

## Herbal Toolbox for Anxiety and Depression

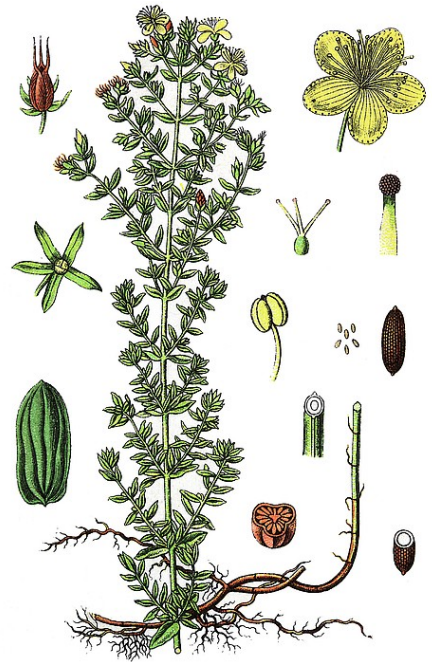
“I like the distinction between happiness and joy. I like joy because I think joy is an active passion. It's not a stagnant state of being. It's not satisfaction with things as they are. It's part of feeling power's capacities growing in you and growing in the people around you. It's a feeling, a passion, that comes from a process of transformation. And it's a process of growth. So this doesn't necessarily mean that you have to be satisfied with your situation. It means you that you understand the situation and you're active in a way that you feel that you are comprehending and moving along in accordance to what is required in that moment.

So you feel that you have the power to change and you feel yourself changing with what you're doing, together with other people. It's not a form of acquiescence to what exists.” Silvia Federici

Nervines: Nervous System Support

### St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

- Taste and energetics: somewhat spicy, warming, stimulating, diffusive.
- *Hypericum* “above a demon.” Traditional use for demonic possession.
- Its usefulness is in conditions of depleted, deficient nervous energy – such as depression or insomnia – and its solar connection (blooms near the summer solstice) makes it an excellent adjunct for the “winter blues” that sometimes accompany the shorter days.
- Use care with this nervine tonic as it interacts with many different medications. Do not use while taking antidepressant drugs.
- St. John's Wort has repeatedly been shown to work as well as or better than antidepressants in double-blind, placebo-controlled studies. In Europe, extracts are prescribed in antidepressant therapy.
- Adverse reactions are rare, but note that St. John's Wort can increase photo-sensitivity.
- Much of its medicinal action is by way of its warming and enlivening effect on circulation with a particular focus on liver activity.
- Dose: 1-5mL (30-150drops or up to 1tsp) tincture 1-3x/day. 1-2 tsp dried plant per 8oz tea. 2-4 cups/day. Tea is very effective as longterm restorative (tonic) for people who are beginning to lose hope in themselves.
- Combinations (Saint John's Wort takes other nervous system remedies deeper):
  - SJW and Valerian for the person who feels overwrought, weighted by depression.
  - SJW and California Poppy is useful for the person who is navigating long-term chronic stress and/or pain with depression.
  - SJW with Skullcap for anxiety.
  - SJW with Skullcap and Rosemary as antidepressant.
  - SJW with Oatstraw tea or Milky Oats tincture for depletion and depression.
  - SJW with Chamomile tea for acting out. Finding calm to re-evaluate options.



### Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*)

- Mint family, non-aromatic. Bitter taste, cooling, calming, strengthening. Nervous system tonic. Restores/improves function after periods of prolonged stress.
- Safe and cooling nervine; very effective in over-stimulated conditions. Indicated for stressed out people who when nervous or agitated develop muscle spasms, nervous tics, or tight, painful muscles.
- Also useful for involuntary movement of muscles and tongue, tremors, restless leg syndrome, mild Tourette's syndrome, and grinding of the teeth. Very helpful for stress-induced headaches (when taken at onset.) Provides relief from neck and back pain (esp. in combination with SJW.)

- Dose: Fresh plant tincture 2-3mL, 1-3x/day for acute calming effect (more relaxant than sedative). Tea 1-2 tsp/cup water is more restorative (to the nervous system) and sedative. Great bedtime tea (bitter taste, best in combination.)
- Combinations:
  - Skullcap with Milky Oats for deep nervous system nourishment or for those who flinch and have a difficult time receiving touch (such as massage).
  - Skullcap with Valerian to enhance the sedative effects of both plants.
  - Skullcap with SJW to enhance that herb's anti-depressant effect.
  - Formula for panic attacks: Skullcap, Motherwort, Blue Vervain, Pulsatilla.

### Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

- Low (energetic) doses deeply warm the heart and this warmth in turn spreads to others. Paracelsus called this “fire of the heart” referring to the heart element that has understanding of the human condition; moderate doses nourish the nerves; large doses sedate.
- Addresses anxiety, restlessness, palpitations, headache, depression, hypertension, and irritability associated with stress or hyperthyroidism.
- Useful for digestive problems, especially if due to nervousness and stress. Also useful for colds, migraines, insomnia, depression, and hypertension, especially if associated with stress.
- The essential oil has been used externally to treat herpes simplex with positive results in multiple clinical trials; the leaves have anti-viral properties (in larger doses)
- Dose: Best enjoyed as an infusion. 1Tsp/8oz water, 2-8 cups a day. Smaller amounts are also appropriate for most children and elders (¼ cup-2 cups a day in divided doses). Tincture can be used 1-2mL, 1-4x/day.
- Contraindicated during pregnancy (unless under the care of a qualified practitioner) and with hypothyroidism.

### Linden (*Tilia americana*, *T. cordata*)

- Taste and energetics: sweet, moist, and cool. Calming, but not overly sedating. Sweet, floral taste; very pleasant.
- Normally blooms in mid/late June (two primary species planted in Lincoln).
- Leaves are heart shaped with dark green on top, paler green below. Sharply toothed, 2.5-4" long. The yellowish-white flowers hang from slender stalks in flattened clusters. They have 5 petals and 5 sepals. Harvest the bract and flower when it's in full bloom. Dry away from direct sun in a basket, or on a propped up screen. Can trim, grind, or leave whole.
- Aids in the release of heat from the body (physically with fever and emotionally with anger). A soothing herb that moistens and cools the body's tissues.
- European use: centuries ago, popular remedy for convulsion and epilepsy. Currently most utilized for hyperactivity, emotional support and fever.
- Relaxes the nerves, sedates, calms the spirit.
  - Specific for nervousness, restlessness, hyperactivity, insomnia (esp. sleeplessness due to racing thoughts). Helpful for panic attacks and anxiety, nervous headaches, dizziness. Very helpful for stress that comes from holding onto too much, feeling full and tense with a quick temper.
- Dose: Best enjoyed as an infusion, 2-4 cups a day. A gentle remedy that is appropriate for most children and elders as well (½ cup-2 cups in divided doses).
  - Tea/infusion can be made with ¼ cup chopped flowers/bracts in 32oz hot water. If allowed to cool to room temp, moistening/slimeatious quality enhanced (polysaccharides impart moist quality to tissues which is important for those living in dry climates and those who are quick to anger, a hot tense condition).
  - Tincture would be best applied in acute conditions (convulsions in children, prolonged fever ... situations where you would likely be seeking professional medical support anyways), or use



- tincture as in a formula to support the emotional heart.
- Linden, Rose petal, and Oats is a trio that, when taken regularly softens the heart and soothes frayed nerves. Could be specific for someone who is healing from abuse.

## Adaptogens: Endocrine System Support

### **Holy Basil** (*Ocimum sanctum*) Tulsi, Sacred Basil

- Taste is pungent, sweet, and warm.
- All Basils are adaptogens, have the ability to strengthen the adrenals, lower cortisol.
- Aromatic plants with pungent smells have the ability to impart immediate effect by inhalation of (volatile/essential) oils that travel past blood-brain barrier via nervous system detection to penetrate deep into the psyche.
- Enhances cerebral circulation to relieve “mental fog” that can be caused by smoking too much cannabis or hormonal transitions (postpartum, menopause), head trauma, ADD, or just plain poor memory.
- Useful antidepressant for stagnant depression (unable to move through the emotional load caused by traumatic event and life often comes to revolve around trauma.)
- Reduces inflammation in the body, buffers the effects of stress, calms anxiety and gladdens the heart – all while tasting delicious as a simple cup of tea!
- Dose: 2-3 cups/day of a prepared teabag or steep looseleaf (1-2 tsp/cup water). The tincture too can help when taken twice a day 2-3mL at a time, especially in combination.
- Combinations:
  - Tulsi with Rose to soothe a broken heart and ease stress.
  - Tulsi with Oats to nourish and rebuild.
  - Tulsi with Nettles to spark vitality, deep nourishment.
  - Tulsi with Lemon Balm to lift the spirits, gladden the heart.
  - Tulsi with Damiana, Rosemary, and Lavender for stagnant depression.

### **Ashwaganda** (*Withania somnifera*)

- Ayurvedic remedy. Nightshade family. Taste is complex: bitter, flowery, earthy.
- The adaptogenic and tonic effects are best suited to persons who are debilitated or exhausted while agitated or under stress. The root is used for nervous exhaustion, stress-induced health conditions, chronic inflammation, and cognitive decline related to aging or difficult transitions (such as postpartum.) The restorative qualities of Ashwagandha are specific in helping to address the root deficiencies behind insomnia patterns. It's a generally calming agent that improves energy utilization throughout the day.
- Strengthens the adrenals, immune function, and improves red blood cell count (anemia). Supportive for the liver as well. Considered an aphrodisiac.
- Traditionally used as a powdered root, 1 or 2tsp twice daily; this can be simmered in milk (fat aids absorption) or added to nut butter and eaten as a snack. A decoction of the dried root pieces is another option (1 tsp/cup of water.) The tincture works well too, about 1/2 to 1tsp (2.5-5mL) once or twice daily.
- Combinations:
  - Ashwagandha with Oats and SJW for deep tonifying effect on nervous system.
  - Ashwagandha with Skullcap for insomnia.

### **Rhodiola** (*R. rosea*)

- A very warming, anti-stress, energy-enhancing tonic. As such, it lessens the pressures our psyches may feel when we are also sluggish or anxious from the changes in daylight. And of all the stronger-acting herbs, it has the greatest affinity for the overwhelmed and frazzled type. It also serves the purpose of enhancing and evening out energy throughout the day.
- A deep-acting cardiovascular tonic that oxygenates the blood (useful for altitude sickness).
- Clears the mind, considered the best adaptogenic antidepressant remedy. Very important in nervous system disorders. Lowers cortisol levels. Prevents shock and trauma from being imprinted in the body. Stimulating antidepressant.

- 1/2tsp (2.5mL or 75 drops) once, or sometimes twice, a day usually suffices to add spark back into a tired life-and sometimes enough spark to start back in to an exercise program, a snowshoe adventure, or that wintertime project you were putting off.
- Herbalist Guido Mase suggests taking Rhodiola for relatively limited periods of time (2-6 months) or on an as-needed basis (1-2 days a week). The dose ranges from 60 to 120 drops twice daily, but not later than 3pm (it can be overstimulating).
- Combinations:
  - Rhodiola with SJW for depression.
  - Rhodiola with Hawthorn for cardiovascular conditions.
  - Rhodiola with Milky Oats for chronic nerve weakness.

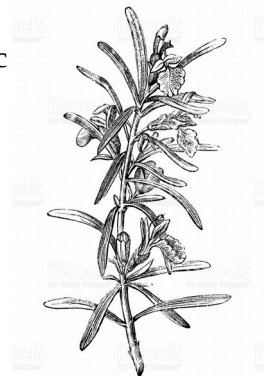
### **Reishi** (*Ganoderma lucidum*)

- Bitter, drying, calming, restorative.
- Best extracted in long decoction (4+ hours) or used in water extract encapsulation. 2-4 cups/day.
- A calming adaptogen that leads one into deeper states of knowledge or wisdom. Not sedative, but peaceful. Useful for insomnia when taken as a tonic (daily use for a period of 1-2 weeks at least).
- Most important remedy for serious depletion of nerve or liver function. Direct action on the liver via oxygenation of blood (making it a good preventative aid for altitude sickness). Cleansing and restorative effect. Useful in a protocol for Hep C.
- Reputation as a wisdom remedy, calms the nervous system. Aids one in feeling *known to oneself*. Allows for process of permanent realignment with a deeper part of yourself. Changes one as would prayer or meditation.
- Combinations:
  - Reishi with roasted Dandelion root for a liver-moving herbal coffee.
  - Reishi with chai spices (cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, clove) for a warming, aromatic tonic.
  - Reishi with Rosemary for a potent aid in releasing held trauma.

Alteratives: liver-focused metabolic tonics.

### **Rosemary** (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

- Warming, stimulating, pungent, aromatic, savory. Use as food. Smaller doses of tincture (too much can bring on headache): 5-15 drops, 1-3x/day. Best in formula.
- Medicinal action works on the junction of the liver and nervous system. Direct action on both (liver tonic, aids in detoxification; blood mover; specific to nerve weakness, *neurasthenia*).
- Specific for the cold, tired person whose nerves are shot. Depressed states. Deep acting; clears the body of bad memories via its stimulating effects on circulation. Aids in being present and releasing the past.
- Combinations:
  - Rosemary with Milky Oats tincture to assist in weaning off substance.
  - Rosemary with Rose if one is in a difficult /“bad” emotional place.
  - Rosemary with Lemon Balm if digestion is out of sorts, esp due to nervous stomach.
  - Rosemary with Skullcap to strengthen and tonify nervous system.
  - Rosemary with Hawthorne to warm and open the heart (generosity) when closed off to others.



### **Dandelion** (*Taraxacum officinale*)

- Detoxifying and restorative action (via alterative/metabolic tonic effect); lymphatic decongestant; strengthens digestion. Laxative and diuretic (laxative action stronger via root and diuretic stronger via leaf). High in vitamin and mineral content; supports microbiota via taste/action as bitter tonic and inulin content. Subtle effect that builds with longer-term use (2-3 months or more).
- Tincture 1-3mL, 1-3x/day taken before meals to improve digestion and assimilation. Tea of leaf: 1-2 tsp/cup water; root 1tsp/cup; roasted root 1tsp/cup.

## Nettles (*Urtica dioica*)

- Deep acting, mineral-rich nutritional powerhouse. It is specific for liver/blood deficiency as it can be viewed as “food for the liver.” Also deep tonic nutrition for adrenals, kidney, and blood. It's a diuretic but acts more strongly as a blood builder (rich green nutrients). Indicated for the pale, tired, deficient person, perhaps presenting with floaters in their eyes.
- Most effective as tea although tincture or vinegar extract is well suited for allergy support. Excellent spring green (wild spinach); add to soups, stirfries, pesto.
- Very drying. Best in formula. Combines well with nervous system tonics for daily support to address chronic anxiety and depression.
- Combinations:
  - Nettles with Oat Straw as a deeply restorative whole-body tonic.
  - Nettles with Lemon Balm for fear/emotional responses that are felt in the stomach.
  - Nettles with Linden for SAD and depressive states.
  - Nettles with Skullcap for nervous system restoration (after major/chronic illness) or to aid insomnia
  - Nettles balanced with Marshmallow root to mitigate dryness (which aggravates anxiety).



## Exhilarants: Herbs for the Spiritual Heart

### Rose (various *Rosa* species, the stronger scented the better)

- Rose holds a sad heart and nourishes it. In clinic, its specific use centers around trauma-physical or emotional-and the withdrawal and closed-heartedness that can result. But it is also quite applicable in any context where sadness is overwhelming the ability to enjoy and engage life. Typically not used alone, Rose makes an amazing addition to tea blends and extract formulas for sadness and apathy.
- Use about 1tsp of petals per cup of tea, or 30-60 drops of tincture. 5-50 drops of Rose Elixir (extract in vegetable glycerine) can be used as needed to mend a broken heart.

### Pine (*Pinus* spp, often *P. strobus* or *P. alba* – White Pine)

- Along with Spruce and Fir, Pine is an evergreen that has always been associated with the darker winter months. Its application goes beyond decoration. The smell is uplifting, antidepressant, and energizing. It is also a great source of vitamin C and very good for the lungs (aiding the deepening of the breath and loosening phlegm).
- The fresh or dried needles can be made into a very pleasant-tasting tea. Approx. 1Tbsp chopped needles/cup of water. 2-4 cups/day.

## References and Resources

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