

Eclectic and Botanical Therapeutics for Mental Health

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In our culture talking about mental illness is a rather recent phenomenon, but the experience of mental illness is as old as human existence. Over the ages various emotional/psychological problems have been given many diverse names (madness, hysteria, "the vapors", lunacy, the blues, melancholia, etc.) and associated with many causes (the moon, being female, especially menstruating women, self-abuse, i.e., masturbation, emotional weakness, religious fervor, and many other explanations).

We still have a relatively poor understanding of psychological illness and in many ways, even though we have a much greater knowledge of the brain and brain chemistry, it has become much more difficult to separate emotional and physical ailments.

Western medicine's reliance on either talk therapy or SSRI medicines (or other antidepressants) offers benefits but often does not address the individual imbalance. The Eclectics were limited by the theories and beliefs of their times, but still attempted to address the specificity of each patient and their "symptom picture". When reading the Eclectic literature, the language is often archaic and a certain amount of translation is necessary. Neurasthenia is nervous exhaustion, mania can be a number of conditions including manic depression, schizophrenia, or post-traumatic stress syndrome. Much of what was called hysteria, we now call PMS/PMDD or, in some cases, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

The following materia medica is primarily drawn from Eclectic sources with an occasional "new" remedy drawn from my clinical experience (i.e., adaptogens, Ginkgo, Mimosa, Bacopa, Rosemary, Lemon Balm).

Depression

Asafoetida gum resin (*Ferula asafoetida*) - depression with nervous irritation, hysteria, headache, dizziness, and flatulence. Muscle tightness, ticklish, or painful to the touch.
Dose: tincture (1:5) - 5-30 gtt TID

Black Cohosh root (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) - "doom and gloom" depression, hormonal depression - post-partum, menstrual, or menopausal. Use with Cactus.
Dose: fresh root tincture (1:2) - 10-15 gtt TID

Cactus stem (*Selenicereus grandiflorus*) - depression with excessive fear, especially useful in menopause, old age, and with heart disease.
Dose: fresh plant tincture (1:2) - 10-30 gtt in 4 oz. water, mix. Take 1 tsp. every 2 hours

Coffee bean (*Coffea arabica*) - nervous depression with dull thoughts and constipation.
Dose: beverage - 1-2 cups per day

Cola nut (Cola acuminata) - neurasthenia with mental despondency, foreboding. The patient is quiet or silent about troubles.

Dose: tincture (1:5) - 1-2 ml QID

Culver's Root/Leptandra (Veronicastrum virginicum) - depression with dull headaches, especially behind eyes, enlarged liver, and clay-colored stools.

Dose: tincture (1:5) 2-5 gtt, every 2-3 hours

Damiana herb (Turnera diffusa) - mild depression with a marked loss of libido. Depression of the elderly and stagnant depression (use with Lavender and Rosemary).

Dose: tincture (1:5) - 2-4 ml TID

tea - 1 tsp. dried herb, 8 oz. hot water, steep 30 minutes, take 4 oz. TID

Evening Primrose leaf, root bark, flower (Oenothera biennis) - depression associated with chronic dyspepsia, vomiting, and frequent desire to urinate. Patient apathetic, gloomy, and despondent.

Dose: tincture (1:5) - 2-3 ml TID

Fresh Milky Oat seed (Avena sativa) - situational depression in type A, hyperactive people emotionally brittle from chronic stress.

Dose: fresh seed tincture (1:2) - 1 tsp. QID

Ginkgo leaf (Ginkgo biloba) - depression caused by vascular insufficiency due to old age or head trauma injuries.

Dose: extract standardized to 24% flavonoid glycosides - 40 mg. gtt TID

fresh plant extract (1:2) - 3-4 ml QID

Holy Basil herb (Ocimum sanctum) - stagnant depression - the patient is fixated on a specific traumatic event, fatigue, mental fog. Use with Lavender, St. John's wort, & Rosemary.

Dose: fresh extract (1:2) - 3-4 ml TID

tea - 1 tsp. dried herb, 8 oz. hot water, steep 15 minutes, take 1-2 cups per day

Lavender flower (Lavendula angustifolia) - mild depression with difficulty thinking, the patient may remark that he/she is in a fog, stagnant depression - the patient is fixated on a specific traumatic event. Lavender mixes well with St. John's wort, Holy Basil, and Rosemary.

Dose: tincture (1:5) 2-3 ml TID

tea - 1 tsp. dried flowers, 8 oz. hot water, steep 20 minutes, take 4 oz. TID

Lemon Balm herb (Melissa officinalis) - a wonderful mild mood elevator. Use in combination with St. John's wort, for SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder)

Dose: fresh plant tincture (1:2) - 3-5 ml QID

tea - 1-2 tsp. dried herb, 8 oz. hot water, steep 15-20 minutes, take 2-3 cups per day

Mimosa flowers or bark (Albizia julibrissin) - a profound mood elevator, useful for deficient insomnia, moodiness, and a broken heart (use with Hawthorn flowers/berries and Rose petals).

Dose: tincture (1:5) - 1-2 ml TID

Pulsatilla herb (Anemone pulsatilla) - depression with nervousness, dizziness, and restlessness. Fearful, sad, constant weeping. Frequent exclamations of sorrow or grief.

Dose: fresh plant tincture (1:2) - 20-30 gtt in 4 oz. water, mix. Take 1 tsp. every 2-3 hours

Rosemary herb (Rosmarinus officinale) - dull, lethargic depression, thinking is too much of a bother, constant mental fog. Also for bilious depression (use with Evening Primrose and St. John's wort).

Dose: tincture (1:5) - 2-4 ml TID

tea - 1 tsp. dried herb, 8 oz. water, steep 20 minutes, take 4 oz. TID

St. John's wort flowering tops (Hypericum perforatum) - mild to moderate unipolar or situational depression. Dyspeptic outlook, sour stomach, sour attitude. Use with Lemon Balm for SAD.

Dose: tincture (1:5) - 3-4 ml QID

Syrian Rue herb (Peganum harmala) - mood elevator for asthenic, tired, deficient depressions.

Dose: tincture (1:5) 30-40 gtt TID

Tiger Lily bulb & herb (Lilium lancifolium) - depression with anxiety. Patient fears to be alone. Frequent muttering under the breath, weeping. Often associated with menstrual, menopausal or post-partum depression.

Dose: fresh plant extract (1:2) - 20 gtt in 4 oz. water, mix. Take 1 tsp. every 2-3 hours

White Baneberry root (Actea alba) - depression in women caused by hormonal imbalances with insomnia, headache, spasticity, and especially ovarian tenderness.

Dose: tincture (1:5) - 10-15 gtt in 4 oz. water, mix. Take 1 tsp. every 3 hours

Adjuncts to Antidepressant Herbs

The following adaptogens can be used as adjuncts along with antidepressant herbs for depression associated with exhaustion, HPA depletion (dark rings under the eyes, quivering tongue) and chronic illness, i.e., CFIDS, fibromyalgia, autoimmune disease, etc.

American Ginseng root (Panax quinquefolius)

Asian Ginseng root (Panax ginseng)

Ashwagandha root (Withania somnifera)

Cordyceps fungus (Cordyceps sinensis)

Dang Shen root (Codonopsis pilosula)

Jiaogulan herb (Gynostemma pentaphyllum)

Licorice rhizome (Glycyrrhiza glabra)

Rhodiola root (Rhodiola rosea)

Schisandra berry (Schisandra chinensis)

Siberian Ginseng root/stem (Eleutherococcus senticosus)

Anxiety

Bacopa fresh herb (Bacopa monnieri) - anxiolytic, especially useful for "cloudy thinking", mental confusion with anxiety, and nervous exhaustion with agitation.

Dose: tincture (1:2) 2-4 ml TID

Black Haw bark (*Viburnum prunifolium*) - anxiety associated with pregnancy. Use with Avena.

Dose: fresh tincture (1:2.5) 2-4 ml TID

tea - 1-2 tsp. dried bark, 8 oz. water, decoct 15 minutes, steep 1/2 hour, take 4 oz. QID

Blue Vervain herb (*Verbena hastata*) - PMS or menopausal anxiety, anxiety with nervous tics, tremors, or spasms. Use with Leonurus and Pulsatilla.

Dose: tincture (1:5) 1-2 ml QID

Cactus stem (*Selenicereus grandiflorus*) – the patient is nervous, sleepless, there is oppression in the chest and dyspnea, he/she fears some important function will cease (heart, breathing, death, etc.).

Dose: tea - 10-30 gtt in 4 oz. water, mix. Take 1 tsp. every 2-3 hours.

California Poppy fresh root & herb (*Eschscholtzia californica*) - useful in patients with excess/hyper insomnia, with anxiety, nervous tension, and stress headaches.

Dose: tincture (1:2) - 1.5-3 ml 3-4 times per day

Fresh Milky Oat seed (*Avena sativa*) - nervous exhaustion - neurasthenia with anxiety, irritability, and labile emotions. Emotionally brittle.

Dose: fresh seed tincture (1:2) - 4-6 ml QID

Hops strobile (*Humulus lupulus*) - nervous irritability or mild anxiety with wakefulness or gastric upset.

Dose: tincture (1:5) - 2-3 ml TID

Kava root (*Piper methysticum*) - anxiety with muscle tension, bruxism, restless leg syndrome, and pain.

Dose: tincture (1:5) 2-3 ml QID

Mimosa flowers or bark (*Albizia julibrissin*) – anxiety or irritability, emotionally brittle patients. Mimosa calms disturbed shen (bad dreams, fears).

Dose: tincture (1:5) – 1-2 ml TID

Motherwort herb (*Leonurus cardica*) – is an excellent nervine and anxiolytic. Use with Verbena hastata for PMS, menstrual, & menopausal anxiety. Add Pulsatilla for anxiety attacks.

Dose: tincture (1:2.5) – 2-4 ml TID

Passion Flower herb (*Passiflora incarnata*) - irritation of the brain, nervousness, restlessness, sleeplessness with muscle twitching, or circular thinking.

Dose: fresh tincture (1:2) - 30-40 gtt TID

tea - 1-2 tsp. dried herb, 8 oz. hot water, steep 45 minutes, take 1-2 cups per day

Scullcap herb (*Scutellaria lateriflora*) - nervousness or spasms due to mental overwork or physical exertion. Nervousness without apparent cause. The patient gets angry and "flies off the handle".

Dose: fresh tincture (1:2) - 2-4 ml. TID

Tiger Lily bulb & herb (Lilium lancifolium) - depression with anxiety. Patient fears to be alone. Frequent muttering under the breath, weeping. Often associated with menstrual, menopausal or post-partum depression.

Dose: fresh plant extract (1:2) - 20 gtt in 4 oz. water, mix. Take 1 tsp. every 2-3 hours

Valerian root (Valeriana officinale) – the patient is restless, nervous, and agitated with a pale face and cool skin.

Dose: tincture (1:2) 2-4 ml TID

Hysteria

Asafoetida gum resin (Ferula asafoetida) – hysteria with headache, dizziness, and flatulence. Muscle tightness, ticklish, or painful to the touch.

Dose: tincture (1:5) - 5-30 gtt TID

Lobelia fresh herb or seed (Lobelia inflata) - hysteria with muscle tension, the jaws are locked, or they have bruxism. Muscle spasms - hiccoughs and torticollis.

Dose: tincture - fresh herb (1:2) - 10-20 gtt TID/QID

seed (1:5) - 5-15 gtt TID/QID

Eli Jones' Formula for Hysteria

Asafoetida

Valerian

Cypripedium (replace with Eschscholtzia root)

Lobelia



equal parts

Dose: 20 gtt of each in
4 oz. water, mix, and
take 1 tsp. as needed

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