

# Anxiety, Depression, and Herbal Medicine

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I originally created this handout in the early stages of the Covid outbreak, as many people were having difficulty with their mental health. I later altered it as I feel it can be generally applicable for feelings of 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 by making the herbal categories more personalized. People generally have a mix of emotions in how they react to the world, so use these descriptions as suggestions 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, difficulty concentrating, jittery, easily startled

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

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

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

**Description 3:** Panic/anxiety attacks, hypervigilant

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

**Description 4:** herbs for sedation and to 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
- Maca
- Mimosa
- Rhodiola
- 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 to achieve a desired 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 are 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 ½ to 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, a larger amount may be needed to reduce 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 by anyone who does not drink alcohol.

### **Medicinal Plants**

The dosages in the descriptions below are based on tinctures and glycerites. These are generalized recommendations. Many of these plants can also be taken as needed and 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 as a daily tonic or as needed
3. Blue vervain-*Verbena hastata*
  - Stuck in circular thought patterns, overthinking, difficulty falling asleep, and mulling over problems
  - Preparations-tincture, tea (infusion)
  - Dosage-1/2-2 dropperfuls as a daily tonic or as needed
4. Calamus-*Acorus calamus*
  - Sluggish thinking, difficulty focusing or concentrating, lethargy
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (decoction)
  - Dosage-½-1 dropperful as a daily tonic or as needed

5. California poppy-*Eschscholtzia californica*
  - Difficulty relaxing, jumpy
  - Preparation-tincture
  - Dosage-½-1½ dropperfuls as a daily tonic or as needed
6. Catnip-*Nepeta cataria*
  - Especially good when anxiety affects the gut, a gentle relaxant
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (infusion)
  - Dosage-1-2 dropperfuls as a daily tonic or as needed
7. Chamomile-*Matricaria chamomilla*
  - Helpful for sleep, gentle nervine, relaxing, nervous stomach
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (infusion)
  - Dosage-½-2 dropperfuls as a daily tonic or as needed
8. Damiana-*Turnera diffusa*
  - Tightly wound, relaxing without sedation, an 'after-work' relaxant
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (infusion)
  - Dosage-½-1½ dropperfuls as a daily tonic or as needed
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 aid
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (decoction), powder, capsule
  - Dosage-½-1 dropperful as a daily tonic or as needed
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 as a daily tonic or as needed
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. Maca-*Lepidium meyenii*
  - Helpful for fatigue and depression
  - Preparations-raw herb, tincture, capsule
  - Dosage-1/2-1 dropperful a few times a day or as needed

15. Mimosa-*Albizia julibrissin*
  - Anxiety, depression, mental lethargy
  - Preparations-tincture, tea (infusion), capsule
  - Dosage-½-1½ dropperfuls as a daily tonic or as needed
16. Motherwort-*Leonurus cardiaca*
  - Jittery, heart palpitations, cannot rest
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, capsule
  - Dosage-½-1½ dropperfuls as a daily tonic or as needed
17. Oats-*Avena sativa*
  - Long-term repair of frazzled nerves, easily agitated
  - Preparations-tincture, tea (infusion)
  - Dosage-best as a daily tonic
18. Passionflower-*Passiflora incarnata*
  - Tense, excessive list-making, overthinking, difficulty sleeping
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, capsule
  - Dosage-½-2 dropperfuls as a daily tonic or as needed
19. Rhodiola-*Rhodiola rosea*
  - For depression and stress-induced fatigue
  - Preparations-tincture, capsules
  - Dosage ½-1 dropperfuls taken daily as a tonic or as needed
20. Rose-*Rosa species*
  - Wide-ranging, useful in many anxious and depressive states
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, capsule, powder
  - Dosage-½-2 dropperfuls. Useful in formulas as a daily tonic or as needed
21. Skullcap-*Scutellaria lateriflora*
  - Sedating, general nervousness, for pain, and sleep
  - Preparations-tincture, tea (infusion), capsule
  - Dosage-½-1 dropperful
22. St. Johnswort-*Hypericum perforatum*
  - Lethargic, gloomy, stuck in a rut
  - Preparations-tincture, tea (infusion), capsule
  - Dosage-½-1 dropperful, best as a tonic
23. Tulsi-*Ocimum tenuiflorum*
  - Jittery, spinning thoughts, general nervousness
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, tea (infusion), powder, capsule
  - Dosage-½-2 dropperfuls as a daily tonic or as needed
24. Valerian-*Valeriana officinalis*
  - Sedating, helpful for pain and sleep. Some people may feel agitation when using it
  - Preparations-tincture, glycerite, capsule
  - Dosage-¼-1 dropperful. Start with a smaller dosage