

# Trust through the olfactory fragrance of lavender

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People's trust in others increases after smelling the olfactory fragrance of lavender. Leiden psychologists Roberta Sellaro and Lorenza Colzato published their findings in *Frontiers in Psychology*.

## Aromatherapy

Sellaro and her fellow researchers were the first to investigate whether the calming olfactory fragrance of lavender has a positive effect on mutual [trust](#). Aromatherapists already know that [aromatic compounds](#) can alter one's mood, cognitive, psychological or physical wellbeing. "Mutual trust is the social glue of society", says Sellaro. "Interpersonal trust is an essential element for social co-operation bargaining and negotiation."

## Trust Game

To determine the effect of fragrances, the researchers exposed one group of test persons to the aroma of lavender, while a second group to the aroma of peppermint. Subsequently, the test persons played a trust game, a task that is often used to measure how much one test person trusts the other. A trustor was given 5 euros and was free to decide how much of that [money](#) he would give to a trustee in each round of the game. The trustor would then receive extra money, but only if the trustee gave him enough money in return. The money transferred to the trustee by the trustor served as an indicator of mutual trust.

## Inexpensive way to increase trust

Test persons gave significantly more money to the other person when they were exposed to the aroma of lavender, compared to persons who had been exposed to the fragrance of peppermint.

Sellaro: "Our results might have various serious implications for a broad range of situations in which interpersonal trust is an essential element. Smelling the aroma of lavender may help a seller to establish more easily a trusting negotiation to sell a car, or in a grocery store it may induce consumers to spend more money buying products. The smell of [lavender](#) may also be helpful in sport psychology to enhance trust and build team spirit, for example in the case of team games such as soccer and volleyball."

**More information:** A question of scent: lavender aroma promotes interpersonal trust, *Frontiers in Psychology* , [DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01486](#)

Provided by Frontiers

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