

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



Kintsukuroi: Japanese tradition of mending broken things with gold, making what has been broken even more valuable than before

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, Torpor, Stuck (*alteratives*)

Tension Wind, Constriction (*relaxants, spasmolytics*)

Traditional Chinese Medicine ‘organs’ 5 elements’

- ∞ **Spleen (earth)**: grounding centering, digesting experience, Intellect *Imbalance*: worry brooding pensiveness
- ∞ **Kidneys (water)**: our vital Essence *Imbalance*: phobic fears, despondent, lack of resiliency, suicidal
- ∞ **Heart (fire)**: seat of Mind & Joy *Imbalance*: nervous excitement, sexual overstimulation, coldness, inability to love
- ∞ **Lungs (metal air)**: Sense of Self, self esteem *Imbalance*: rigidity inability to let go
- ∞ **Liver (wood)**: engaging with life, smooth, flexible flow, structure and vision, ‘*sprout forth*’ ‘*free & easy wanderer*’
Imbalance: depression (malaise), easy anger *from constrained liver Qi*, frustration, aggression, arrogance, pretention

Flower Essences

Plant medicine preparation to balance & uplift the emotional patterns that weaken us predispose us to ailments

- Suppressed/undigested emotions •Depression, Anxiety •Fear, Tension, Anger •Traumas held in body-mind
- “Flower Essence Journey” *working with essences over time to develop the felt-sense of:*
- Safety (home, family, work) •Healthy relationships, boundaries, enjoying life
- Identity (expression of self & work)

Food: 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! Dysbiosis is directly associated with mental states (*refer to class discussion*)

Consider also energetics of food

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

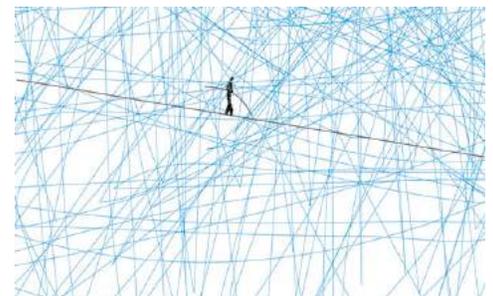
a few thoughts on Our Practice as Herbalists

- ⊙ **Listening mindfully & compassionately**: offering attention & compassion, in turn, helps one meet themselves mindfully & compassionately - *the basis of healing trauma.*
- ⊙ **Diagnostician**: What are the obstacles to well-being? Consider energetics, patterns, specific indications & life situations
- ⊙ **‘Positive Psychology’**: recognize and build on health and resiliency “*Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it.*” ~ Confucius
- ⊙ **Painful & Traumatic events** can come up in a consultation & can be an avenue of great healing– but also **can be re-traumatizing.**
- ⊙ **Do not go further into discussion of trauma than you are comfortable with and feel you are able to respond and hold for a person.** Both you and your client should feel safe. **Don’t open a door you can’t walk through.**

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 respond 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 know how to deal with it.
 - 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.
- Affects kidneys, urinary tract, adrenals (the seat of fear)
- Usually based on an emotional pattern = or imprint; rarely solely about the situation that triggers the anxiety
- One person's anxiety trigger is another's excitement!
- Nature and security (The nature of nature is actually instability / change. Yet focus and engaging on present moment along with connection to community and spirit offer support that offers a sense of safety in the midst of instability and change.)
- Typical therapies include relaxing through herbs and other therapies. They help calm a hyper response, allowing for perspective, but other therapies and herb & food help address the cause of the hyper response
 - 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 – also being by in water, ocean
- *Abhyanga* Sesame Oil (self) Massage: whole body & modified massage of soles of feet, palms. 3rd eye & crown of head) Also *Shirodhara* Ayurveda oil dripping therapy on to 3rd eye.
- *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

Specific indications offer a way to understand both psyche & herb.

Questions (leading from specific indications) can aid one to develop awareness & ‘witness’ part of our psyche that help to create space in experience, which, in turn, help to balance & heal

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*) Calamus (*chew on a root when feel anxiety or panic attack coming on*)

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

Head, neck, shoulders, skeletal tension: Black Cohosh, Blue Vervain, Wood betony

Heart: Hawthorn, Reishi, Lemon Balm, Motherwort (*relaxing & cooling, palpitations 'hot anxious' PMS digestive issues too*)

Lung, difficulty breathing: Lobelia (*relaxing*) Reishi, Lungwort, Wild lettuce, Schizandra *consider unresolved grief*

Solar plexus: Catnip (*in the stomach rising upwards into the chest*), St John's Wort, Lemon Balm (*sweaty palms*)

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

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

Gut, diarrhea: Chamomile (*use with complicated cases that are not clear; give Chamomile or other nervines for a couple weeks, then the issues becomes clearer - also can use catnip & wood betony this way too*)

Muscles: Skullcap (*spasms*), Kava, Lobelia, also magnesium

Nerve pain: St John's Wort

Fatigue, Lack of strength, calmness: Rhodiola, Reishi, Eleuthero

Hormonal cycle: Blue Vervain, Motherwort

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

Internalizes emotions: Catnip (*upward energy from stomach*)

Externalizes emotions: Chamomile (*downward energy from stomach / gut*)

Panic with loss of speech: Calamus

Confusion, cloudy/ scattered thinking: Bacopa, Calamus, Rosemary, Tulsi '*pot brain*', Lemon Balm (*Mints!*), Reishi, Schisandra, Frankincense

Panic with fear of danger*: Anemone, Angelica, Linden (*helps to engender a sense of safety*, Mimosa, Borage (*Helps one engage with fear, develops courage*) **explore feeling of safety in life*

Panic with fainting: Lavender, Blue Vervain

Long term stress, , depression, trauma, fatigue, insomnia; Frazzled: Milky Oat (*tonic*), Rhodiola (*with depression*), Reishi, Spikenard, California Poppy

Ungrounded, Frenzy: Wood Betony, Reishi

Restlessness: Linden, Hawthorn

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

Tension / Inability to relax: Agrimony, Linden, Blue vervain, Lemon Balm, Damiana, Lavender, Valerian, Kava

Self doubt: Gentian (*strengthens gut instincts*)

Shyness: Violet, Kava

Confusion, cloudy thinking: Bacopa, Tulsi, Calamus

Overwhelm of senses, Over-stimulated: Ghost Pipe, Skullcap, Anemone (*Pulsitilla, 'wind flower' - particularly for Vata*)

Uncontrolled weepiness, Fragility, easily startled: Anemone, Milky oat seed, Scullcap, Lavender

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

Over-sensitive, over-reactive: Anemone, Skullcap

Nightmares, Anxiety dreams: Wood Betony, Linden, St John's Wort, Ashwagandha, Schizandra, Mimosa

Social anxiety: Kava, California Poppy

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

Anger: Scullcap

Tension: Agrimony, Blue Vervain, Lemon Balm

Ungroundedness, Frenzy: Wood betony '*feeling from another planet*', Reishi

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*)

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*

Reishi “*spirit plant*” a light in the dark wood - Balancing for numerous mental states

☉ Qi (Vital Energy), Jing (Essence) and Shen (Mind) Tonic ☉ Enlivens & calms the mind; gentle but very effective mood enhancer over time

☉ establishes balance in parasympathetic and sympathetic states

☉ Indicated for chronic stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia

☉ Mild very safe -even w/ pharmaceuticals)

☉ Very helpful in cutting back in psycho-active Meds and addictive substances, as well as the side effects of cutting back on off substances. With regular use, reishi prevents the psycho-emotional ‘fall out’

☉ Very tasty with cocoa! (Likeable replacement for morning coffee)

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

Eleuthero: 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

Solar herbs for happiness! Bringing light to dark places in the psyche and body
(class –name solar herbs you know & are pictured)

Aromatics for Depression

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

Use aromatics regularly to prevent & treat depressive states, SAD & ‘funk’.

★Anis Hyssop ★Catnip ★Calamus ★Chamomile ★Coffee ★Damiana ★Lavender ★Lemon Balm
 ★Linden ★Peppermint ★Rhodiola ★Pine ★Rose ★Rosemary ★Skullcap ★Sweet leaf (Monarda)
 ★Tulsi ★Valerian ★Wormwood

Adaptogens for Mood Imbalances

Important parts of protocol!

Benefits most all with anxiety & depression Developing resiliency Adapting to stress

Rhodiola, rose root:

- ⊙ adapted to extremes of our environment -extreme light and dark, damp and dry, hot and cold.
- ⊙ Traditional peoples revered it for its strengthening & mood-enhancing actions.
- ⊙ Helps ease our 'extremes' and mitigate the intensity of modern life.
- ⊙ An anti-stress, endurance & energy-enhancing tonic.
- ⊙ For depression, SAD fatigue, weakness (& anxiety with weakness)
- ⊙ Can be too stimulating for some and best used in morning
- ⊙ **Note:** endangered but easily cultivated in north –*buy only cultivated!*

Ashwagandha:

- ⊙ revered *rasayana* (rejuvenative) herbs of Ayurveda.
- ⊙ One of the few *calming adaptogens*. Traditionally used for anxiety, over-work, insomnia, bad dreams, mild OCD, and *nervous exhaustion*.
- ⊙ Used in all conditions of weakness. especially useful for depression associated with hypo-thyroidism; for the 'wired and tired'.

Schizandra:

- ⊙ Strengthens general vitality and tonifies the heart, liver and lungs.
- ⊙ Calms & quiets Shen; Astringent qualities for mind: used for cloudy muddled thinking, agitation, bad dreams, scattered state of mind & depression.
- ⊙ Thomas Easley finds schizandra very effective **hyperactivity**.
- ⊙ It is Kris Kilham's favorite herb for **mental clarity**.
- ⊙ Mary Bove says "Schizandra **turns the worrier into the warrior**"

Consider Also! **Reishi** (see above) **Bacopa**, **Eleutherococcus**, **Licorice**, **Panax sp.**

Consider how one feels the depression. Depression experienced as...

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

Saffron bupleurum

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: Eluethero

Abusive relationships, petty tyrants, black cloud depression: Black Cohosh (small doses *with caution*)

Painful spasmodic diseases: Cannabis, Ghost Pipe

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

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 Stansburysam*
- 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

*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*



The big picture: some ways we can Enjoy Life & World

- Accepting & offering love & pleasure
- Present Moment Awareness
- Adaptability
- Curiosity, Openness & Wonder
- Relaxation & Reverie

What other qualities can we develop to enjoy life more deeply?

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