

Mind & Soul Medicine: Plants to Dispel Anxiety & Depression Women's Herb Conference 2017

*Kintsukuroi: Mend broken things with gold,
making what has been broken even more
valuable than before
(Japanese tradition)*



Depression & Anxiety on the Rise - reality or better recognition? *A few random statistics*

- From 1980 to 1986, the suicide rate for African-American males ages 15-19 increased more than 100 percent. While that was over 20 years ago researchers have continued to watch that trend continue
- Four out of every five young people that contemplate or attempt suicide exhibit clear warning signs.
- One out of every five young people and one out of every four college students or adults suffers from some form of diagnosable mental illness. Deeply disturbing is the fact that suicide is the third leading cause of death among people ages 15-24, and the second leading cause of death in college students ages 20-24.
- Approximately 80% of people experiencing depression are not currently receiving any treatment. 80-90% of people who live with a serious mental illness are unemployed.

Depression is certainly not new - but seemingly not as common. *A brief overview of 'Western' perspectives*

- Mesopotamia in 2000 BC – those who were depressed were *thought to be possessed by spirits*
- *Melancholia* symptoms were described as persistent sleeplessness, lack of appetite and depressed mood, along with occasional aggressive behavior, sometimes leading to suicide. Cicero argued that melancholia was “violent rage, fear and grief” Greeks & Romans felt melancholia had both spiritual & physical causes - *Used bathing, gymnastics, special diets, poppy extract and donkey's milk as remedies*
- Middle (Dark) ages – *Back to considering mental aggravations as demonic possession*
- Renaissance period - *Baths, humane treatment even music therapy*
- Early 20th century, the symptoms of depression were consistent with melancholia
- 1930's research by Dr. Weston Price of isolated and very healthy groups of traditional peoples around the world *noted the consistent good nature and cheerful spirits of these communities taken as a whole – despite significant hardships and tragedies*
- In 1950's /60's another type of depression began emerging “atypical depression” characterized by *milder depressed mood, poor energy increased sleepiness, appetite and weight gain and higher incidence of anxiety*

Role of herbalists in working with mental and emotional states

“When the heart is not healthy the entire system is diseased” -Prophet Muhammad

- Traditional medicines did not separate the body–mind–spirit. Herbs heal and balance the body–mind–spirit.
- Our role in caring and giving attention. Healthy connections are healing in all directions!
- Resiliency! Nutrition and herbs build our resiliency and adaptability to stress and trauma
- **Important (critical) to know our limitations.** As herbalists we are generally not trained to work with other mind and emotions. Important to be able to refer out.

Traditional Medicine Energetics and the Mind

Ayurveda

Vatta: instability, safety, fear, fragile, losing touch with reality

Pita: perfectionist (over control, OCD), shame, anger, obsessions, addictions (serious depression suicidal)

Kapha: depression, stagnation

Tissues States

Heat, Excitation, Irritation, Stimulation, Fire (*sedatives*)

Cold Depression, lack of fire (*pungent aromatics*)

Stagnation, Topor, Stuck (*alteratives*)
 Tension Wind, Constriction (*relaxants, spasmolytics*)

Traditional Chinese Medicine

- » Mental signs of **Kidney channel disorders** include **anxiety; fear in the pit of the stomach**; sadness; mental and physical fatigue; antisocial tendencies; and laziness.
- » **Intense or prolonged fear depletes the Kidney energy** . Often **chronic anxiety** may induce Xu (Deficiency) and then Fire within the Kidney.) Overwork, parenting, simple aging, and a sedentary or excessively indulgent lifestyle all contribute significantly to Kidney Xu (Deficiency).

Nourishing the Mind-Body

Good nutrition gives the body the *building blocks* needed to deal with stress. Many unbalanced extreme mental states – even schizophrenia - can be treated through food and nutrition.

Herbs soothe, aid in stress *adaption*, *build* bodily function (as well as offer nutrients themselves).

- The mind & emotions require nutrients to function
- Stress requires increased nutrients and increased support for microbiome!
- Mental symptoms arise out of deficiencies
- Resiliency arises out good nutrition & microbiome
- Healthy fats/ lipids nourish and are needed by nerves and brain.
- Omega 3's *needed to cool inflammation: CLO / fish oils, also pastured eggs, dairy fat & animal fats*
- Vit. B12 & B *deficiency creates mental symptoms*
- Vit. A & D: *stress depletes Vit A Vit D* and depression. Resiliency better with adequate Vitamins A & D
- Protein: *enough but not too much*
- Microbiome: effects mood (*refer to class discussion on interaction of our microbiome and emotions*)

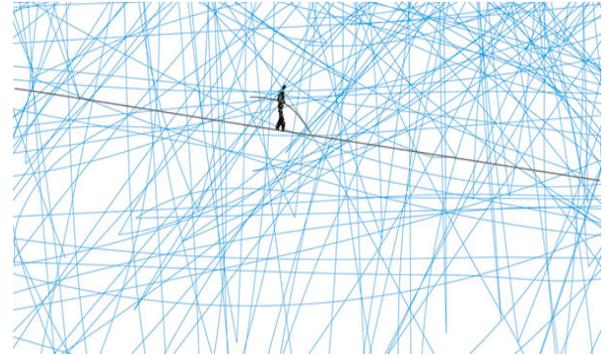
Consider also energetics of food

- Grounding food for anxiety (Vatta pacifying diet in Ayurveda)
- Stimulating & detoxifying food for depression

Anxiety

“To stay with that shakiness to stay with a broken heart, with a rumbling stomach, with the feeling of hopelessness and wanting to get revenge—that is the path of true awakening. Sticking with that uncertainty, getting the knack of relaxing in the midst of chaos, learning not to panic—this is the spiritual path.”

-Pema Chödrön, “Stay with Your Broken Heart”



- Considered a spirit disturbance -also considered a hyper-emotional reaction
- A protective safety response - related to fear and an inability to responds to feelings of fear
- A sympathetic system stress response, *neither fight nor flight - but freeze*
- a generalized state of fear; the result of too much energy that a personality doesn't knowhow to deal with it.
- Affects kidneys, urinary tract, adrenals (the seat of fear)
- Usually based on an emotional pattern = or imprint
- One aspect of anxiety is reflective of added energies in the system and changes in which one feels powerless. Focusing on some person or project at hand as well as defending oneself in some way usually diminishes or cures anxiety.
- One person's anxiety trigger is another's excitement!
- Nature and security The nature of nature is instability

They help calm a hyper response, allowing for perspective.

But often anxiety triggers are best addressed through body, emotion and spirit-based therapies, which includes flower essences for the herbalist, but also many others.

Anxiety can be therapeutic as it can at times arise out the added energies that flower essence brings to the surface of consciousness, but the psyche doesn't yet have the structures to deal with.

A few Mind-Body Therapies to consider recommend for anxiety

- Being in Nature – Forest Bathing – being by in water, ocean
- Sesame Oil Massage – whole body (also soles of feet, palms. 3rd eye & crown of head) Ayurveda oil dripping therapy
- Pranayama: Breathing practices
 - “Bringing awareness to the stomach through the breath is one ancient method overcome fear. One can place their hand on stomach region to aid this and breath in and out through nose slowly and steadily focus ones awareness on the expansion and contraction of the stomach. This simple breathing exercise has a deeply calming effect. There are numerous other pranayama exercises that aid the mind to engage with fearful states.”
- EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques); Tapping techniques - EMDR
- Exercise: particularly Tai-Chi, swimming & meditative breathing-based yoga
- Mindfulness practice – guided imagery
- Wide gaze perception - *with thanks to Kathleen Maier for teaching this practice*
 - With arms outstretched directly to each side and eyes looking ahead, become aware of your periphery. When you can see your fingers relax in that wide gaze awareness. This puts us in parasympathetic system response- excellent for anxiety
- Expressing emotions *-particularly good for pitta constitutions*
- Laughter “**Always laugh when you can, It is cheap medicine**” Lord Byron

Anxiety: Specific Herb Indications

Consider where one feels the anxiety. If symptoms are experienced in the...

Head (brain): Wood Betony, Skullcap (*helps focus, brings heat down; ‘stimulating meetings’ also helpful with anger & those who don’t like being touched*)

Head & Gut (i.e. tension headache & intestinal ailments): Blue Vervain

Head, neck, shoulders, skeletal: Black Cohosh, Blue Vervain, wood betony

Heart: Hawthorn, Reishi, Motherwort (*relaxing & cooling, palpitations ‘hot anxious’ PMS digestive issues too*)

Liver*: Schisandra **Most in US are not consciously aware of liver, but many cultures are still are.*

Lung: Lobelia (relaxing) consider unresolved grief

Solar plexus: Catnip, St John’s Wort, Lemon Balm

Adrenals (Kidneys lower back): Borage, Schisandra, Tulsi

Gut: Chamomile (*use with complicated cases that are not clear; give Chamomile or other nervines for a couple weeks, then the issues becomes clearer*)

Muscles: Skullcap, also magnesium

Nerve pain: St John’s Wort

Consider how one feels the anxiety. Anxiety experienced as...

Panic with loss of speech: Calamus

Panic with fear of danger*: Anemone, Angelica, Linden (*helps to engender a sense of safety*) **explore feeling of safety in life*

Panic with fainting: Lavender, Blue Vervain

Long term stress, Frazzled: Milky Oat (*tonic*), Rhodiola (*with depression*), Reishi, Spikenard

Ungrounded, Frenzy: Wood Betony, Reishi

Restlessness: Linden, Hawthorn

Hyper-vigilance: Blue Vervain, Milky Oat Buggleweed (*'hunted animal'*)

Internalizes emotions: Catnip

Externalizes emotions: Chamomile

Self doubt: Gentian

Shyness: Violet, Kava

Confusion, cloudy thinking: Bacopa, Tulsi, Calamus

Overwhelm of senses: Ghost Pipe, Skullcap

Over-thinking/ cyclical thoughts: Wood Betony, Amla, Passionflower (possible night formula:
Valerian, Passionflower, Ashwaganda)

Social anxiety: Kava, California Poppy

Stagnation /depression, fatigue: Saint John's Wort, Rhodiola, aromatic herbs in general

Tension: Agrimony, Blue Vervain, Lemon Balm

Over-stimulated: Anemone (Pulsitilla, *'wind flower'* - particularly for Vata)

Over-sensitive, over-reactive: Anemone, Skullcap

Lack of relaxation, tension: Damiana, Lemon balm, Lavender, Valerian, Blue Vervain

Lack of groundedness, 'feeling from another planet': Wood betony

Lack of safety: Saint John's Wort, Angelica, Usnea

Burning the candle at both ends: Ashwaganda, Eleuthero

Lack of strength/calmness; fatigue: Rhodiola, Reishi, Eleuthero

Uncontrolled weepiness, anxiety of grieving: Milky Oats

Insomnia, wired & tired: Ashwaganda, Reishi, Chamomile, Rhodiola (*morning*)

Prolonged stress, depression, trauma, fatigue, insomnia: Eluethero

Mania, Panic Disorder*: Rauwolfia **Note: Rauwolfia needs to be used with understanding & caution.*

There is MUCH more to consider with panic disorder

Trauma PTSD* a feeling that something was taken: Eleuthero Adaptogenic Formula: Panax, Glycyrrhiza
Eleutherococcus, Avena. Equal parts, 1-2 tsp 3-6 times daily (Jillian Stansbury) **Note: There is
MUCH more to consider with PTSD but this formula can be supportive*

Grief

"To not grieve is a violence to the Divine and our own hearts and especially to the dead. If we do not grieve what we miss, we are not praising what we love. We are not praising the life we have been given in order to love. If we do not praise whom we miss, we are ourselves in some way dead. So grief and praise make us alive."

--Martin Prechtel, The Smell of Rain on Dust

- Mourning a loss is healthy & essential for health. A great deal of depression and anxiety can be due to stagnant, uncompleted grief
- Community recognition of personal loss & ceremony is part of moving through grief
- TCM: lung & large intestine: time to clear our lungs (and colon)
- Honoring our ancestors with our grief - Fall is a traditional time of release & grieving (Day of the Dead in Mexico & Rosh Hashanah (Hebrew New Year))
- Time of Grief for great loss: *at least* a year

Hawthorn, Rose, Mimosa: the 'Grief Relief formula' from David Winston: available from Herbalist & Alchemist -- also rose glycerite * can add a drop of rose essential oil

Eluethero: for the effects of prolonged stress, depression, trauma, fatigue, insomnia, chemotherapy

Milky oats: specific for grief & sadness. An aspect of depression 'I am sad I have not grieved'; Anxiety of Grief; uncontrolled weepiness

Onion Flower Essence: For releasing sadness; helps all phases and aspects of the grieving process.

Note: There are many other essences support grief process

Depression

A sad soul can kill you quicker than a germ. -John Steinbeck

Depression – specific Herb Indications

Mental fog: Tulsi (*cannabis fog*), Calamus, Bacopa, Rosemary (*stagnant depression*)

Stagnation /depression, fatigue: St. John's Wort, Rhodiola, Rosemary, Lavender

Heartache/ lack of engagement with life: Rose, Hawthorn, Mimosa

Sadness with irritability: Mimosa

Lack of joy: Mimosa, Rose, Reishi, Borage, lavender

Lack of strength/calmness; fatigue: Rhodiola, Reishi, Eleuthero

Lack of congeniality enjoyment of people; tension around people Sumac leaves (fall: yellow green leaves)
Spice bush leaves, Mimosa

'Cut to the bone', loss of sense of protection: Yarrow, Angelica, Usnea

Repressed anger, stagnant heaviness: Bupleurum (*warning for those who 'stuff emotions' - will cause anger to rise*)

Nothing ever right: Bacopa

S.A.D.: Saint John's Wort, Lemon Balm, rhodiola, Evening Primrose leaf & flower Calendula ("worse when the sun went behind a cloud.")

G.I, related depression [Winston]: Culver's root, Wormwood, Saffron or St. John's Wort, Evening Primrose leaf & flower (*Oenothera biennis*) (*The Eclectic indications for this herb are depression associated with chronic dyspepsia, vomiting and frequent desire to urinate. The person is apathetic, gloomy and despondent. This is one of the best herbs for GI-related depression. [Winston]*)

Uncontrolled weepiness, anxiety of grieving: Milky Oats

Sense of self, remembering who you are: Rosemary. St John's Wort

Post partum depression: Lemon Balm

Artistic funk & melancholy: Red Root

Insomnia, wired & tired: Ashwaganda, Reishi, Chamomile, Rhodiola (*morning*)

Prolonged stress, depression, trauma, fatigue, insomnia: Eleuthero

Abusive relationships petty tyrants black cloud: Black Cohosh with *caution*

Painful spasmodic diseases: Cannabis, Ghost Pipe

Apathy lack of engagement with life: Rose, Borage, Poke (diluted dose homeopathic)

Solar herbs for happiness! Bringing light to dark places in the psyche and body

Aromatics for Depression: Strong smelling plants, rich in volatile oils, are dispersive & pungent. They release tension (stress), spark movement & clarity mind. Most aromatics are also nervines!

Use regularly to prevent & treat depressive states, SAD & 'funk'. ★Valerian ★Wormwood

★Anis Hyssop ★Catnip ★Calamus ★Chamomile ★Coffee ★Damiana ★Lavender ★Linden ★Tulsi

★Lemon Balm ★Peppermint ★Rhodiola ★Pine ★Rose ★Rosemary ★Skullcap ★Sweet leaf (Monarda)

Bi-Polar Disorder, Schizophrenia & disorders with altered brain function Use herbs with caution!

- Saint John's Wort & Rhodiola can trigger mania
- Kava & Valerian can trigger depression
- Lithium water (use with caution when on lithium med!)
- Drop doses of simples are best for herbs
- Flower essences helpful but caution in releasing trauma
- **Best to use tonic nervine herbs:** Milky oats, Linden Chamomile, Dandelion Rt (*specific for bipolar, mapped tongue, neck tension -Wood*)
- **Adaptogens:** Schizandra, Eleuthero –*Jillian Stansbury*
- A possible simple calming & grounding flower essence for schizophrenia is lavender and red cedar.
- DO NOT GIVE detoxing & moving herbs or essences to unstable person

On Suicide

Don't kill yourself. Don't kill yourself.
Don't. Eat a donut, be a blown nut.
That is, if you're going to kill yourself,
stand on a street corner rhyming
seizure with Indonesia, and wreck it with
racket. Allow medical terms.
Rave and fail. Be an absurd living ghost,
if necessary, but don't kill yourself.
Let your friends know that something has
passed, or be glad they've guessed.
But don't kill yourself. If you stay, but are
bat crazy you will batter their hearts
in blooming scores of anguish; but kill
yourself, and hundreds of other people die.
shoot yourself, it cracks the bio-dome.
I will give badges to everyone who's figured
this out about suicide, and hence
refused it. I am grateful. Stay. Thank
you for staying. Please stay. You
are my hero for staying. I know
about it, and am grateful you stay.
Eat a donut. Rhyme opus with lotus.
Rope is bogus, psychosis. Stay.
Hocus Pocus. Hocus Pocus.
Try not to kill yourself. I won't either.

By Jennifer Michael Hecht

*Every moment of light and dark
is a miracle.
I believe a leaf of grass
is no less
than the journey-work
of the stars.
– Walt Whitman*

