

Anxiety and Herbal Medicine

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I originally made this handout in the early stages of the Covid outbreak, as many people were having difficulty with their mental health. I recently altered it a little as I feel it can be generally applicable for anxiety and depression.

I divided 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 break down 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 most personally beneficial. Note that many herbs fall into numerous categories, as their medicinal attributes can be helpful in a number of situations.

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

Remember all the important basics of preventative health maintenance, such as quality nutrition, adequate sleep, and community.

Description 1-Swirling undirected thoughts, difficult concentrating, jittery, easily startled

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

Description 2-Thoughts stuck in a loop, tense, too controlled, and/or controlling. Obsessive list-maker

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

Description 3-Panic/anxiety attacks, hypervigilant

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

Description 4-herbs for sedation and help with falling asleep

- Chamomile
- Hops
- Kava
- Passionflower
- 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 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 (alcohol)
- Glycerite-prepared in vegetable glycerin
- Combination tincture and glycerite
- Tea-water-based preparation
- 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 implies 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 Preparations

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 issues, often a larger amount is taken as needed to reduce the symptoms; this can range from ½-2.5 dropperfuls as needed. The same herb(s) can also be taken in smaller doses regularly, a few times a day, as a nervine or 'nerve aid' to help with anxiety and depression symptoms over time. These are called tonics and are usually formulations of different herbs. A very generalized tonic dosage would be ½ to 2 dropperfuls 3-5 times daily.

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

Medicinal Plants

The dosages in the descriptions below are based on acute symptoms. They are generalized recommendations to be taken as needed. Many of these plants can also be taken regularly as tonics.

1. Anemone-*Anemone species*
 - Best herb for panic attacks
 - Preparation-tincture
 - Dosage-5-10 drops as needed
2. Betony-*Betonica (Stachys) officinalis*
 - General nervousness, historically used for troubling dreams
 - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (infusion)
 - Dosage-½-1½ dropperfuls
3. Blue vervain-*Verbena hastata*
 - Stuck in circular thought patterns, overthinking, difficulty falling asleep, mulling over problems
 - 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

- Preparation-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-*Piper methysticum*
 - Very relaxing, disinhibiting, sedative, sleep
 - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (decoction), powder, capsule
 - Dosage-½-1 dropperful
 11. Lavender-*Lavandula species*
 - 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-½-1½ 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, overthinking, difficulty sleeping
- Preparations-tincture, glycerite, capsule
- Dosage- $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 dropperfuls

18. Rose-*Rosa species*

- Wide-ranging, useful in many anxious and depressive states
- Preparations-tincture, glycerite, capsule, powder
- Dosage- $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 dropperfuls. Useful in formulas

19. Skullcap-*Scutellaria lateriflora*

- Sedating, general nervousness, 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.

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