



Podcast Session #7

The Power of Essential Oils

With Jodi Cohen

Jodi Cohen speaks with Dr. Christine Schaffner about her journey to founding Vibrant Blue Oils. Originally suffering with exhaustion and anxiety, Jodi turned to essential oils once she saw the power it had on her and her family.

00:06 Dr. Christine Schaffner: Welcome to the Spectrum of Health podcast. My name is Dr. Christine Schaffner and today I'm talking with my friend, Jodi Cohen. Jodi is the founder of Vibrant Blue Oils. Vibrant Blue Oils is an essential oil company and Jodi founded this company based on her own journey and her own health struggles. There was a time where she was struggling with anxiety and exhaustion. Her kids were also not sleeping and were struggling with attention and focus issues. So today, we'll talk about her journey. To be honest, this conversation was recorded a little time ago and since then, Jodi and I have created a class called Reboot Your Brain. We did a beta test last year and we're offering it this year too, we're really combining both of our skills and our knowledge to share with you what we feel people are up against these days with the rise in neurological illness and also share help for people who don't have a neurological illness, but are just struggling with brain fog, fatigue, insomnia, or poor health. I hope you enjoy our conversation today and if you want to learn more about our class, Reboot Your Brain, info will be in the show notes. Thank you.

01:22 DS: Welcome everyone. I'm here today with my dear friend, Jodi Cohen. Jodi is the author of a new book 'Healing with Essential Oils' and owner of Vibrant Blue Oils. Welcome, Jodi.

01:35 Jodi Cohen: Thank you so much for having me, Christine. It's such an honor.

01:38 DS: Well, we have a lot of interesting topics to share with our audience. Before we dive in to some really unique perspectives about the autonomic nervous system, the vagus nerve, the lymphatic system and melatonin, I would love to hear your story Jodi. I think you have a powerful story to share

with our audience and I would love to hear, how did you get into essential oils?

02:02 JC: I think the right tool shows up in your life when you're ready for it. Oils came into my life at my rock bottom. My husband, who is bipolar, needed to be hospitalized, and the minute he was hospitalized and I knew that he was safe and it wasn't my job to keep him safe, I fell apart. We have little kids and he was unpredictable and it was kind of like living in triage for 10 years. It was exhausting, but you could never relax because oh my gosh, something might happen when you're relaxing.

02:42 JC: I used to wake up full of energy. But then I couldn't get out of bed. I'm a really extroverted person. I couldn't answer the phone. I could barely function, but my kids were little and they were obviously my priorities. So my day went like, forcing myself to get up. I would make them breakfast. I would pack their lunches. I would get them to school. I would come home. I would crawl into bed and that was about all I could do.

03:09 JC: And after my second was born, I had tried post-partum medication and it really made me crazy. I didn't realize at the time, that if your methylation cycle is impaired and you're not detoxifying efficiently, then you can recirculate some of those medicines and it can make you, like in my case, kind of psychotic. I was fortunate enough, I have a very, very close friend who's in the psychiatry field and I called her during a psychotic moment and she said, "are you taking something?" And I said, "yes." And she said, "you can't take drugs. You have to stop that right away."

03:44 JC: So I wasn't going to go down the pharmaceutical route and I was trying my best. I had a background in nutrition so I was trying to work with herbs and food and it wasn't hurting, but it was more like treading water and not necessarily swimming to shore. So one day some very good friends came by with a huge box of different essential oils and said, "these are going to help you." And I said, "great. How do I use them?" And they said, "no. You're very smart and you're very intuitive. You will figure it out." Then they literally left and fortunately, they left the box next to me on the couch because I wasn't really getting off the couch those days. I sat there for a second and kind of thought, "you know, I know how to test people for adrenal supplements. I do this in my practice. I can probably test and see if there's anything in this box that's going to help me." I was a little skeptical. I tested them...and as you know, when you test people sometimes you get a very, very strong yes, sometimes you get a mild yes. This was a very strong yes.

04:48 JC: So that actually was encouraging. It was the first time that I had felt optimistic in a while and I thought, "oh okay, this is interesting. Which one is going to help me?" I drilled down and normally I get one or two supplements, but I got five oils and I thought, "now, this is very weird. Five, what do I do with five?" And then I had the idea to combine them and to test how many drops of each I needed. I did that and having never worked with oils before, I did it in my kitchen. But then I combined them and put them on my adrenals, which as you know, are on the low back. They fit on top of the kidneys which are about the size of a fist. So if you make a fist then line the bottom of the fist up with your very bottom rib, the twelfth rib and then feel on top, that's where your adrenals are.

05:36 JC: So I put them on my adrenals and I felt different immediately. It was really that sensation, if you've ever been caught in an undertow and every time you try to swim to shore, you kind of get pulled further out and you maybe have that moment of like "am I going to die? Is this the end?" And then somehow a magical wave carries you to shore and you step on the sand and you take that first breath, it's like "oh my God. I'm alive. It's going to be okay." That was really how I felt. It was so powerful and I firmly thought, "I'm a lifelong runner and I hadn't been able to run." Nothing felt fun to me. It was like "my gosh, I could go running." I felt like running for the first time in a month and so I went running and I felt like myself and then I came back and I thought, "Oh my gosh..."

06:25 JC: That was exciting and I kept using that oil throughout the day and it really felt like a lifeline. Then it occurred to me that I could make other oils to help with my insomnia and to help with other things, as I knew I was kind of stuck in that chronic sympathetic state. So I made a bunch of my own little potions just to get me through the time and within about two or three weeks, I started to really feel like myself again and actually answer the phone and agreed to meet people. Everyone wanted to know what I did and then they wanted to try it and then they started having similar successes with themselves and their clients. At that point, I had enough energy to actually go online and look at oils and look at how other people were using them, and there were two things that really surprised me.

07:19 JC: The first was that no one was really looking at oils the way that I was. The second was how complicated they made it and I realized, if I had started with research, I never would have felt qualified to even play with them, I would have assumed I needed to read 20 books first. So it was really a

blessing of just being so desperate and so open that I was able to be guided by intuition.

07:52 DS: I really appreciate you sharing your story and I think it's a very powerful perspective. Maybe when we're having our rock bottom moments, we don't always see the gift and how this was a really huge gift on the other side. When we have a personal experience in our body, it definitely increases our understanding and perspective on a level that we're able to communicate more deeply. I really appreciate you sharing that Jody, and as a result, you've created these wonderful oils that we've been using in practice successfully. One of the areas where we've connected a lot is with our love of understanding the autonomic nervous system. With the patients I see, they're in a chronically often sympathetic state or there's just dysregulation in what we call our autonomic nervous system. For those of you who don't know what your autonomic nervous system is, it's how we regulate and respond to stress.

08:49 DS: There's a master nerve or cranial nerve called the vagus nerve and the vagus nerve is a regulator between our parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems and it has a profound effect on our heart, and our digestion. A lot of times when people start to get sick, they have symptoms in those areas. I would love to hear some of your inspirations around the vagus nerve and what your blends are geared towards.

09:21 JC: Thank you. Yes, I'm a yoga practitioner and for years would hear my yoga instructors talk about the vagus nerve and how yogic breathing can trigger a response and kind of turn off the sympathetic fight or flight state and turn on the parasympathetic rest and digest state. Early in my nutritional journey, I read all of Mark Hyman's books, and he talks about this quite a bit. I

started on the background as an investigative journalist and so I was doing all this research. I found that you could actually trigger the vagus nerve.

10:01 JC: There were electrical pacemaker-like devices that were kind of inserted in the vagus nerve to stimulate the vagal response and they were working really well, especially for epilepsy and depression. I thought, "oh gosh that's really interesting" because I knew that several of the oils were quite stimulatory. I started playing with the idea of, "I wonder if you could stimulate the vagus nerve with an oil?" Because oils are fat soluble and they permeate through the skin and the vagus ganglia is most accessible right behind our earlobe on that mastoid bone. So one of the things that I do very differently with essential oils is that I combine them into blends.

10:42 JC: Single oils are amazing but sometimes when you combine blends, you get a super stimulatory and super easily assimilated oil, like the blend that we use for stimulating the vagus nerve, which is a combination of clove, which is highly stimulatory and carries a very healing constituent called eugenol, and lime, which has the smallest particles of any essential oil.

11:12 JC: It kind of takes the best of both oils and allows you to stimulate the vagus nerve very quickly. Once that is stimulated it triggers and activates the downstream parasympathetic response. That includes slowing the heart rate down, stimulating the saliva in the mouth and the release of hydrochloric acid in the stomach as well as the release of enzymes in the pancreas and bile, to break down your fats in the gallbladder. The whole vitality of the digestive system, peristalsis, bowel movements are really controlled by the parasympathetic state.

11:56 JC: So if you're in stress, your food is going to sit longer in the small intestine and then it rancidifies and putrifies and some of the bad bugs start to creep in and suddenly you might have SIBO or irritable bowel or all these other things. One of the most important things you can do if you start to heal and return your body back to balance or homeostasis as we call it in our world, is to put your rhythm back in balance. Your sleep rhythm and your parasympathetic digestive rhythm so that everything is kind of naturally released when it is supposed to. It's not just the food that you're eating, it's your ability to digest, absorb and assimilate that food.

12:41 JC: So you really want to make sure that the food is being properly broken down with the appropriate nutrients and enzymes and is moving through the system with the right timing so that it doesn't get delayed and cause problems.

12:56 DS: There's so many great points in what you've said. I love your parasympathetic oil. I have often used it in a patient visit and people feel that immediate calm feeling that we're all longing for. I often am talking about the vagus nerve with a lot of my patients and it's of course, this regulation between stress and relaxation. We also look at it from the lens of why? What are we up against right now? And that's something that I know you've written about in your book on toxicity with the vagus nerve. We're often educating patients on what are neurotoxins and then some other issues that are affecting the vagus nerve. I'd love to hear some of your thoughts about vagus nerve toxicity and some tools that you are exploring with that right now?

13:52 JC: Well to credit you, I learned most of this from you. What's interesting is that Christine, and then our other friend Elisa Song, who works with autistic children...in a matter of two days both told me the parasympathetic oil was really helping their autistic children in class. I'm like, "that's so interesting." So of course being the researcher that I am, I'm like, "I wonder why it is" and it turns out that if you have toxins, toxins can be heavy metals, or infections, these drain from the brain when you're sleeping, they drain down the side of the neck through the lymphatic system in kind of a hydraulic system. But imagine, if you've ever stayed at a hotel during the height of the busy season, good luck getting on the elevator, right?

14:39 JC: How ever long you wait, it comes up, it goes down, it's always full. That's like toxins trying to leave your body. They need that transport system to get out and if they don't get out, then they linger and they're lingering in your neck right near the vagus nerve. Nerves are very receptive to toxins, especially heavy metals. They can get into that vagus nerve and harm it, like in the case of vaccine damage. Children who express symptoms of autism, that signalling is impaired and so oftentimes, the stimming and the movements that you see these autistic children doing are kind of manual attempts to override the impaired vagal system.

15:21 JC: It's not that they don't want to be well-behaved or kind, it's that they're dysregulated and so they're trying to get back into balance. I use the example, most of us have had an experience where we're driving and someone cuts us off and we're shocked at how angry we are, the four letter word that pops out of our mouths. There are other times where we've had a really good morning, our stomach is full, we're not hungry, we're not in a hurry,

someone cuts us off and we're like, "oh yeah, that's fine." Doesn't bother us at all.

15:49 JC: The difference is kind of how regulated we are and so when these kids have this parasympathetic blend applied and the vagus nerve is able to regulate and so are the downstream organs, of course they're better able to listen and to sit still and to not act out because they're in balance. So to get back to the toxins, it can be a number of things. It can be heavy metals that are trying to drain. It can be toxins from mouth wash. It can be viruses or bugs in the brain.

16:25 DS: That's great and I love your analogies, Jodi. You always make these pretty complicated biological effects very tangible with your analogy so I think that's great. And I think we can start talking about this whole notion of the glymphatic system as we're talking about this. This is something that I've been really excited about learning about over the last few years and it just really makes everything make sense with our patients. Why are people having such a hard time cognitively? Why are people's vagus nerves so compromised? We have this whole system that functions at night called the glymphatic system and it's a waste clearing system for our brain. When we sleep, our brain, our neurons actually shrink about 60% in size in order to make room for the movement of lymph through the brain, and that's why it's called the glymphatic system. It's a lymph system that is dependent on what we call glial cells, a specific type of glial called an astrocyte.

17:31 DS: So the astrocytes kind of surround the neurons and regulate the flow of lymph that flows along the arteries, goes along the neuron, bringing nutrients and oxygen to the neurons and then removing metabolic waste and

also all of these toxins that we're talking about, so heavy metals, viruses, parasites, all of these things that can be in our brain. Then it drains along the venous system at night and again, this is a very powerful system that only works optimally at night when we sleep, and so sleep has this increased level of importance when we realize we don't only feel better when we sleep, but our brain actually detoxifies at bed time. We can definitely see all the ways that we're having dysregulated sleep in modern times with all of these exposures to blue light in our electronics, chronic stress, etc and the impact that can have.

18:35 DS: There's a lot of things that disrupt the production of melatonin and one thought that we've been really excited about too is that melatonin not only helps us sleep as it helps our circadian rhythm, but it actually also has a very powerful effect in detoxifying in the brain. So we're getting the opportunity for our glymphatic system to work more but also, there are studies that show that melatonin in the brain helps to clear heavy metals, viruses and parasites. There's a great study on that so we're using a lot of liposomal melatonin in the office.

19:13 DS: Liposomal melatonin can help get a little bit better absorbed into the brain. But I know Jodi, you've been having some other thoughts about how to increase melatonin production with oils. I would love to hear your thoughts about that.

19:26 JC: You brought up so many great points. It's funny, I always knew. One of the things that I think we both do, is we try to help people prioritize, because they come to us and everything is wrong. It's all going wrong at once and they want to jump in and try everything, but it's a little bit like, I have two

kids and they have lots of friends that are always over at the house. There are often times when there are six to eight kids trying to tell me something at the same time and guess what, I can't hear any of them when they're all talking at once. I have to pause and make them take turns, that's kind of how I feel about the body. If you're telling it to do a million things at once, it kinda gets overwhelmed but when people would come to me, even before I knew why, I would always start with sleep because it seems to me that if you weren't sleeping, you weren't able to heal. So that was the most important element and the details of the glymphatic system really helped put that in perspective. So thank you for that, that was terrific.

20:22 JC: And now what I do is sleep. There are different reasons that people have trouble falling asleep versus staying asleep. So for example, often when they're having trouble falling asleep, like you're exhausted but your mind won't shut up and you're thinking about all the things you need to do the next day, that is kind of a hormonal battle that's waging in your body. So we know that the sleep hormone is melatonin that's released by a pineal gland. The stress hormone that is its counterpart is cortisol and that's released by the adrenal glands and they work in tandem and have an antagonistic relationship, right?

21:00 JC: For example, in the morning, to wake you up, your cortisol should be high and your melatonin should be low and then as the day wears on, your cortisol level should drop, and melatonin should be released in response to darkness, to kind of help you go to sleep. But guess what happens, if you're in a stressed out state and your mind is going crazy, your cortisol levels are going to stay high. And if you think of a teeter-totter, one side needs to go down for the other side to go up.

21:26 JC: Which makes sense, right? Because cortisol is one of your survival hormones, if there is a wild animal chasing you and you're falling asleep, you're going to die. So your body is designed to prioritize the stress hormone cortisol over the sleep hormone melatonin. This is one of the reasons it's important to have your room dark at night, because when you have darkness, you're actually triggering your pineal gland to release melatonin. You can also use oils to help flip that switch and naturally trigger the pineal gland to release melatonin, so that it kind of gently forces cortisol levels down. I do want to say something about some remedies, because I know that there are a lot of ways that you can attempt to get melatonin into your system. Liposomal, I believe, is one of the most effective ways because it's fat based and the brain is fat, and I think that there's a synergy there with why the oils work, because they're also fat soluble.

22:27 JC: You said in one talk something that I love. Something about how the art of medicine is not just the remedy, but finding the remedy that actually gets into the system. I thought that was so beautiful and eloquent and I think that's why I don't think essential oils are magic bullets. I don't think that they cure everything but I think that it is a remedy that kind of triggers a specific pathway that could help in a really unique way when combined with other dietary and lifestyle changes. I think that it is able to access the body uniquely.

23:08 DS: Absolutely. And through your own experience Jodi, you saw the power of essential oils. On that thought, I think it's one thing to know what a patient needs, but then a whole other thing to know how to individualize that treatment and again, get the remedies to where they need to go. I think that

again as you shared, it's the art of medicine and the art of really individualizing the treatment that works for a patient. If it was ever one thing people probably wouldn't be as sick or need as many strategies to get well, but I think essential oils provide such a beautiful way to balance the body, and they're working. Maybe you can speak a little bit more, about all the routes that we can use essential oils.

23:53 DS: So we can use them through inhalation, we can use some topically. Some people like to use them orally but there's different routes of delivery and depending on really what our body needs, one route may work better for us, at certain times. So I don't know if you want to share maybe some other pearls you've learned with working with people in your oils, what you've seen be effective.

24:18 JC: Now that's actually a terrific point and I think one of the challenges, especially when you're working with children who are living in this perfect storm of toxins, and one of the side effects of that is that their digestion is often impaired. They have leaky gut, they have constipation, they have all these ailments that make it really challenging to assimilate nutrients through the front door to the body, the digestive tract. That's one of the things that I think is wonderful about oils...I was taking this functional neurology class and one of the things that said that I loved is with the brain, there's always a back door.

24:56 JC: So if one way of getting there isn't working, you try the back door. I think the same is true for the body and I think that those back doors are the olfactory system, which goes through the nasal passage way directly into the limbic system, the amygdala, which is the master controller of the brain and

the stress response and then also through topical assimilation. It immediately gets into our system, both sending an energetic message and I actually believe a physical message. I think essential oils send not just an energy message. I think they're hybrids, I think that they work on both phases, I think they work on many levels, including the physical levels.

25:40 JC: It's really exciting and that's the thing, especially for autistic children or anyone that's kind of on the spectrum, sometimes, when one function is a little diminished, others are heightened, and so they're often very receptive to oils and oils can shift them very quickly.

26:01 DS: I see a patient population where they've been sick for a long time, they've seen 20 to 30 doctors and there's a lot of what we call 'treatment fatigue,' and just swallowing tinctures and pills can be hard, and I think that essential oils are a really positive and beautiful and uplifting way to support the body. I know patients really enjoy using them and it's powerful medicine. I think these are all great points Jodi.

26:37 DS: I would love to talk a little bit specifically. I know that you have a really wonderful line of blends, the Vibrant Blue Oil line. we've talked about the parasympathetic blend, and then I really love in practice, your lymph blend. And you also came up with, recently, a vessel expansion blend. I think these are two blends that are really relevant to our discussion today. Can you share the formulas and why they work and a little bit more about them?

27:09 JC: I think that one of the amazing things about oils is that it's a kind of alchemy. When you're combining two blends, it's a little bit like if you've ever gone to a really interesting restaurant and they come up with these things

and you read it on the menu and you think, "that looks interesting. I wonder how that's going to taste." And then it's magnificent and you never would have thought that the combination could do that. I think that there's something about plants. Obviously, all modern medicine, mostly came from plants. It's just been modified slightly and patented. They have tremendous healing potentials and when you combine them, just like combining the clove that's stimulatory and the lime that's easily accessible, you can do a lot of things to open up pathways in the body. For example, the expansion of energy.

28:00 JC: We can even feel that in certain foods, like for anyone who's gone on any kind of vegetarian plant-based diet for a couple of weeks. Suddenly, they have more energy, things are flowing. Plants are incredibly powerful. I think milk thistle is one of the most powerful detoxifiers ever and it's hard to find something that's chemically created that can match it. If you have a clear intention, like opening up the hydraulic system in the neck or getting the lymphs to move through the body, you can use oils to get to that end and the way we do them, it's a combination of things.

28:36 JC: I actually start with intuition because it's never done me wrong, so I kind of get very clear on what I want the blend to do and then I get very clear on what I think should go in there and then I do the research. I go back and I say, "well, gosh, I wonder why that would help" and then I test it. Like the vessel expansion blend that we're talking about, oftentimes, when people have any kind of head injury or concussion or whiplash, you were the one who said the drainage system from the brain out of the body is like a hydraulic system, right? And if there's a bottle neck...we live in Seattle where the freeways are constantly under construction.

29:15 JC: In theory, there is a four-lane freeway, but three of the lanes are closed. Guess what? There's going to be traffic, but when they stop doing construction and all the lanes are open, the cars move. That's kind of like the ability to drain toxins out of the system. If your vein is constricted or not necessarily aligned so that there is proper flow, that's going to impede the ability of the toxins to flow out and drain out of the brain. Just like construction ends and suddenly all four lanes are open, if you can make that pathway bigger, more can flow through there. So that's what we're really trying to do, and then also giving it the impetus to move.

29:54 DS: That's great. Again, another great analogy. These are great visuals that people can use to really tap into how they feel and so there is a sense when you have congestion or lymphatic stagnation, once you are aware of what that looks physically, you can start to tap into feeling where you might have stagnation in your body. I love these analogies, Jodi.

30:19 JC: Thank you.

30:19 DS: You're gifted at that. Jodi, you just wrote a book. It's an amazing book, "Healing With Essential Oils." Can you tell our audience where they can find your book, and a little bit more about the information in your book?

30:40 JC: Yes, you can find it on Amazon and actually, I'm super excited, Chelsea Green Publishers just picked it up so they will be bringing it to other small book stores.

30:49 DS: Woo hoo.

30:49 JC: The easiest way to find it is, I included my maiden name in the title, Jodi Sternoff Cohen, and you can look it up that way. The reason I wrote the book, I've mentioned, I think I counted, I think I have over 500 books that are either related to nutrition or oils. There are so many companies that offer really high quality products. They're all good but they're like, "oh my gosh, what do I do with them?" What I was really hoping to do is help people not just look at the symptom but look at the underlying cause that's contributing to a symptom, and that can really be distilled down to five main things.

31:32 JC: Inflammation, which is also in the brain and the body. Core digestion, core detoxification, poor sleep, a lot of stress, blood sugar dysregulation and then circulation issues, and if you can address the underlying issue, you often can fix the problem. For example, the common patient that I see will be a woman in her 40s who says, "I'm fat, forgetful and fatigued." So basically, they go in the pantry, they can't remember why they went there, they may be 10 pounds heavier than they're used to being and they're tired all the time.

32:09 JC: Well, if you just fix this...oh, they're not sleeping, they're insomniacs. So suddenly if they're sleeping at night, they wake up, they're not as tired, they have the energy so they're not necessarily craving carbohydrates or caffeine, so they lose the weight and they're getting the sleep so their brain is draining so they're not as forgetful. So sometimes just fixing sleep, fixes everything. I'm a busy mom. I've definitely thrown money down the toilet on things that didn't work. I don't want people to have to buy 15 things when they only need one. I'd rather fix the one thing and see if that trickles down to fix other things.

32:46 DS: Your book is really, really well written and I think it's just a great way for people to gain more knowledge and insight. You have some really wonderful tips and tools to address things, depending on what's going on with each person. I think it's a very, very useful book and it's very scientifically-based too, I think you did a great job with that. I'm so happy for you and I'm so glad that we have this book to share with our patients and our audience, so awesome job, Jodi.

33:16 JC: Thank you. It's a book I wish I had when I got started because I couldn't really find the information I was looking for.

33:25 DS: So amazing how that inspires creativity. Right?

33:29 JC: Exactly.

33:30 DS: Well, Jodi, this was so fun. It's always a joy speaking with you and I know that our audience got a ton of very useful information. If people want to learn more about you, where can they find you?

33:44 JC: You can find me at www.VibrantBlueOils. Feel free to sign up, we have a free help guide that goes into more detail on a lot of this information and will help to kind of guide you if you're interested in getting started with oils.

34:08 DS: Well great, we'll put that in our show notes as well and again, thank you so much for your time. It's always a joy.

34:16 JC: Thank you so much.

34:20 DS: Thank you for listening to the Spectrum of Health podcast. I'm Dr. Christine Schaffner and again, I hope you enjoyed our conversation today with Jodi Cohen. If you resonated with this information and you want to learn more, please check out our class, Reboot Your Brain. There is more information and videos available to describe what we will be teaching, and this is a class that you can do at your own pace. It's about an eight-week class and we try to update it continually and offer you the information I'm learning and practice, as well as the information Jodi is learning through her own experience and with her essential oil background. Again, thank you so much for listening and we hope to see you soon.