBLE, TOUCHABLE PRAYERS -- BRINGS US INTO A TIMELESS STATE WHERE WE CAN REMEMBER THAT THE HEALING WE PRACTICE IS AS OLD AS THE HUMAN SPECIES. PASSED ON FROM MOTHER TO DAUGHTER, GRANDFATHER TO GRANDSON, MEDICINE WOMAN TO APPRENTICE IN A LIVING LINEAGE OF LOVE, CONNECTEDNESS AND WHOLENESS.”

-KIVA ROSE OF TRADITIONS IN WESTERN HERBALISM

“DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT IT  
FEELS LIKE TO BE WORRY —FREE?  
TO BREATHE IN THE SWEET SMELL  
OF YARROW, MUGWORT, AND  
PINE? DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN  
YOU PLACED YOURSELF IN THE  
HIGHEST PLACE OF IMPORTANCE?  
SELF-CARE INVITES YOU TO  
REMEMBER ALL OF THESE THINGS.  
MASSAGE YOURSELF WITH HERBAL  
OIL, BATHE IN HERBAL WATERS,  
AND PLACE YOUR BARE FEET ON  
THE GROUND. TEACH YOUR LOVED  
ONES TO DO THE SAME. NOTHING  
COULD BE MORE IMPORTANT.”

-VICKY SALCIDO-COBBE OF

GRANDMOTHER'S MEDICINE

this layer of healing defense, slowing down and transforming what can otherwise be anxious and overwhelming reactions. My sister is a good example of someone who built up this defensive layer over time, with life changing results. She, like me, is a Highly Sensitive Person (did I mention it's genetic? Our dad and many others on his side of the family also carry the inherited trait of high sensory processing sensitivity).

But she, literally since the day she was born, tends toward more agitation and anxiety in her sensitivity than I do. She feels everything and is highly attuned to a spiritual reality that I'm not even aware of, but she also suffers from her sensitivity in ways I do not.

Recently we were talking about her very stressful role as a business owner and manager and how, in the past, she's tended to have emotional meltdowns due to tense and aggravating work situations. I commented on how she's handling things so well and really doing an amazing job at work, and suggested maybe oiling every day to help with the stress.

She told me she *was* oiling every day and had been doing so for some time, and we both agreed that her daily oiling practice has helped her keep her center and deal with stress in a new, more productive way.

*Nourish those nerves, you sweet embodied souls.*

# The Lymphatic & Immune Systems

The lymphatic system is fundamental to immune function, affecting everything from colds to cancer. It moves blood (and, therefore, white blood cells) throughout the system, and if the skin is dehydrated then the lymph right underneath is dehydrated, and the body won't be able to fight off infections or allergies as easily.

**Proper circulation of the lymphatic fluid is necessary** to lymphatic health but, unlike the circulatory system, it does not move of its own accord. It needs touch and massage to keep it flowing. Herbal Body Oils lend themselves beautifully to making this often overlooked practice of gentle self-massage a regular part of your self care routine.

Manual Lymphatic Drainage was developed in the 1930's by a husband and wife team of doctors, Emil and Estrid Vodder, who noticed that their patients with recurring colds and other immune problems often had swollen lymph nodes. They discovered that rhythmic and gentle massage of the lymph nodes moving toward the heart helped to dissolve lumps and keep the lymph flowing. (You can search online for many videos demonstrating Manual Lymphatic Drainage massage techniques).

According to Wikipedia, "The study of lymphatic drainage of various organs is important in diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of cancer. The lymphatic system, because of its physical proximity to many tissues of the body, is responsible for carrying cancerous cells between the various parts of the body in a process called metastasis. The intervening lymph nodes can trap the cancer cells. If they are not successful in destroying the cancer cells the nodes may become sites of secondary tumors."<sup>4</sup>

“IT’S SO IMPORTANT TO  
CONNECT WITH OUR BODIES  
AND BREASTS THROUGH TOUCH.  
WE NEED TO TAKE THE TIME TO  
MASSAGE AND STIMULATE OUR  
LYMPH SYSTEM. IT IS OUR RIVER  
OF LIFE, MOVING NUTRIENTS  
AND WHITE BLOOD CELLS  
THROUGHOUT THE BODY AS IT  
RELEASES TOXINS AND  
UNWANTED MATERIALS. WITH  
THE HELP OF OILS YOU CAN  
BREAK DOWN BLOCKAGES IN  
YOUR BREAST TISSUES AND  
NUDGE YOUR BODY TOWARD ITS  
NATURAL STATE OF BALANCE.”

- KARI JENSEN OF

POPPY & SOMEDAY

When speaking of lymphatic health and cancer, we cannot overlook the importance of breast massage as a regular part of a woman’s preventative self care routine. Consistent breast/underarm massage keeps the lymph nodes at the armpits healthy and flowing, helping to prevent the stagnation that may contribute to breast cancer.

**And breast massage feels wonderful!** We are so used to our breasts being only touched sexually or functionally (when feeding a baby) that to receive loving touch on its own, even if from ourselves, is an incredibly healing experience. I love massaging my breasts with Herbal Body Oils. It’s like, “Oh, hi, you’re mine. You don’t belong to my partner or my child or to the general ‘male gaze’. You belong to me, and I love you and promise to take care of you.” It also really helps to relax the corresponding back and shoulders muscles.

And, of course, it is a great way to get to know the terrain of your mammary glands, so that you will know immediately if anything has changed and can seek medical attention as early as possible if you find a lump. Early detection is everything, and the familiarity that breast self massage engenders is an excellent way to ensure this.

*“Using infused herbal oils is an easy and pleasurable way to keep your breasts healthy, prevent and reverse cysts, dissolve troublesome lumps, and repair abnormal cells. Breast skin is thin and absorbent, and breast tissue contains a great deal of fat, which readily absorbs infused herbal oils. The healing and cancer-preventing actions of herbs easily migrate*



*into olive oil- creating a simple, effective product for maintaining breast health.” -Susan Weed<sup>5</sup>*

I also always pay attention to gently rubbing the lymph nodes at my groin/inner thighs whenever I am doing a full body oil or have added oil to the bath. And since rubbing the neck and jaw is a very important part of any Herbal Body Oiling routine for those of us who spend too much time hunched over a computer or smart phone (surely not you, dear reader), the lymph nodes there will be well tended also.

**You need not be an expert in lymphatic anatomy** or trained in any mode of body work to keep your own lymph flowing. I encourage you to do some research and watch some videos, but at the very least just pay attention to gently rubbing your neck/throat, breasts/armpits, and lower belly/groin/inner thighs whenever you oil your body.

Between the nervous system calming and immune-protective benefits of massaging the body with herb-infused oils, this simple practice lays a very solid foundation of preventative self care. I’ve gotten sick less often since I’ve been body oiling frequently (including oral Oil Pulling- see [Bonus #2](#) below), and am better equipped to handle unexpected stress that comes my way thanks to my super nourished nerves.

# How To Use Herbal Body Oils

I highly recommend full body oiling as the most effective way to get all the benefits Herbal Body Oiling has to offer. It is truly a full body reset.

Aside from maximizing the full range of physical healing potential that Herbal Body Oiling offers, full body oiling creates within the practitioner an in-depth body awareness. This is something that so many of us lost somewhere along the way from childhood to now, but that is absolutely necessary to a feeling of centeredness and authentic self-assurance.

*The deep connection to my body and innermost self that this practice has built up in me over time has been fundamental to my physical, emotional, and creative well-being.*

Sometimes I do try to just do one spot- “I’ve got a lot to do today; I’ll just give my shoulders a quick rubdown and then get on that computer”- but I *always* end up removing more clothing to keep spreading the oil along, because whatever part of my body that has oil on it feels so good I just want all of it to feel the same!

Of course, sometimes there really is only time for a quick spot treatment, and that is just fine. Any oiling is better than no oiling! But I encourage you try out a full body oil if you never have.

And no, I don’t oil my scalp. I tried once for the sake of experimentation, and it took weeks for my long, thick hair to not be oily any more. But I do know people who love doing it.

I do, however, oil my face. Well, my jaw. Oh, the tension we store in our jaws! For a while there I was grinding my teeth so hard at night that my upper right molar was splitting my lower right molar down the middle. You can actually see the rift forming. So oiling my jaw is a very important part of my practice, and has really helped me cut down on my nighttime jaw clenching.

**It goes against what feels like an intuitive fact,** but I was taught that oil doesn't cause oily skin, and I have found this to be true for me. Of course, do what is best for you, but don't hesitate to experiment with a soothing face massage as part of your self care routine.

So there's no doubt that full body oiling is your best bet for maximizing the benefits of this soothing practice, but let's be real- oil is... oily.

Some people use the word greasy to describe that sensation, but it really is inaccurate. This isn't dirty, grimy grease, this is a clean, herb-infused vegetable oil (although, again, rendered animal fats are a traditional material with which to make body oils and you can do that too).

Here are some practical techniques that I've evolved over the years to make full body oiling a fun and easy self care ritual and to integrate my constant oiliness into my life without ruining everything I own.

“IN TRADITIONAL TIBETAN MEDICINE, PEOPLE WITH DISTURBED OR EXCESS WIND OFTEN HAVE THE DISEASE OF DESIRE. TOPICAL OILINATION APPLICATION IN THESE CASES IS KEY IN REMEDYING EVIL WINDS THAT STIR THIS MENTAL SUFFERING OF DESIRE. DESIRE CAN BE AS BIG AS GRANDIOSE VISIONS OF MATERIAL ABUNDANCE BEYOND THE ACTUAL CAPACITY OF THE EARTH OR AS SMALL AS OVEREATING SUGAR TO THE POINT OF ILLNESS.

I SEE HERBAL OIL APPLICATION AS A KEY IN BALANCING THE MENTAL POISONS OF THE WESTERN WORLD, IDEALLY BRINGING US BACK TO A PLACE OF GRATITUDE AND FOCUS. OIL IS A MOST MAGICAL AND ACCURATE OF MEDIUMS TO NOURISH THE BODY WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY CLEANSING.

OIL IS A PERFECT DESIGN.”

- KELSEY BARRETT OF HEAVY NETTLE

## Find Your Focus

There are two ways I engage in my oiling practice. One is as a quiet, introspective ritual where I gather my thoughts and get clarity on things. The other is as a mindless (in the best sense of the word), slow, lingering rub down where I utilize outside distraction.

For the first I set out ritual objects that are meaningful to me, slow down my breathing, and dive deep. I tend to do this on a day that has personal significance (my birthday, the anniversary of my grandmother's death, the night of a lunar eclipse, etc.), or when I'm feeling highly charged emotions or know I'm at a turning point in my life, and I usually journal about what came up later.

For the second I set up a movie, music, or podcast beforehand. I find that being entertained by something allows me to linger over the experience and keep rubbing out my aches and moving my lymph along longer.

Don't think for a second that watching something on Netflix means you're not engaging in a sacred self care ritual.

### **Another option is to oil with a loved one.**

It's such a sweet time to check in and slow down with the children in your life. Nothing bonds people quite like the ritual of loving touch, and this is especially meaningful with kids who are growing more into themselves (and away from us) every day. It can be so helpful with fussy babies, overtired toddlers, and exhausted big kids. Some of my sweetest moments in this life have happened while rubbing oil onto my daughter's back at the end of the day, slowing down and dropping in with her.

Oiling with friends is pretty sweet too. Recently I shot my first video all about Herbal Body Oiling, with one of my dearest friends behind the camera at another of our bestie's homes. Once the camera was off the three of us were drawn like magnets to the oil and ended up half naked, sharing self-massage techniques and laughing and talking long after the work was done. I love busting out oils when I gather with women. It works like wine- loosening inhibitions



and lubricating the conversation toward ever deeper and more honest topics. Plus, we all feel better and more nourished afterward.

*And, of course, oiling with a lover is a super sensual way to connect at the end of a long day (week/month/year/decade). It helps to drop you both into an open, relaxed state reminiscent of that new love feeling. It can be absolutely magical to be transported back there and, through being really present with one another, to remember why you fell in love in the first place.*

It's also a great way to break down barriers of fear and self-consciousness at the beginning of a relationship or fling. It wasn't planned, but the St. John's Wort oil I'd just bottled that day became a major reason my boyfriend and I had such a memorable first night together. We love reminiscing about how I seduced him with Herbal Body Oils! So, yeah, it's also a total turn on and killer sex aid.

## Create Your Space

By which I mean simply- sit on a towel to oil. I save old towels and buy pretty new ones at thrift stores especially for oiling. A full size towel allows you to turn and stretch out your legs, something I love doing once my muscles are warm and relaxed from the oil. I replace my towel every few months. You can tell, by weight and feel and smell, when it's time to throw the towel away. And no, sadly, washing it doesn't help.

## Deal With Your Oiliness

Oil naked. Lose the undies. Even if you think you're avoiding that area (which you absolutely should not do, remember that's a key lymph center), they'll end up oily. I used to keep clothes around especially for putting on after I was oiled up, but found that the oil penetrates cloth so quickly and fully that I could only get a handful of uses out of them before they needed to be thrown out. Now I either use the towel I'm sitting on to wipe off excess oil before getting dressed or into bed, or I get into the shower at some point after oiling.

“WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE EACH DAY OF OUR LIVES AS A SINGULAR AND CONTINUOUS, GRACEFUL DANCE. FOR, JUST AS IN DANCING, WHILE IMPROVISATION AND SPONTANEITY ARE PARAMOUNT, THERE ARE STEPS WE CAN COME TO KNOW SO INTIMATELY THAT THEY FEEL AS OUR OWN AND GLIDE US ACROSS THE FLOOR WITH MUCH GREATER EASE AND NATURALNESS. SO, TOO, BRINGING A SMALL SENSE OF RITUAL INTO ONE’S ROUTINE CAN MAKE THE DANCE OF LIFE JUST THAT MUCH MORE RICH, SATISFYING, AND LAYERED WITH MEANING.

THE SMALL BUT POWERFUL RITUAL OF ANOINTING ONESELF WITH A SACRED HERBAL OIL IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE LIFE FROM THE INSIDE LOOKING OUT, RATHER THAN FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN. IT IS A TIME TO SIMPLY LET GO AND MAKE SPACE FOR THE PERFECTION OF THE MOMENT YOU ARE INHABITING .”

- SOPHIA ROSE OF LA ABEJA HERBS

**Bonus- the heat of the shower helps to expand the pores to make absorption of the oil that isn’t wicked away by the water quicker and more effective.**

Don’t worry that you’re losing the therapeutic effects if you have to de-oil yourself soon after oiling. It penetrates immediately and effectively. And even after wiping or showering the top surface oil off your skin, a layer of it remains that won’t get into your clothing but will continue to calm and soothe you. I can often smell, ever so subtly, the smell of the oil I used the night before on my skin the next day, even if I’d showered after applying it. And I haven’t had to throw any clothes out in years. (If you do spill oil on your clothes, that old dish soap trick works pretty well, especially if you rub the dish soap in and rinse it out multiple times over the course of a day or two.)

You can also make a salt scrub for the shower (instructions below) and get your full body oiling in that way.

**And, of course, adding a bit to the bath** is an incredibly effective and luxurious way to get your whole body oiled and relaxed! It goes without saying, but I’m gonna say it anyway- always remember to replace the lid to your jar and to screw it on tightly! As soon as you’re done, before you forget, put the lid on. A spill is *such a bummer*, because not only do you create the lamest mess ever, but you also lose all that precious healing liquid. When I’ve spilled on wood floors or tile or linoleum, I just scoop that oil right back up with my hands into the jar

and use it again. Carpet is a different story, of course. A story with a very sad ending. And if your jar is getting slick, wash the outside with soap and water to prevent it from slipping when someone picks it up.

**Also my friends, please keep in mind that a little goes a long way.** I see people absolutely slather themselves (or the person they're massaging) with oil. This is not only unnecessarily messy, it's wasteful. That much oil cannot absorb into the skin, unless you have hours to sit there and wait. You'd be amazed how much skin surface area you can cover with a small amount of oil. Try it. Put a certain amount on your wrist, some on your shoulder, and rub toward the elbow from there. See how far you can take it, how much of your arm you can cover in a layer of oil. If you have to add more, do it. You'll hit your stride eventually. Save your money! Honor the time you spent making the oil! Make it last, but *don't* skimp on fully immersing your body. Use it every day (or almost), just don't use more than is necessary to get the job done each time.

**So there are some of the answers to the questions I am frequently asked about using Herbal Body Oils, now let's talk about *making* them.**

# How to Make Fresh Plant Infused Herbal Body Oils

*I originally wrote the outline of following for [The Starseed Survival Guide](#) Volume II, edited by Erin Rivera Merriman. It's been expanded here.*

**I make fresh plant oils, and I do not use heat.** Many Herbal Body Oil How-To's use the stove top / double boiler method to infuse the medicinal properties of the herbs into the carrier oil more quickly, but I prefer to use time instead of fire. Heat can destroy the plant's properties and degrade the quality of the oil. Go ahead and use that method if you are in a hurry or really know what you're doing, but know that steeping your oil for one moon cycle will give you the same result.

I realize that the steps below looks like a lot of information, and may seem overwhelming.

I've broken down the overall process into the five basic steps, so you have the big picture. Next, you can refer to the checklist below to cover all the little details when you actually make the oil.

(More information on the specific medicinal properties of different herbs and the qualities of different oils [here...](#))



- 1. Gather your herb**
- 2. Chop it up**
- 3. Put it in a jar**
- 4. Pour oil over it**
- 5. Later, strain it out. Easy!**





## To make the oil you will need-

- your herb/s
- a knife & cutting board or scissors or a blender
- a glass jar with lid
- a spoon or chopstick
- a carrier oil (see below)
- a sticker label

## To decant (strain out) the oil a month or so later you will need-

- a jar of the same size
- a metal strainer that fits over the mouth of the jar (find at any kitchen store or online)
- a piece of cloth to drape over the metal strainer- cotton muslin, cheesecloth, a tea towel (find at a kitchen store, fabric store, or online)
- a sticker label

*So let's do it!*

1. **Gather your herb/s.** My favorite wild plants to use are evergreen needles (pine, cedar, fir, etc.), mugwort, St. John's wort, and yarrow. You can also use cultivated plants such as lavender, calendula, or rosemary. Do an internet search of best harvesting practices for that particular plant before you go out, especially if you're wildcrafting, to ensure proper re-growth, and always harvest sustainably (leaving at least half the plant population behind, **I usually leave 3/4ths or more**). Also, only choose plants that you know well and/or have done research on. If the plant is new to you or your skin, apply the oil to one small spot at first to be sure there is no reaction.

2. **Chop up your harvest** as finely as you can- the more surface area of the herb that comes in contact with the oil, the stronger your oil will be. So the finer you chop it up, the stronger your medicine. Blenders can be very useful for evergreen needles and hardier parts of a plant (bark, root) and for large quantities of plant matter; a knife and cutting board work great for softer leaves and flowers and for smaller quantities.
3. **Fill a glass jar** of whatever size fits your needs about 3/4ths of the way with your chopped-up herb.
4. Slowly **pour your carrier oil over it**. Fill almost to the very top.
5. **Take a spoon or chopstick and slowly move it around in the oil**, bringing as many air bubbles to the surface as you can. Over & over. Just keep coming back to it throughout the day. Once this is done, **fill oil to the very top**, so that it touches the lid when you put it on. No room for air. Air can cause mold. Check on your oil every few days as it steeps to stir up more bubbles and top it off if the oil level goes down. (If there is a layer or a few spots of mold when you open your oil- no problem. Just skim it off.)
6. **Put a plate under your jar**- the oil may spill over. (Yes, the oil level can either go up or down, or both, magically, when you're not looking).
7. **Label your oil**- the herb, what kind of oil used, and the date made.
8. **Let it steep** for one moon cycle or so-ish. I know people who do 2 weeks, and I know people who do 6 weeks. I do 4 weeks, or one full lunar cycle. This makes intuitive sense to me, and I've found it the perfect balance point between not-strong-enough-medicine (2 weeks) and over-saturated/given-to-mold (6 weeks). It's easy to remember when to strain it out if you make your oil on the new or full moon, but if that doesn't happen just mark your calendar to remember. (Many people put their steeping oils out in the sun for some or all of this

duration. I don't, again just to avoid the possible deleterious effects of the heat. I do like to put them out under the full moon though. I generally keep them in a cool, dark place during the steeping process).

*A month later...*

9. You may want a friend for the decanting (separating the herb from its liquid medium), especially if you made a large amount. Be aware that this may get messy. Either do it naked or with clothes that can get oily, and have paper towels nearby. **Get another jar of the same size, a metal strainer that fits over the mouth of the empty jar, and some muslin or cheesecloth or a piece of tea towel. Place the metal strainer over the mouth of the jar, and drape the material over the metal strainer.** You're creating a double layer of straining material here- the metal and the cloth that's draped over it.
10. **Slowly pour your herby oil into the cloth covered strainer**, which will strain out the plant material while the herb-infused oil drips into the container below. Keep pouring until your original jar is empty.
11. **Squeeze the oil out** of the herb mass left behind down into your jar. Throw away the straining cloth and the leftover oily herb pulp- they cannot be re-used.
12. You can keep your oil in this jar, or divide it into smaller ones to share! Either way, **label it**. Herb, carrier oil, date made (seriously, do this, otherwise you *will* come upon some forlorn jar deep in a cupboard one day and wonder **wtf** it is and if it's still useable).
13. Time for some **radical self love**. And please, give a loved one the gift of an Herbal Body Oil rubdown!

## Transform Your Oil Into Something Else

I prefer just the oil myself, but here are some simple recipes for creating other herbal products-

- To turn any herbal oil into a **salve** add one tablespoon of grated beeswax per one ounce of oil and heat on low, removing from heat as soon as beeswax melts.
- To turn it into a **body butter**, add one tablespoon melted grated beeswax and one tablespoon cocoa butter per ounce of oil.
- To turn it into a **salt scrub** for the shower (a quick and easy way to get your daily dose of full body oiling and Manual Lymphatic Drainage massage in) add twice as much coarse sea salt- or, really, any salt- as the amount of oil. So easy!

# A Partial List of Healing Herbs & Their Medicinal Actions



*Mugwort : Artemisia douglasiana*



*St. John's Wort : Hypericum perforatum*



*Yarrow: Achillea millefolium*

All Herbal Body Oils calm the nervous system. Oiling the body does that automatically, even if there are no herbs infused into the oil (seriously, if you're ever on the verge of a nervous breakdown and a stick of butter is the only fat-based product you've got, rub that baby in).

Remember that muscles relax and lymph moves whenever any kind of fat is conscientiously applied. The properties of the herbs listed below are pure bonuses.

Also know that the stronger the scent a plant has- like lavender or rosemary- the stronger the naturally occurring essential oils in that plant are, and the stronger the antimicrobial (and therefore preservative) properties will be.

- ▽ **Calendula** (flowers): A wonderful vulnerary (wound healer), softens and soothes the skin. Absolutely amazing at cooling inflammation.
- ▽ **Chickweed** (leaves & flowers): Incredibly cooling, soothing, and anti-inflammatory. Use for any type of skin inflammation (including sunburn) or rash.
- ▽ **Dandelion** (flowers): Eases tension and helps to break up and move out deep-seated emotional blockages within the body. Breaks through physical congestion and lethargy.
- ▽ **Evergreen Needles** (pine, cedar, redwood, fir, etc.): Amazing scent, anti-inflammatory (especially at the joints, great for arthritis), circulation stimulating (good for stagnancy or constantly feeling cold), contain compounds proven to fight cancer (breast massage!), antiseptic, antibacterial, antiviral, anti-fungal, anti-tumor.
- ▽ **Lavender** (leaves & flowers): Cooling, antiseptic, cleansing, relaxing, nourishing. Great for babies and children.
- ▽ **Mugwort** (leaves & flowers): Revered in Traditional Chinese Medicine for pulling things to the surface, for drawing out problems. Tones and regulates the female reproductive system. Spiritually, used as an aid to enhance dreaming and to open portals of extrasensory perception. Helps us remember who we are at a fundamental level, connecting us to our ancestors, the dreamtime, and the wild. Smells amazing.
- ▽ **Plantain** (leaves): Perfect for skin irritation, itches, and rashes. Used to relieve swelling, and to draw out splinters, thorns, and infections & inflammation from stings and bites. Can improve healing time for wounds. I love to combine it with chickweed. Antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, antitoxic.



- ▽ **Rose** (flowers): Nurtures and soothes the skin and the soul. Heals the heart. Total sensual delight. Use highly fragrant roses for best results.
- ▽ **Rosemary** (leaves & flowers): Known for its stimulating properties, brings circulation to the surface and enlivens the brain with its refreshing scent. Relieves stiff muscles and is helpful for arthritis and rheumatism. Combine with an evergreen for help with the latter. Great for cold weather.
- ▽ **St. John's Wort** (leaves & flowers): Deeply warming. Soothes sore muscles. Heals nerve damage, bruises, bumps, and aches. Great for back pain and sciatica. Relaxes the whole system to support and facilitate any physical healing work.
- ▽ **Violet** (leaves & flowers): Cooling, demulcent, toning. Has an affinity with the lymphatic system and is used as the base for many breast massage formulas.
- ▽ **Yarrow** (leaves & flowers): Soothes sore muscles and bruises, brings energy to areas of stagnation. Can be used to heal clean wounds. Anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial. Spiritually, used for protection and the strengthening of boundaries. Relieves tender breast and nipple tissue. Susan Weed writes, "Women have noted that consistent use of yarrow oil seems to prevent the growth of new blood vessels that cancerous tumors need for growth."

# Carrier Oils

I always use organic olive oil as my medium, because it's strongly preservative and feels wonderful on the skin. Olive oil is affordable and readily available, and most herbalists I know use it exclusively for making herb-infused oils. Any oil that can be bought will work for making Herbal Body Oils though. Buy what you can afford and what feels good.

Coconut oil is cooling, sesame oil is warming, but they both have strong scents that will contend with the scent of your herb/s. Other carrier oils that people have used include grapeseed oil, avocado oil, safflower oil, jojoba oil, almond oil, walnut oil, sunflower oil, peanut oil, sesame oil, and pumpkin seed oil.

“FAT AS THE FIRST WORD IN THE NAME OF MY BUSINESS HAS GOTTEN ME IN SOME INTERESTING DISCUSSIONS. PEOPLE ASK ME ABOUT THE NAME ALL THE TIME BECAUSE THEY CAN HARDLY BELIEVE I WOULD USE A WORD THAT HAS SUCH NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT IS USED WITHIN ‘BEAUTY CARE’. IN PART, I USED THE WORD ‘FAT’ TO BE PROVOCATIVE; I DON’T BELIEVE FAT IS A DIRTY WORD. BUT MOST OF THE FAT IN FAT AND THE MOON COMES FROM MY LOVE OF THE MATERIAL — OIL IS THE MEDIUM OF EXTERNAL HERBAL MEDICINE.

FAT, BOTH IN PLANTS AND ANIMALS, IS WHERE ENERGY IS STORED. THE RICHNESS WE TASTE IN THE FOOD, AND THE SUPPLENESS WE FEEL ON OUR SKIN AFTER A GOOD SLATHER OF BATH OIL, IS OUR BODY’S RECOGNITION OF PLEASURE IN THAT VITAL ENERGY. OIL FROM PLANTS, IN AND OF ITSELF, IS MEDICINAL. I FEEL HONORED AS A MEDICINE MAKER TO INDULGE IN THE PLAY OF FAT AND HERBS, ESPECIALLY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE MOON.”

- RACHEL BUDDE OF FAT AND THE MOON

## A note on shelf life...

Three factors play into how long an herb-infused oil will last:

1. The herb used. As noted above, plants with a stronger essential oil content (which you can ascertain simply by smelling them) have stronger antimicrobial properties, which act as a preservative and will make the oil last longer.

stronger scent = higher essential oil\* content of the plant = stronger antimicrobial properties = more preservative effect and longer shelf life

*(\*see [Bonus #1](#) for more on the difference between Herbal Body Oils and essential oils)*

2. The carrier oil used. I always use organic olive oil for its preservative qualities. Jojoba oil is the most preservative oil that I know of, but is also by far the most expensive.
3. How & where it's stored. Keep your oil in the coolest, darkest place you can in order to make it last as long as possible. I go through mine so quickly that they are never in danger of spoiling, so I just keep them by my bedside (and bathside and in my purse and in my car; they're like hair ties and chapstick 'round here).

**In general, an herb-infused oil will last 1 to 2 years. Use it up! It's cheap, easy, and fun to make more.**

# Unexpected Radical Feminist Conclusion

*“For those of you who struggle with guilt regarding self-care, answer this question: What greater gift can you give to those you love than your own wholeness?” — Shannon Tanner*

As I said in the intro, Herbal Body Oiling is not exclusive to one gender. But let's keep it real, 98% of the people who read this ebook are going to be women, and it is women who are going to share the practice of herbal self care with others and set the example of radiant self-love for their family and friends (at this moment in time, at least. Dudes, you're on deck).

Collectively, women are dropping the patriarchal narratives that have held us bound for millennia. As the book [The End of Men: And the Rise of Women](#) by Hanna Rosin makes clear, a new era is upon us. In the U.S., and many other countries, women are outperforming men both in education and the job market. The scales have officially tipped (even if we have a ways to go when it comes to income equality).

As we continue to overcome outdated stereotypes and cultural institutions that prescribed for us a very narrow place in society, our talents and abilities outside the home find more opportunity and greater recognition, and *society as a whole benefits*. It's been proven over and over that the more power women have, the better off everyone is.

But although women are occupying more places in the public sector, we aren't relinquishing the roles many of us fill as mothers or homemakers. In other words, the work load of many women and almost all working mothers is heavier now than it's ever been. We're bringing home the bacon and cooking it up for the kids before doing the dishes, packing lunches, driving carpool, and heading off to work.

***Now more than ever, self care is an absolute necessity, especially for women, no matter your work and whether or not you've procreated. No one else is going to take care of your body in the way that only you can.***

As we collectively achieve what our foremothers dreamed about and fought for, this increased access to economic opportunity and social status, we must consciously choose to bring the ancient sacrament of self care with us into this brave new world.

As we venture further and further out into a world that's been dominated by unbalanced masculine archetypes for centuries, we must also venture further and further into the vastness of our inner selves. We must intimately know the terrain of our own bodies and spirits if we wish to bring healthy, sustainable change to a world that is turning more and more in the direction of the empowered feminine.

***So go forth, you radically self-loving dreamers and doers! Take over the world, be part of the revolution, tend to your art and your career and your people. And while you're at it, nourish yourself with plants and touch and intention. The work you do from a place of centered self-assurance and embodied self-knowledge will radiate outward in waves of love and healing beyond what you can ever know.***

# First Steps Forward From Here

1. Find a plant ally, either from your garden, the woods, the list above, and/or a book. Go to what calls you, or just what's most readily available. Don't overthink it. Whatever first came to mind is right.
2. Spend time with it, get to know it, learn about its healing properties in whatever way works for you.
3. Identify the issues in your life that could be helped by Herbal Body Oiling (insomnia, back pain, anxiety, etc.). Be honest with yourself.
4. Figure out the best method for bringing Herbal Body Oiling into your life as part of a self care routine (full body oiling while watching a movie a few times a week, an evening bath ritual, a daily salt scrub rubdown in the shower, etc.)
5. Buy or make an oil with your herbal ally.
6. Commit to making self care a sacred ritual, and watch what unfolds.

*From here, the possibilities for healing and growth are endless!*



# Notes & Suggested Reading:

## Notes

1. [The Highly Sensitive Person: How To Thrive When the World Overwhelms You](#) by Dr. Elaine N. Aron, Ph.D.
2. Wikipedia entry for HSP
3. [The Family Herbal: A Guide to Living Life with Energy, Health, and Vitality](#) by Rosemary Gladstar
4. Wikipedia entry for Lymphatic system
5. [Breast Cancer? Breast Health! the Wise Woman Way](#) by Susan Weed

## Suggested Reading:

There are countless herb-related books out there, but I'm just going to recommend the few that have been influential in my life and my understanding of self care and simple home herbalism...

- [Herbal Rituals](#) by Judith Berger
- [Healing Wise](#) by Susan Weed
- [The Herbal Kitchen](#) by Kami McBride
- [Herbs for Health & Healing](#) by Kathi Keville
- [Plant Spirit Healing](#) by Pam Montgomery

# Thank You!



It was truly a joy to sit down and funnel my years of study and experimentation into this ebook, all the while envisioning a rising wave of herbal healers empowered to care for their own with medicinal plants.

Completing it took many months of writing, sitting down to review old class notes, cozying up with some long neglected books on my shelves, synthesizing my experiences, communicating with other herbalists, and catching up with the latest information online. I ask that you kindly respect my work by not sharing this ebook with others. You may, of course, give an overview or provide a few quotes. Please direct people to the page from which you learned about/purchased it instead.

You can find out more about me, the Mythic Medicinals line of Herbal Body Oils, and all sorts of other herb and wellness (and not) related things at my website, [www.AquarianDawn.com](http://www.AquarianDawn.com)

You can like my [Facebook page here](#) and follow me on [Instagram here](#).

Thank you to Vicky of [Grandmother's Medicine](#) for taking my boring, unadorned text and turning it into a beautiful ebook!

Endless appreciation to my girl Jennifer Laffranchini for taking the photograph that became the cover image.

Mad props to Sophia Rose of [La Abeja Herbs](#), Kelsey Barrett of [Heavy Nettle](#), Kari Jansen of [Poppy and Someday](#), Erin Rivera Merriman of [Active Culture Family](#), Ally Sands of [Aquarian Soul Designs](#), and Rachel Budde of [Fat and the Moon](#) for their deep wisdom and unique insights. There is such sweet satisfaction in connecting with other women of my generation who are carrying on the work of the elder herbalists who pioneered the herbal revival of the 60s and 70s and bringing it into the modern era. This is hallowed work, and I'm honored to be doing it alongside you all.

Thank you to Kiva Rose for being an inspiring herbalist and creating excitement around herbs through the gift of [Herbaria](#) and [Traditions in Western Herbalism Conference](#).

And thank you to my teachers, Kami McBride of [Living Awareness Institute](#) and Kathi Keville of the [American Herb Association](#). They taught me about Herbal Body Oils (and so much more) and forever altered the course of my life. Much of what was shared here I absorbed through my apprenticeships with them.

**Please feel free to share about this ebook or your own experiences with herb-infused oils using the hashtag #herbalbodyoiling on social media. No one's using that yet – it's all ours!**

# Bonus #1: What Is the Difference Between Herbal Body Oils, Essential Oils, and Flower Essences?

*(This was originally written as a blog post, and you can find that [here](#))*

## What Are Herbal Body Oils?

Herbal Body Oils are herbs chopped up and steeped in a carrier oil for 2-6 weeks (I do one moon cycle). The plant matter is then strained out, leaving behind just the oil, which has been infused with the medicinal properties of the herb. Commonly used carrier oils include olive oil, jojoba oil, grapeseed oil, coconut oil, avocado oil, and safflower oil. You could also use walnut oil, sunflower oil, peanut oil, sesame oil, pumpkin seed oil, or any other oil you can get your hands on.

Once made, an Herbal Body Oil is rubbed onto the skin (either at one problem spot or, as I prefer, all over the body for the ultimate in soothing self care) or poured into the bath. Oiling the body is the quickest way, besides mind-altering substances or heavy pharmaceuticals, to drop the nervous system into a state of relaxation. It nourishes the skin and nerves, as well as boosting immunity by keeping the lymphatic system hydrated and flowing (for lymphatic health, pay extra attention to massaging around the neck, armpits/breasts, and inner thighs).

Body Oiling is an ancient technique, revered in Ayurveda and honored in the Bible, for calming the body and bringing the element of ritual into everyday self care. I have found this method of getting herbs into my body to be the most effective as far as calming my nervous system, resetting my body/mind/spirit after a stressful day, and connecting with my child and other loved ones using touch to nourish and heal.

## What Are Essential Oils?

Essential Oils are super concentrated plant matter in liquid form. The usual method of extracting Essential Oils from the herb is steam distillation, where the plant is heated inside a still until the Essential Oil rises and is captured (to put it very, very simply & succinctly). They're called Essential Oils because the *essence* of the plant has been captured- its scent and some of its strongest medicinal properties.

Essential Oils are also called "Volatile Oils", as it is the volatile part of the plant- that which quickly evaporates into vapor- that has been extracted. They are really not oils in the sense that Herbal Body Oils are. Rubbing an Essential Oil on your skin will not leave it oily, as rubbing in an Herbal Body Oil will. If you drop some Essential Oil on your clothing it will not leave an oil stain but will, in fact, evaporate over time.

It's hard to make sense of what is true about Essential Oils in today's over-saturated marketplace, especially with network marketing companies empowering undereducated sales reps (who call themselves "aromatherapists" when they do not have the training to claim that title) to make exorbitant and dangerous claims. A recent Instagram hashtag search for #YoungLiving brought up advice from different reps to put lavender oil on your eyelashes to make them grow (**no**), in your baby's mouth to calm fussiness (**NO**), and in your pet's mouth if they have an infection (**NO!** Essential Oils can kill some pets, whose livers and kidneys cannot process them).

Essential Oils are very concentrated and super potent; they need to be used with mindful caution after much research. The safest way to use them is to dilute them in a carrier oil (an Herbal Body Oil works nicely). Experienced herbalists and aromatherapists rarely recommend using Essential Oils directly, or "neat", on the skin or taking them internally. Check out my teacher Kathi Keville's book [Aromatherapy: A Complete Guide to the Healing Art](#) for awesome information and best use guidelines from a woman who's been practicing herbalism and aromatherapy for 40+ years.

## What Are Flower Essences?

Flower Essences are a homeopathic (very diluted vibrational medicine) preparation of flowers steeped in water, after which they are strained and a small amount of alcohol is added to the water for its preservative effect. Once the

mother tincture, as the original flower-infused water & alcohol preparation is called, has been diluted and packaged in smaller bottles with dropper lids, the remedy is taken on the tongue or in water.

Invented by English homeopath Edward Bach in the 1930s, they are remedies meant to heal emotional and spiritual, rather than physical, ailments. Of course, tending to the emotional and spiritual life can have profound effects on the physical body. Each flower's healing properties is ascertained by meditating with the plant. Bach found, for example, that the essence of honeysuckle helps "Those who live much in the past, perhaps a time of great happiness, or memories of a lost friend, or ambitions which may not come true."

Unlike Herbal Body Oils or Essential Oils, there is no discernible scent or scientifically measurable medicinal benefit to Flower Essences. Aside from the brandy, they are tasteless, any trace of the flower's physical signature long since diluted out. But it is this very dilution that is said to make the strongest medicine in homeopathic preparations. The vibrational resonance of the plant is what is working with the body, and is said to do so on a deeper, more subtle level than other forms of herbal medicine.

So there we have it, a brief overview of three popular forms of herbal medicine. They each have different applications and are appropriate at different times for different reasons. Find what resonates with you, and share your experiences with your community (including me)!

### **Addition to the ebook -**

Many of the products that are sold as herbal body oils today are simply essential oils added to a carrier oil. I use the phrase to denote whole herbs infused into oil, but not everyone does. When looking at products, be sure to read the ingredients to know whether you are buying a whole-herb infused oil, or a carrier oil that has simply had a few drops of distilled essential oil added to it.



## Bonus #2: Oil Pulling

I've been so happy to see Oil Pulling getting a lot of attention recently. I was first introduced to this practice by herbalist [Rupam Henry](#) at the [Northern California Women's Herbal Symposium](#) in 2009, and it's been an important part of my life ever since.

Oil Pulling is the simple act of swishing oil around one's mouth first thing in the morning in order to pull out toxins through the gums. It is an ancient Ayurvedic technique dating back at least 3,000 years, used daily to maintain oral health and the health of the entire body system.

The gums are a direct gateway to the rest of the body- people with gum disease often develop degeneration of the internal organs as well. According to WebMD "A healthy mouth and healthy body go hand in hand. Good oral hygiene and oral health can improve your overall health, reducing the risk of serious disease and perhaps even preserving your memory in your golden years. The phrase 'healthy mouth, healthy you' really is true -- and backed by growing scientific evidence."

A truly clean (not just *feeling* clean with super minty toothpastes and mouthwashes) mouth has been linked to lowered risk of heart disease, better blood sugar balance, less memory loss in old age, and less risk of infection and inflammation in the body.

Oil pulling every morning is a simple and effective method for deep cleaning the mouth, pulling toxins not only out of the mouth but, through the gums, out of the rest of the body via the bloodstream as well. Unlike when I first started Oil Pulling, there is now a lot of scientific evidence and medical support for this practice.

Again from WebMD, "Unlike some so-called natural home remedies, it's not a practice that's based on pseudo-science. Recent studies show that oil pulling helps against gingivitis, plaque, and microorganisms that cause bad breath. How? 'Most microorganisms inhabiting the mouth consist of a single cell,' Jessica T. Emery, DMD says. 'Cells

are covered with a lipid, or fatty, membrane, which is the cell's skin. When these cells come into contact with oil, a fat, they naturally adhere to each other.’”

This adherence is the key, because after swishing with the oil you spit it out, and it takes the toxins along with it.

I’m one of those very lucky people blessed with good genetic dental health (and I’ve flossed once or twice a day since my teen years), so I don’t have any personal experience with Oil Pulling improving my dental health. I haven’t had one cavity since I began doing it, but then again I’ve only had one cavity in my life, and that developed during my pregnancy. What I can say for sure is that when I’m Oil Pulling consistently I don’t get sick. It just doesn’t happen. It’s like every morning the oil pulls out any harmful micro-organisms that might be lurking in my bloodstream.

I also notice the difference in my breath and the taste in my mouth every morning. This alone has convinced me that Oil Pulling is legit. After I do it, whatever morning funk I was tasting in my mouth is gone. Again, this isn’t like with toothpaste or a mouthwash where it simply covers it up; it is literally pulling it out.

## **So how do you do it?**

First thing in the morning, before brushing your teeth or eating or even drinking water, put about a tablespoon of oil in your mouth.

Traditionally in Ayurveda sesame oil is used, but I (and many others today) prefer coconut oil. Coconut oil also contains lauric acid, which has strong antimicrobial content, and is being studied for its ability to prevent tooth decay.

Swish it around for 20 minutes. If you find this challenging at first, start with 5 and work your way up. Make it a ritual—use this time to make your bed, journal, do yoga, pack lunches for the day, etc. A lot of experts and practitioners agree that 20 minutes seems to be the exact right amount of time to attain the desired effect, so do try for that.

Spit it out. You do not want to swallow and re-absorb the toxins! You’ll notice it’s more viscous than when you put it in, indicating the chemical transformation it went under as it absorbed the microorganisms in your mouth and mixed

with your saliva. For this reason I don't like to spit into the sink (plus you don't want all that oil gunking up your plumbing over time). I spit into a half paper towel and throw it away.

Swish your mouth out with water.

Drink a whole lot of water and start your day!