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Study doubts aromatherapy's effects

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7th March, 2008

THE ARTICLE

A new study has cast doubts on the effects and benefits of aromatherapy. The research is from Ohio State University in the USA. It says that despite the popularity of the therapy around the world, there is very little scientific data to show that it works. Researchers found that many of the oils used in aromatherapy had little or no effect on their 56 volunteer test subjects. In some cases, plain water made the volunteers feel better than the oils. The team's leader, professor Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, suggested that people should question whether aromatherapy products do what manufacturers say they can do, especially for pain relief. She said: "I don't think [they] do harm....I just don't think that [these products] do good in the ways that they suggest they do." She cautioned people to "keep [this] in mind before spending a lot of money on [aromatherapy]."

Aromatherapy has been used for medicinal purposes for thousands of years, especially in India. It has become increasingly popular in the West and is enjoying a boom. Even Britain's Prince Charles, a keen believer in the therapy, persuaded the British government to offer it as part of the UK's health system. Professor Kiecolt-Glaser tried to test whether scents worked in the same way as drugs work. She looked at the two most common oils that are used in aromatherapy, lemon and lavender. Aromatherapists say lemon oil improves our mood, while lavender helps to reduce stress and make us sleep better. Her research concluded that neither smell had any positive impact on the body. One of the volunteers was surprised at the findings and said she would not stop buying the oils. "I know when I smell something like lavender, I feel more relaxed," she said.

WARM-UPS

1. SMELLS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about smells – nice and not nice, good and bad. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

casting doubts / benefits / popularity / therapy / oils / volunteers / pain relief / medicinal purposes / booms / health systems / lemon / stress / positive impact

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. OIL MEDICINE: You have a new job. You have to tell people what health benefits are contained in the aroma / scent of these oils. You know nothing about the oils but you get paid lots of money. With your partner(s), make up the things you will lie to people about. Change partners and share your ideas.

Oil	Main health benefits	Especially good for people with...
coconut		
sunflower		
olive		
grapefruit		
peppermint		
rose		
patchouli		
vanilla		

4. ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE: Talk with your partner(s) about these "alternative" medicines/therapies. Change partners and share your findings.

- aromatherapy
- homeopathy
- acupuncture
- Chinese medicine
- reiki
- Pilates
- hypnotherapy
- yoga
- massage therapy
- other _____

5. AROMATHERAPY: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'aromatherapy'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. QUICK ROLE PLAY: Students A **strongly** believe that smelling natural oils can cure our body of different problems; Students B **strongly** believe that smells cannot make us better. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. A US study has said aromatherapy has absolutely no benefits. | T / F |
| b. There is very little data available on the effects of aromatherapy. | T / F |
| c. A researcher suggested consumers should think before they oils. | T / F |
| d. The researcher said many of the oils actually harm the body. | T / F |
| e. Indian people began using aromatherapy a few decades ago. | T / F |
| f. Britain's Prince Charles is a fan of aromatherapy. | T / F |
| g. Lavender oil can help keep us awake for long periods of time. | T / F |
| h. A volunteer said she would continue to buy her favourite oils. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| 1. doubts | a. warned |
| 2. despite | b. smells / aromas |
| 3. cases | c. enthusiastic |
| 4. harm | d. uncertainties |
| 5. cautioned | e. healing |
| 6. medicinal | f. state of mind |
| 7. keen | g. regardless of |
| 8. scents | h. beneficial |
| 9. mood | i. damage |
| 10. positive | j. instances |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. A new study has cast | a. I feel more relaxed |
| 2. despite the popularity | b. show that it works |
| 3. very little scientific data to | c. popular in the West |
| 4. water made the volunteers feel | d. impact on the body |
| 5. She cautioned people to keep | e. doubts on the effects |
| 6. used for medicinal | f. believer in the therapy |
| 7. It has become increasingly | g. better than the oils |
| 8. a keen | h. this in mind |
| 9. neither smell had any positive | i. of the therapy |
| 10. when I smell something like lavender, | j. purposes |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A new study has _____ doubts on the effects and benefits of aromatherapy. The research is from Ohio State University in the USA. It says that _____ the popularity of the therapy around the world, there is very little scientific data to _____ that it works. Researchers found that many of the oils used in aromatherapy had _____ or no effect on their 56 volunteer test subjects. In some cases, plain water made the volunteers feel better than the oils. The team's leader, professor Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, suggested that people should _____ whether aromatherapy products do what manufacturers say they can do, especially for pain _____. She said: "I don't think [they] do harm...I just don't think that [these products] do good in the ways that they _____ they do." She cautioned people to "keep [this] in _____ before spending a lot of money on [aromatherapy]."

relief
despite
little
mind
cast
show
suggest
question

Aromatherapy has been used for medicinal _____ for thousands of years, especially in India. It has become increasingly _____ in the West and is enjoying a _____. Even Britain's Prince Charles, a _____ believer in the therapy, persuaded the British government to offer it as part of the UK's health system. Professor Kiecolt-Glaser tried to test whether _____ worked in the same way as drugs work. She looked at the two most common oils that are used in aromatherapy, lemon and lavender. Aromatherapists say lemon oil improves our _____, while lavender helps to _____ stress and make us sleep better. Her research concluded that neither smell had any positive impact on the body. One of the volunteers was surprised at the findings and said she would not stop _____ the oils. "I know when I smell something like lavender I feel more relaxed," she said.

mood
keen
popular
reduce
purposes
buying
scents
boom

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

A new study _____ effects and benefits of aromatherapy. The research is from Ohio State University in the USA. It says _____ the therapy around the world, there is very little scientific data to show that it works. Researchers found that many of the oils used in aromatherapy _____ their 56 volunteer test subjects. In some cases, plain water made the volunteers _____. The team's leader, professor Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, suggested that people should question whether aromatherapy products do _____ can do, especially for pain relief. She said: "I don't think [they] do harm....I just don't think that [these products] do good in the _____." She cautioned people to "keep [this] in mind before spending a lot of money on [aromatherapy]."

Aromatherapy has been _____ thousands of years, especially in India. It has become increasingly popular in the West _____. Even Britain's Prince Charles, a keen believer in the therapy, persuaded the British government _____ the UK's health system. Professor Kiecolt-Glaser tried to test whether scents _____ drugs work. She looked at the two most common oils that are used in aromatherapy, lemon and lavender. Aromatherapists say lemon oil improves our mood, while lavender helps to reduce stress _____. Her research concluded that neither smell had any positive impact on the body. One of the volunteers was _____ and said she would not stop buying the oils. "I know when I smell something like lavender, I feel more relaxed," she said.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'aroma' and 'therapy'.

aroma	therapy
--------------	----------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cast • despite • 56 • question • do good • mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purposes • boom • keen • scents • reduce • I know
--	--

STUDENT SMELLS SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about smells in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
 - b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'aromatherapy'?
 - c) Have you ever tried / Would you like to try aromatherapy?
 - d) How do you think aromatherapy works?
 - e) The study in the article that says aromatherapy doesn't really work. What do you think of this?
 - f) Do smells make you feel better?
 - g) What are your favourite smells?
 - h) Which is better, the smell of freshly baked bread or freshly brewed coffee?
 - i) Do you think smells and aromas have healing powers?
-

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Don't you think aromatherapy works if it has been used in India for thousands of years?
- c) What do you think of Prince Charles speaking up for aromatherapy?
- d) Do you think the oils do what the manufacturers say they do?
- e) Shopping malls use scents to make us feel happier and therefore shop more? What do you think about this?
- f) What do you think of "alternative" medicines and therapies?
- g) What aromas help you study English better?
- h) What smells from childhood can you remember?
- i) Did you like this discussion?

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

A new study has (1) _____ doubts on the effects and benefits of aromatherapy. The research is from Ohio State University in the USA. It says that (2) _____ the popularity of the therapy around the world, there is very little scientific data to show that it works. Researchers found that many of the oils used in aromatherapy had little or (3) _____ effect on their 56 volunteer test subjects. In some cases, plain water made the volunteers (4) _____ better than the oils. The team's leader, professor Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, suggested that people should question whether aromatherapy products do what manufacturers say they can do, especially (5) _____ pain relief. She said: "I don't think [they] do harm....I just don't think that [these products] do good in the ways that they suggest they do." She cautioned people to "keep [this] (6) _____ mind before spending a lot of money on [aromatherapy]."

Aromatherapy has been used for (7) _____ purposes for thousands of years, especially in India. It has become increasingly popular in the West and is enjoying a boom. Even Britain's Prince Charles, a keen believer (8) _____ the therapy, persuaded the British government to offer (9) _____ as part of the UK's health system. Professor Kiecolt-Glaser tried to test whether scents worked (10) _____ the same way as drugs work. She looked at the two most common oils that are used in aromatherapy, lemon and lavender. Aromatherapists say lemon oil improves our mood, while lavender helps to (11) _____ stress and make us sleep better. Her research concluded that neither smell had any positive impact on the body. One of the volunteers was surprised (12) _____ the findings and said she would not stop buying the oils. "I know when I smell something like lavender, I feel more relaxed," she said.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) caste | (b) casts | (c) caster | (d) cast |
| 2. | (a) despite | (b) spite | (c) in spite | (d) respite |
| 3. | (a) not | (b) no | (c) nothing | (d) none |
| 4. | (a) feeling | (b) felt | (c) feel | (d) feels |
| 5. | (a) by | (b) to | (c) for | (d) the |
| 6. | (a) under | (b) in | (c) on | (d) inside |
| 7. | (a) medicines | (b) medicate | (c) medic | (d) medicinal |
| 8. | (a) in | (b) on | (c) by | (d) with |
| 9. | (a) him | (b) it | (c) them | (d) they |
| 10. | (a) for | (b) as | (c) on | (d) in |
| 11. | (a) increase | (b) worsen | (c) reduce | (d) help |
| 12. | (a) at | (b) for | (c) to | (d) a lot |

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out about aromatherapy. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. AROMAS: Make a poster about your favourite aromas and/or your least liked smells. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. AROMATHERAPY: Write a magazine article about the effects of aromatherapy. Include imaginary interviews an aromatherapist and someone who tried aromatherapy without success.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down new words and expressions.

5. LETTER: Write a letter to professor Janice Kiecolt-Glaser. Ask her three questions about aromatherapy. Give her your thoughts on aromatherapy. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. T d. F e. F f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| 1. doubts | a. uncertainties |
| 2. despite | b. regardless of |
| 3. cases | c. instances |
| 4. harm | d. damage |
| 5. cautioned | e. warned |
| 6. medicinal | f. healing |
| 7. keen | g. enthusiastic |
| 8. scents | h. smells / aromas |
| 9. mood | i. state of mind |
| 10. positive | j. beneficial |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. A new study has cast | a. doubts on the effects |
| 2. despite the popularity | b. of the therapy |
| 3. very little scientific data to | c. show that it works |
| 4. water made the volunteers feel | d. better than the oils |
| 5. She cautioned people to keep | e. this in mind |
| 6. used for medicinal | f. purposes |
| 7. It has become increasingly | g. popular in the West |
| 8. a keen | h. believer in the therapy |
| 9. neither smell had any positive | i. impact on the body |
| 10. when I smell something like lavender, | j. I feel more relaxed |

GAP FILL:

Study doubts aromatherapy's effects

A new study has **cast** doubts on the effects and benefits of aromatherapy. The research is from Ohio State University in the USA. It says that **despite** the popularity of the therapy around the world, there is very little scientific data to **show** that it works. Researchers found that many of the oils used in aromatherapy had **little** or no effect on their 56 volunteer test subjects. In some cases, plain water made the volunteers feel better than the oils. The team's leader, professor Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, suggested that people should **question** whether aromatherapy products do what manufacturers say they can do, especially for pain **relief**. She said: "I don't think [they] do harm....I just don't think that [these products] do good in the ways that they **suggest** they do." She cautioned people to "keep [this] in **mind** before spending a lot of money on [aromatherapy]."

Aromatherapy has been used for medicinal **purposes** for thousands of years, especially in India. It has become increasingly **popular** in the West and is enjoying a **boom**. Even Britain's Prince Charles, a **keen** believer in the therapy, persuaded the British government to offer it as part of the UK's health system. Professor Kiecolt-Glaser tried to test whether **scents** worked in the same way as drugs work. She looked at the two most common oils that are used in aromatherapy, lemon and lavender. Aromatherapists say lemon oil improves our **mood**, while lavender helps to **reduce** stress and make us sleep better. Her research concluded that neither smell had any positive impact on the body. One of the volunteers was surprised at the findings and said she would not stop **buying** the oils. "I know when I smell something like lavender I feel more relaxed," she said.

LANGUAGE WORK

1 - d 2 - a 3 - b 4 - c 5 - c 6 - b 7 - d 8 - a 9 - b 10 - d 11 - c 12 - a