

Are you a Cave Dweller? How the Seasons affect us Physically and Emotionally and how essential oils may help

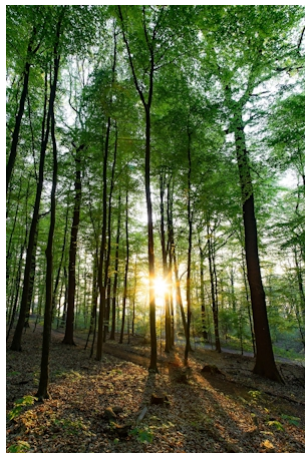
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By Penny Keay

I hope this title caught your eye and made you curious!

We are asked year around for help with sleeping and behavior disorders which may be due to the lack of proper rest.

The age doesn't seem to matter. We are asked for help for the young and old and everyone in between.



CAVE DWELLING QUESTION

To help clarify my question as to if you are a "Cave Dweller" and what this all has to do with aromatherapy and your health - you will have to read on.

To start, here is a simple questionnaire for you to see if you are a "Cave Dweller". Mind you, most of these questions are being directed to folks in the USA or Canada.

If you are reading this from around the world, you can use a world map and follow the longitudinal lines to see if they may apply to you.

Likewise, those in the southern hemisphere – turn the map upside down – just kidding. Simply relate how far you are from the Equator. Actually as you read the article, you will know if this applies to you.

Do you live in the Southern half of the USA, especially in areas where the daytime temperatures are over 100 degrees Fahrenheit for weeks on end?

Do you live in the Northern half of the USA or Canada where you only have daylight hours in the winter for less than 10 hours a day? On the other hand, the Temperatures are so cold you can't be outdoors without becoming a human Popsicle.

Do you get up and go to work in the dark and come home in the light? Or Get up and go to work in the dark and come home in the dark?

Do you spend hours each day indoors with artificial lights?

If you say "YES" to any of those questions then you are most likely a Cave Dweller. These are folks that typically don't spend much time outdoors in natural sunlight.

Or, when they do get to see the sun, it is late in the afternoon. This may be anyone that works in offices or goes to school. Many buildings or offices do not have windows and breaks most likely are not allowed outside the buildings.

As most of you know and have heard there is a world of folks that are now being diagnosed as deficient in Vitamin D.

Vitamin D is known as the Sunshine Vitamin. That's because the body, when the skin is exposed to sunlight, turns cholesterol and other fatty acids into – Vitamin D.

(Actually, Vitamin D is a hormone related chemical.)

Deficiency in Vitamin D is not a surprise really, when you consider the amount of time the majority of humans spend indoors or when they are outdoors use a lot of sunscreen.

The Sun is there to help us live. Any biologist will tell you that without the sun most life on earth would not exist. There are a few exceptions but the vast majority of life on earth needs the sun.

So not only does the sun help the body make Vitamin D it is also the triggering mechanism for your ability to fall asleep at night and get a goodnight's rest. Here the mechanism is not through your skin but through your eyes.

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The first bright sunlight you get early in the morning helps to release certain hormones that will help you to fall asleep about 14-16 hours later.

If you don't get that sunlight first thing in the morning but instead get it late in the afternoon, your circadian rhythm will be out of sync and your body won't know that it's supposed to go to sleep until – you got it- 14-16 hours later. Which is when, you know, about the time you are supposed to be getting up to GO to work!

Yikes! You are thinking insomnia. Well maybe you just need to reset things.

Okay, we've mentioned a couple things about the sun but the sun is also important to help the body convert many of our bodies working elements into a variety of hormones and other chemicals we need to support life.

The list is extremely long for all the chemical reactions that the body and brain react to each day. Nevertheless, break or make a 'cut' in the sequencing of any of these and soon your body may not be able to repair itself.

Your physical health will also be reflected in your mental and emotional states.

Did you ever notice how you feel on the weekend or when you have days off and you can go outside and enjoy the sun? How it warms your face, your heart or soul? How you feel better, happier on days when you can be in the sun?

How about how you feel when it is cloudy every day or you are stuck inside? How down you feel? (Not really a true depression but just sad.)

The above is why 'Cave Dwellers' are more apt to have problems with S.A.D. Seasonal Affective Disorder.

When you don't see the sun or it is limited, non-existent or at the wrong time of the day, your sleeping and mental health will be affected.

Now is the time – between the extreme seasons for you to start a new routine to get things back in the correct rhythm before the extremes happen.

Well, not everyone can have an outdoor job but everyone can usually find some time each day, preferably first thing in the morning to get some sun.

You don't need a lot but you should try to get 15-20 minutes each day. Mind you, this is only a small amount and some folks may need more each day. Everyone is different and you need to figure your level of exposure to the sun.

Just a small amount of sunshine each day helps to make the hormones and chemicals you need to be healthier.

So how can Aromatherapy and essential oils help?

First, you need to be able to fall asleep so you can wake up feeling refreshed.

There are any number of essential oils that when diffused 15 minutes to 1 hour prior to bed will help you get over the first hurdle, that of falling asleep.

We usually suggest Lavender. Lavender normally works for every age, babies, children, adults and seniors. Occasionally though we may need to add other relaxing and sedative type essential oils. Roman Chamomile would be the next essential oil of choice that works well for babies and children. It works for many adults too.

With adults and seniors, we have found that adding Bergamot and Ylang-Ylang may be the additions to the Lavender that will put you to sleep and keep you asleep until morning.

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Now if these don't work don't despair there are still a few others to try. Valerian is the most potent of all the essential oils used to help induce sleepiness but as many of you can attest, it is not one of the most pleasant smelling essential oils.

In fact, personally I think it stinks. HOWEVER, it does work. Al and I have to be careful when he is pouring this as we do get very sleepy ourselves. He tries to rebottle this at the end of day so we don't have to feel so tired when we still have lots to do.

We have several essential oil blends that use varying amounts of Valerian to help make the use more tolerable. Please Check out Bedtime Bliss Synergy or Sweet Dreams Synergy.

Both of these have Valerian in them. Bedtime Bliss is milder in scent while Sweet Dreams has more valerian.

Are You Affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder aka S.A.D.?

Now our "Cave Dwellers" often feel more sadness, blue, down and even mildly depressed. Essential oils can certainly help you feel more alert and energetic. They can help you to focus and concentrate.

S.A.D. is very common in areas when folks spend a lot of time indoors, and where they are forced to stay in due to extreme heat or extreme cold. Of course getting some sunlight – sunshine will help but adding a few essential oils to your living spaces will help you be alert when you need to be and then fall asleep when you want to.

Not getting proper sleep can disrupt your eating and exercise regimens. Pretty soon your whole immune system becomes more susceptible to viruses and other germs.

Here again essential oils can help your immune system stay strong. Diffusing any essential oil will have varying degrees of antimicrobial action against bacterial and viruses. Choosing the best one for your immediate needs will vary.

We have many synergy blends that can be used for multiple actions. Realize that although a "name" of a blend is suggestive of the health or emotional application it may be used for, most of our synergy blends can be used for 'other' situations or health concerns.

Don't be afraid to diffuse any of our blends, use them in the bath, or shower. Mix them in lotions or carrier oils. Wear them on jewelry.

So although we don't list a blend for S.A.D. or Cave Dweller, know that you can probably use any blend that are relaxing or calming, uplifting or energizing or for concentration. This may not only help you do just that but they can also help you with promoting your health by building your immune system and building your defenses against viruses and other germs.

Being exposed to essential oils on a daily or nightly basis will help you to get the rest you need, help you with your mental energies and fight off 'nasties' to help you keep healthy.

Therefore, whether you are a Cave Dweller or not there are many essential oils that can help you have a healthier and happier life.

Use them often and use them properly and safely. Most of all "Enjoy them" as nature intended them to be used for our health. Remember, sunshine was needed to grow them too. The plants know how important sunshine is – now we as humans need to remember that too!

Please quit being afraid of being out in the sun. Although many folks have been scared to think that ANY exposure to sunlight will cause skin cancer the body actually needs sunlight and sunshine to ward off MANY more types of cancers. Moreover, many other physical and mental illnesses respond favorably to proper amounts of sunlight.

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Moderation is what is necessary for a healthy body and mental state not total abstinence. Think about it for a minute. Most of the World has daylight for more than 14 hours a day – which are our 'waking' hours. If man was not supposed to be exposed to sunlight why do we have this much sunlight each day?

Al and I, living in northern Minnesota and working indoors all day, do not get enough sunlight during the winter months. Therefore, although we try hard to get the early morning sun to keep our circadian rhythm on track Al still needs more sun (Vitamin D).

We discovered several years ago that his body has a very hard time converting sunlight to Vitamin D. When he doesn't get enough sun, or Vitamin D his eczema flares up, and he is more susceptible to upper respiratory infections. We do take nutritional supplements to help.

If you or your loved one feels, they are dealing with S.A.D. or depression they should consult with their health care provider and use aromatherapy and essential oils as a complimentary health modality while dealing with S.A.D. or depression.

Please do not self-diagnose these conditions. Seek medical attention and use essential oils as an additional help.

Blends to Try

Please let me Sleep Blend

Lavender – 10 drops

Valerian – 3 drops

Rose or Rose Blend – 1 drop

Blend these together in a glass bottle. Use ONE or Two drops only on a cotton ball or on Terra Cotta Disc. Place it near the head of your bed about 30 minutes BEFORE you are ready to head off to sleep. Do your normal bedtime routine to relax.

Because this is a strong smelling blend, you will want to remove the cotton ball or Terra Cotta Disc and place them in a glass jar for use the next night.

You can use additional essential oils that help to induce a peaceful and restful sleep along with this blend but you may not need more.

I'm not S.A.D. any more Blend

Coriander – 10 drops

Ylang-Ylang – 4 drops

Lemon – 3 drops

Neroli – 3 drops

Blend these essential oils together in a glass bottle. Then diffuse in any diffuser or use in a Personal inhaler.

Great to keep by your desk and use in a Terra Cotta Disc diffuser especially on those days when you may not get out to see the sun!