

Did you know....

Humans can distinguish more than 10,000 different smells (odorants), which are detected by specialized olfactory receptor neurons lining the nose.... It is thought that there are hundreds of different olfactory receptors, each encoded by a different gene and each recognizing different odorants. Each of the hundreds of receptors is encoded by a specific gene. If your DNA is missing a gene or if the gene is damaged, it can cause you to be unable to detect a certain smell. For example, some people have no sense for the smell of camphor.

Scratch-and-sniff

Scratch and sniff stickers are one of technology that has always sounded like such a good idea, but has never really reached its full potential or caught on; except in children's books and the occasional perfume strip in a magazine. It has also been tried in movie houses and other forums. Why shouldn't nasal information be just as important as [audio](#) and [visual](#) information? Perhaps because **no one has figured out how to encode language in smells.**

Below are two scents; one of the scents has a hint as to what it may be; while the other does not.

Before you scratch n' sniff ask yourself...

Does smell trigger my memory?

Does having an expectation about

what the scent is make a difference

about how I approach the experience?



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The Power of Smell as a Trigger to Traumatic Memory

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The experience of smell plays a very powerful role on our emotions and actions. We all have experienced the smell of food that marks a cultural tradition, or that salt smell that tells you that you are near the ocean.

Scents generate reactions in the frontal lobe and the hypothalamus that influence behaviors and personalities. Aromachology and Aromatherapy, studying the effects the sense of smell has on the general emotional state of the individual, have emerged as viable modalities for treatment for a variety of somatic complaints.

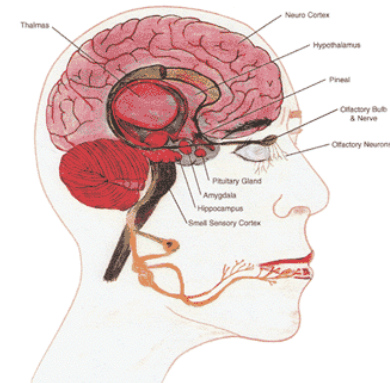
In cases where an aroma (the smell of gun powder, alcohol, petrol, for example) might be directly associated with trauma, the importance may seem obvious. Even when a scent has an indirect relationship (the cologne worn by a perpetrator of sexual abuse or the smell of pine where the abuse took place), the association of trauma and scent might be emblazoned on a child's psyche, even if the child has no words for it.

Especially in children how they perceive an aroma or react to one is also quite complex. Like adults, children react to smells immediately and independently of thought. They will experience a wholly affective response, (pure emotion). Think about your reaction to a overpowering foul odor. Often your reaction comes even before you have time to process the cause or where it is coming from. Yet the processing of smell is not simply a result of chemical recognition, but influenced by context, and based on time, cognition and emotion.

We intuitively know that pleasant smells elicit strong positive reactions and memories in children; while other odors have a negative effect on them--making a child avoid and shy away from the odor or situation.

For traumatized children and adolescents, the cognizance of smell/scent can be a key to more successful treatment.

Limbic System Smell and Emotional Responses



How does the sense of smell work?
What causes a smell?

Smell is a very direct sense. In order for you to smell something, **molecules** from that thing have to make it to your nose. Everything you smell, therefore, is giving off molecules -- whether it is bread in the bakery, onions, perfume, a piece of fruit or whatever. Those molecules are generally light, **volatile** (easy to evaporate) chemicals that float through the air into your nose. A piece of steel has no smell because nothing evaporates from it -- steel is a non-volatile solid