

they visited in the past). Once this individuality has been acknowledged, another more collective experience then follows. This experience is often determined by certain factors such as the person's age, religion, culture, etc. and is seated in the personal unconscious.

However, when archetypal qualities are experienced, we can speak of an unidentifiable experience. Unidentifiable in the sense that no direct relationship exists between the personal conscious and the personal unconscious. This experience stems from a deeper level; the collective unconscious. Once all the other levels have been completed and acknowledged, it can mean that this experience is collective.

The advantage of these tests is that they provide added insight into the dynamic effect of the fragrance of essential oils and aromatic extracts. Additionally, by being brought to the conscious level through their identification; the fragrance can now lead to a more permanent perception. Accordingly, the scent can now be remembered in different ways and thus can be therapeutically useful. I shall further illustrate this point a little later on.

The archetypes of plants and aromatic oils

When I am categorizing the archetypal characteristics of a plant and an essential oil or aromatic extract, I need to be able to associate freely so that I can make connections. This process is a combination of the observation of the plant in its habitat (Maessen, 2004), the emotional influence of the plant, its cultural history, its myths, and ultimately its physical effect. I draw upon many sources to assist with these connections such as the work of De Cleene and Lejeune (2003) for the traditional ritual uses of plants.

By mirroring and translating these aspects to physical processes, (Steiner, 1985; van Birgelen and de Vries-Ek, 1986; Rijntjes and Heijboer, 1989), one can arrive at a good understanding of the psychodynamic processes of the particular oil and its archetypal characteristics. Eventually, the more people that experience and describe the same emotion or experience with a particular plant essence, the closer we come to describing the archetype of the oil or plant itself. I have repeated this process with a large number of people and there is a surprising consistency in the experiences reported.

Working with the aromatherapy cards

As part of my work as a therapist and designer, I have developed a pack of thirty two aromatherapy cards that can be used to introduce clients in a different way to aromatherapy and its dynamics, as well as helping to create movement and flow in a therapeutic conversation. The cards contain practical information such as the description of the plant, its physical and psychological effect and an affirmation that is closely linked to the archetypal energy of the plant in question. For me, the affirmation is one of the most powerful aspects of the aromatherapy cards. For explanation of the guiding principles of the cards please see Figure 1.

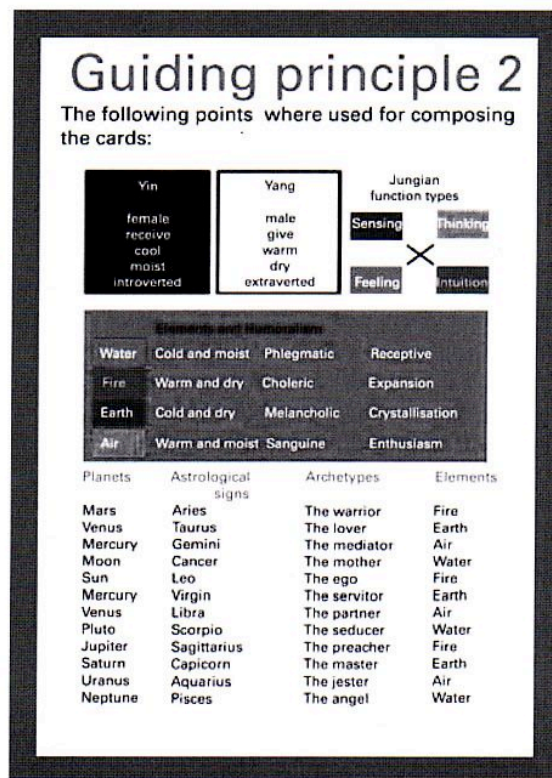


Figure 1. Guiding principles for the Aromatherapy Cards.

To give an example of a typical session, first of all I spread the cards face down in front of the client and encourage them to select a card 'at random', a card that they feel 'led' to choose, using their left hand (to better access the feminine, intuitive side). When they then turn over the card, I ask them to see if they recognize any aspect of the card as being personally relevant. This might be the words on the card, the image itself, the affirmation... whatever the client senses as being important to them. The information provided on the card stimulates the client to think about certain aspects of their personal development. This therapeutic process is then reinforced when the scent of the plant-specific essential oil/extract is offered. At this point, conversation becomes easier and therapeutic dialogue is facilitated. The healing process can now flow and the aroma now provides an anchor for the person as part of their personal development.

A typical example

Let us imagine that the individual has selected the card for *Citrus limon*, lemon (see Table 1 for a translation of the lemon aromatherapy card). The affirmation on the card is 'crystal clear' and the physical information on the card is concerned with cleansing and protection. Perhaps this individual has problems on a physical level with recurrent sore throats, or is a person who has difficulty in communicating, in speaking up for him/herself.

The archetype of lemon is the 'Mediator'. Like the Greek god Mercury, the archetypal energy of the Mediator travels at speed between 'the gods and the people' to bring their messages. Communication is his greatest skill.