Complementary therapy services in mental health

Comfort

Relaxing

Stress relief

Calming

Information pack
Why is there a need for complementary therapies in Mental Health?

We know that service users often feel anxious and stressed, as well as dealing with problems such as loneliness and isolation. Such problems are widespread in mental health, adversely affecting the health and well being of our service users.

Offering service users a safe adjunct to conventional care is of paramount importance for patient choice.

Research shows that the use of Complementary Therapies can help reduce the symptoms associated with mental health problems, such as stress, anxiety, tension, agitation, and frustration (see pages 6 and 7).

The evidence suggests that Complementary Therapies have physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual benefits.

Health and wellbeing from a complementary medicine viewpoint, explains the human mind-body as comprising three independent levels: biochemical, structural and psycho-social, suggesting that they are all interrelated. Consequently an impact on one level affects the others. Therefore all aspects of a person are taken into consideration when viewing their mental health problem.

What we do?

The Complementary Therapy service works as part of the Physical Therapy Team. We focus on helping to alleviate service users stress, anxiety and stress related problems, through offering a range of therapeutic treatments. All treatments are carried out by fully qualified Professional Complementary Therapy Practitioners.

The Complementary Therapies we deliver are: Aromatherapy massage, Indian Head Massage, Reflexology, and Reflex hand massage.

Treatments can provide a deeply relaxing and safe adjunct to conventional care and can frequently assist in relieving some of the psychological effects associated with mental health problems.
**Benefits of complementary therapies in mental health**

- Reduce stress and anxiety levels
- Reduce agitation and related behavioural problems
- Provide relaxation and comfort
- Increase sleep
- Reduce pain and decrease muscle stiffness
- Encourage a general sense of balance, calm and well being

There is growing evidence that Complementary Therapies are being used with positive outcomes within mental health services throughout the UK and Internationally.

Many health professionals are developing the spectrum and variety of services offered to service users. These services are designed to complement and support the recovery process, maintain the individual’s wellbeing, and offer individuals choice.

Complementary therapies can be independently used to encourage relaxation, to provide pain relief and to support health promotion.

“Service user’s views and choices should be the driving force for innovation and access to complementary therapies and their voices should guide the ways in which complementary therapies are developed within mental health”.

[Image of a person with hands on head, looking stressed]
Benefits of Aromatherapy therapy in mental health

What is Aromatherapy?

The Internet Health Library (2006) (IHL) describes Aromatherapy as the systematic use of essential oils in holistic treatments to improve physical well being. They explain that essential oils, extracted from plants, possess distinctive therapeutic properties, which can be used to improve health and prevent disease.

According to the library these natural plant oils are applied in a variety of ways, including massage, baths, and inhalations.

It is known that scent has a special impact on living organisms. With scent travelling rapidly to the brain, it is shown to have a direct effect on the limbic system. It is then the limbic system which communicates with the autonomic nervous system. Consequently having a physiological and psychological effect on the body.

Aromatherapy essential oils such as *Lavandula angustifolia* (Lavender) and *Rosmarinus officinalis*, (Rosemary) have been investigated repeatedly for their effects on anxiety, and their specific chemical constituents, linalool and linalyl acetate, have been identified as having anti-panic or anti-anxiety actions.

Aromatherapy massage can:

- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Reduce agitation and related behavioural problems.
- Reduce motor behaviours and increase sleep
- Reduce pain, decrease muscle stiffness
- Promote relaxation and stimulate circulation.
- Can stimulate and illicit calm and relaxation.

*Essential oils are chosen specifically for the service users individual needs, for example Sweet Marjoram for stress and agitation or Rosemary to help with concentration and to uplift.*
**Reflexology and the benefits in mental health**

**What is Reflexology?**

The Princes Foundation for Integrated Health explain the theory of reflexology as being based on the principle that certain points on the feet and hands, called reflex points, correspond to various parts of the body and that by applying pressure to these points in a systematic way, a practitioner can help to release stress and anxiety and encourage the body’s natural healing processes.

Relaxation induced by reflexology techniques, causes the body’s autonomous nervous system to switch from the ‘fight or flight’ stress inducing mode to the parasympathetic recuperative and healing mode.

Reflexology is recognised as a well established, respected and effective therapy for conditions within mental health.

Reflexology is a means of maintaining homeostasis, aiding relaxation and triggering the body’s own innate self healing capacity.

The impact Complementary Therapies such as reflexology can have on people who are stressed, depressed, anxious or suffering from other mental health problems, can be profoundly positive.

Reflexology can relax the mind and body, thus counteracting stress.

**Reflexology can help with:**

- Agitation
- Anxiety and tension
- Migraine
- Stress-related conditions
- Insomnia
- Respiratory problems

**Although most reflexologists work over the entire foot.**

**Complementary Therapist can adapt treatments to mental health patients;**

**Particular attention is given to reflex areas associated with stress such as the solar plexus, hypothalamus, pituitary, and adrenal glands, as well as any other reflex point pertinent to physical symptoms experienced.**
Indian Head Massage is a simple, safe and highly beneficial therapy that can help to relax, soothe or invigorate an individual with mental health problems.

It is a treatment that involves the therapist using their hands to knead, rub and squeeze the body's soft tissues.

The treatment can include a sequence of movements to the upper back, neck, shoulders, upper arms, scalp, hair and face. Oils can be used such as coconut, mustard oil, almond oil, sesame oil, olive oil, and jasmine oil. Known as On The Spot Therapy because it can be carried out anyway and requires the minimal space.

Indian head massage can:

- Promote relaxation, as the massage helps to give a feeling of well being and calm.
- Help with mental fatigue and can improve concentration through increased blood circulation
- Relieve tension headaches
- Help with irritability and promote sleep as the service user feels more relaxed and calm
- Triggers the release of the chemical in the brain called endorphins, which create a feeling of contentment and happiness

It has been shown that people receiving Indian Head Massage have increased alpha waves in the brain. This is also a feature of people who are in a meditative state. This deep state of relaxation is associated with alleviated stress, improved breathing, lower blood cholesterol, better hormonal balance and increased immunity.
Aromatherapy/Massage/Reflexology

Statistics show 75% of people with severe Dementia experience behavioural symptoms such as restlessness, irritability and aggression. The Alzheimers society show recent scientific research has proven positive results with the use of essential oils on patients with Dementia, in particular *Melissa officinalis* (Melissa) and *Lavendula Angustifolia* (Lavender).

Janice et al (2008) randomised controlled trail reported electroencephalogram (EEG) computations showing that *Lavender* increased patterns consistent with drowsiness, and subjects reported greater relaxation. The study showed clear and reliable evidence that inhalation of *citrus limonum* (lemon) enhances positive mood and also boosts norepinephrine release, invoking catecholamine changes. (Janice, K Et.al.(2008). Olfactory influences on mood and autonomic endocrine, and immune function. *Journal of Psychoneuroendocrinology. Volume 33*)

The *Journal of Biological Chemistry, 2010* report on new findings showing the benefits of inhalation of the essential oil Jasmine, helping soothe, relieve anxiety and promote sleep, reporting to be a safe alternative to medications such a valium.

Sergeeva et al (2010) study found the chemical constituents contained in jasmine increased the GABA receptors, due to ester contents, in particular its chemical constituent benzyl acetate, and calming and sedative properties.

Several research trials report chemical constituent linalool and linalyl acetate contained in essential oils such as Lavender and Rosemary as playing a key role in the sedative action on the central nervous system (Cavanagh and Wilkinson (2002), Shaw et al (2007), Jager et.al (1992), Cal and Sztowska (2003), Heuberger, Redhammer and Buchbauer (2004).

Research shows that massage stimulates production of endorphins and decreases blood pressure, through its effect on the parasympathetic nervous system. They report on a study which revealed that massage treatment alone can be an effective treatment to help patients with mental health problems. (Bastard and Tiran (2006)

Results from this study suggest that aromatherapy-massage might be an effective intervention for postpartum mothers to improve physical and mental status and to facilitate mother-infant interaction. (J Midwifery Womens Health (2006). The Psychological Effects of Aromatherapy-Massage in Healthy Postpartum Mothers. Volume 51.)
Aromatherapy/Massage/Reflexology

A 30-minute back massage was given daily for a 5-day period to 52 hospitalized depressed and adjustment disorder children and adolescents. Results compared with control group showed massage subjects were less depressed and anxious and had lower saliva cortisol levels after the massage. In addition, nurses rated the subjects as being less anxious and more cooperative on the last day of the study, and nighttime sleep increased over this period. Finally, urinary cortisol and norepinephrine levels decreased, but only for the depressed subjects.


Women diagnosed with anorexia nervosa were given a massage twice per week for five weeks or standard treatment. Results revealed the massaged women reported lower stress and anxiety levels and showed lower cortisol levels immediately following the massage. Over the five-week treatment period, they also reported decreased body dissatisfaction on the Eating Disorder Inventory and showed increased dopamine and norepinephrine levels.

(Hart, S Et al (2001). Anorexia nervosa symptoms are reduced by massage therapy. *Eating Disorders, 9*, 289-299)

Nakamaru et al (2008) report on a study which used Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) to measure the somatopical relationship between cortical activity and sensory stimulation of reflex areas. Statistical analysis showed reflexogical stimulation of the foot reflex areas corresponding to the eye, shoulder, and small intestine activated not only the somatosensory areas corresponding to the foot, but also the somatosensory areas corresponding to the eye, shoulder, and small intestine or neighbouring body parts.

Natarajan et al (2004) study showed EEG activity to become less complex relative to normal state due to reflexology stimulation. Thus suggesting that when the subjects were under reflexlogic stimuli, functional processes active in the brain is less and the brain induces a relaxed state.

A study conducted on elderly patients showed that foot massage provided good circulation, relaxation and comfort.

(*Nurs Health Sci, 2002 Aug;4*).

Calming music and hand massage proved to alter the immediate environment of agitated nursing home residents to a calm structured surrounding (*Nurs Res. 2002 Sep-Oct;51*)