

# Viral Anxiety and Herbal Medicine

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March 28, 2020

Many folks have been asking about herbs for anxiety and depression during this current viral crisis. Below are some suggestions. These plants are not specific for the virus but are helpful in a general way. I put the herbs into six categories with descriptions for each. This sort of oversimplified characterization can be problematic in a 'pigeon-holing' type of way, but it can also help breakdown unwieldy terms such as anxiety and depression. People generally have a mix of emotions in how they react to the world, so use these descriptions as a suggestion for what may be helpful for you. Note that many herbs fall into numerous categories.

I also added short descriptions for each plant to try to elucidate their uses. Again, these are simplified and just my interpretation; different people have different opinions and different reactions from the medicinal properties of these plants.

Do not forget all the basics of health maintenance such as getting quality nutrition, adequate sleep, and all the important ways to avoid the coronavirus.

I hope each of you stays healthy, and for those of that that get ill, I hope you have a speedy and full recovery.

I would like to add that while I am glad to offer information and suggestions, it is important for each person to take responsibility for what they take and give to others.

**Description 1**-Swirling undirected thoughts, difficult to concentrate, jittery, easily startled

- Anemone
- Betony
- California poppy
- Catnip
- Chamomile
- Damiana
- Lobelia
- Mimosa
- Motherwort
- Oats
- Rose
- Tulsi

**Description 2**-Thoughts that are stuck in a loop, tense, too controlled and/or controlling. Cannot stop reading/listening to the latest story about the coronavirus

- Betony
- Blue vervain
- Damiana
- Hops
- Kava kava
- Lavender
- Oats
- Passionflower
- Rose
- Skullcap
- Tulsi
- Valerian

**Description 3**-Panic/anxiety attacks

- Anemone
- Chamomile
- Hops
- Kava kava
- Motherwort
- Passionflower
- Skullcap
- Valerian

**Description 4**-herbs for sedation and/or help with falling asleep

- Betony
- California poppy
- Chamomile
- Hops
- Kava kava
- Passionflower
- Rose
- Skullcap
- Valerian

**Description 5**-Nervines, gently relaxing, notching it down a little without sedation

- Betony
- California poppy
- Catnip
- Chamomile
- Damiana
- Lemon balm
- Lobelia
- Mimosa
- Motherwort
- Oats
- Passionflower
- Rose
- Tulsi

**Description 6**-Gloomy heavy thoughts, sluggishness, unmotivated, difficult to get out of bed, sad

- Calamus
- Chamomile
- Lavender
- Lemon balm
- Lobelia
- Mimosa
- Rose
- St. Johnswort
- Tulsi

**Preparation Notes**

These are some of the ways these plants can be prepared and ingested.

- Tincture-prepared in ethanol (drinking alcohol)
- Glycerite-prepared in vegetable glycerin
- Tea-prepared in water
- Powder-powdered plant, often mixed into a liquid
- Capsule-powdered herb in a capsule

**Dosage Notes**

These are very broad guidelines. Most of the herbs here are safe and larger amounts can be taken as needed. Also, individual sensitivity comes into play, as some people may need more or less of a specific medicine for an effect.

**Tinctures and Glycerites**

Dosages are given in dropperfuls. A dropperful here means when the glass tube (the pipette) is full to the top. This dosage works for both 1 and 2 oz bottles (which is approximately 2 ml when full). It is often easier to take two half dropperfuls, as that is often how much fills up per squeeze.

### **Tea-General directions**

For infusions, pour 1 quart of hot water over 1 oz of plant material and let sit for 20 minutes. A French press is helpful for this process. Drink 1-2 cups daily.

For decoctions, simmer about 1-1.25 oz of plant material in 1 quart of water for 15-20 minutes. Drink 1-2 cups daily

Teas can be stored in a refrigerator for at least a few days.

### **Acute and Tonic**

Most of these plants can be used for both acute and chronic symptoms. This largely depends on the dosage and how regularly they are taken. For acute symptoms, often a larger amount is taken as needed to reduce them. The same herb can often be taken in smaller doses regularly a few times a day as a nervine or 'nerve aid' to help with anxiety and depression over time. These are called tonics. A very generalized dosage would be ½ to 2 dropperfuls 3-4 times daily. Tonics are generally a formula containing a few different herbs.

**\*Important note about tinctures**-since they are based in alcohol, they should be avoided for those that do not drink alcohol.

### **Medicinal Plants**

In the below descriptions, the dosage is based on acute symptoms, the amount taken to help with how one is feeling at the moment. Many of these plants can also be taken as a tonic.

1. Anemone-Anemone spp.
  - Best herb for panic attacks
  - Preparations-tincture
  - Dosage-5-10 *drops* as needed
2. Betony-Stachys spp.
  - General nervousness, historically used for troubling dreams
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (infusion)
  - Dosage-½-1½ dropperful
3. Blue vervain-Verbena hastata
  - Stuck in circular thought patterns, overthinking plans, difficulty falling asleep while going over problems again and again
  - Preparations-tincture, tea (infusion)
  - Dosage-best as a tonic
4. Calamus-Acorus calamus
  - Sluggish thinking, difficult to focus or concentrate, lethargy
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (decoction)
  - Dosage-½-1 dropperful

5. California poppy-*Eschscholtzia californica*
  - Difficulty relaxing, jumpy
  - Preparations-tincture
  - Dosage-½-1½ dropperfuls
6. Catnip-*Nepeta cataria*
  - Especially good when anxiety affects the gut, gentle relaxant
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (infusion)
  - Dosage-1-2 dropperfuls
7. Chamomile-*Matricaria chamomilla*
  - Helpful for sleep, gentle nervine, relaxing
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (infusion)
  - Dosage-½-2 dropperfuls
8. Damiana-*Turnera diffusa*
  - Tightly wound, relaxing without sedating
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (infusion)
  - Dosage-½-1½ dropperfuls
9. Hops-*Humulus lupulus*
  - Relaxing, sedating, helpful for sleep
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite
  - Dosage-½-1 dropperful
10. Kava kava-*Piper methysticum*
  - Very relaxing, slightly intoxicating, sedative
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (decoction), powder, capsule
  - Dosage-½-1 dropperful
11. Lavender-*Lavandula spp*
  - Gently relaxing, uplifting
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (infusion with other herbs)
  - Dosage-¼-½ dropperful, better in formula
12. Lemon balm-*Melissa officinalis*
  - Sluggish, unmotivated, anxious
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (infusion)
  - Dosage-½-1½ dropperfuls
13. Lobelia-*Lobelia inflata*
  - Increases the efficiency of other anti-anxiety herbs. Used in formula
  - Preparations-tincture
  - Dosage-about 1/6 part of a formula
14. Mimosa-*Albizia julibrissin*
  - Anxiety, despondent, general nervousness
  - Preparations-tincture, tea (infusion), capsule
  - Dosage-½-1½ dropperfuls
15. Motherwort-*Leonurus cardiaca*
  - Jittery, heart palpitations, cannot rest
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, capsule

- Dosage- $\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$  dropperfuls
16. Oats-Avena sativa
- Long-term repair of frazzled nerves, easily agitated
  - Preparations-tincture, tea (infusion)
  - Dosage-best as a tonic
17. Passionflower-Passiflora incarnata
- Tense, excessive list making, difficulty sleeping
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, capsule
  - Dosage- $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 dropperfuls
18. Rose-Rosa spp.
- Wide-ranging, useful in many anxious and depressive states
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, capsule, powder
  - Dosage- $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 dropperfuls
19. Skullcap-Scutellaria lateriflora
- Sedating, general nervousness, useful for pain and sleep
  - Preparations-tincture, tea (infusion), capsule
  - Dosage- $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 dropperful
20. St. Johnswort-Hypericum perforatum
- Lethargic, gloomy, stuck in a rut
  - Preparations-tincture, tea (infusion), capsule
  - Dosage- $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 dropperful, best as a tonic. St. Johnswort may interfere with some medications.
21. Tulsi-Ocimum tenuiflorum
- Jittery, spinning thoughts, general nervousness
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (infusion), powder, capsule
  - Dosage- $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 dropperfuls
22. Valerian-Valeriana officinalis
- Sedating, helpful for pain and sleep. Some people feel agitated when using it
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, capsule
  - Dosage- $\frac{1}{4}$ -1 dropperful. Start with a smaller dosage