

HERBS FOR GRIEF, TRAUMA & The NERVOUS SYSTEM

Shared by: Kelbi McCumber Morris of LUMENous Healing



@meKelbi kelbi@lumenoushealing.com

Adaptogens, which help us adapt to stress; nervines, for relaxing the nerves; Trophorestoratives for nutritive restoration; flower essences & Essential oils for emotions & mood, bitters for the liver to detox our emotions, and plant sleep aids to promote healing, rest and reset. We can use these in many ways & I encourage you to use them in whatever ways best fit into your lifestyle. Whether that is with a ritually soothing cup of tea, a quick & potent tincture, a spritz of hydrosol, a sip of or a well placed flower essence, or in a warm relaxing bath.

Herbs discussed in class:

Burdock, Bleeding Heart, Indian Ghost Pipe, Pasque Flower, Skullcap, Wood Betony, Rhododendron, Olive, Ginseng, Linden, Hawthorn, Motherwort, Star of Bethlehem, White Yarrow, Sweet Chestnut, White Chestnut, Walnut, Damiana, Ashwagandha, Blue Vervain, Gorse, Borage, Water Violet, Gardenia, Hibiscus, Mimosa, Rose, Lavender, St. John's Wort, Lemon Balm, Dandelion, Nettle, Tulsi, Schisandra, Reishi, Cleavers, Golden seal, Yellow dock, Kava kava, California Poppy, Hops, Passion Flower, Valerian, Red Clover, etc....

Soothe Me Infusion

This blend will help a person to rest and sleep. It builds the nervous system even as it soothes and calms. It isn't a recipe to use forever—just for when it's truly needed. It's a lovely helper when called for.

- 1 cup dried violet leaves
- 1 cup dried oatstraw
- 1/2 cup dried hawthorn berries and/or leaves and flowers

Bring oatstraw to boil in half gallon of water and pour over the rest of the herbs. Allow this blend to steep overnight on your counter. In the morning, squeeze out the herbs and heat the infusion and put it into a stainless steel or glass insert thermos to drink throughout the day.

Calm Those Frazzled Nerves Tincture Blend—Variation I

Use this blend whenever you like, but especially when life has given you more than you think you can handle. Remember that it never does, no matter how it feels in the moment. You got this!



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- 1 teaspoon (or 3 parts) violet leaf tincture
- 2 droppers full (or 1 part) skullcap leaf and flower tincture
- 1 dropper full (or 1/2 part) California poppy tincture

I add this tincture blend to hot water to make a soothing, sedating nervine recipe. You can also make an overnight violet leaf infusion and add the skullcap and California poppy tinctures. Another method is to make skullcap tea (steeped for 30 minutes) and add the other two herbs as tinctures.

Calm Those Frazzled Nerves Tincture Blend—Variation II

Call on this blend when your nerve endings are raw and frazzled from grieving or seething, when they've been fried and short-circuited with shock and/or anger, or you can't stop thinking and you're not sleeping well.

- 1 part St. John's wort tincture
- 1/2 part skullcap tincture
- 1/4 part California poppy tincture

Mix these tinctures into hot water. It is very effective for helping anyone frazzled. If giving it to a distressed child or an elder start with small amounts, such as 5 drops of St. John's, 2 drops of skullcap, and one drop of California poppy. You can always increase them. Sometimes you need to increase or decrease the amounts bit by bit to find the right dosage for yourself. The range of what is acceptable is broad. An example of a large but still safe dosage is up to a teaspoon of St. John's—roughly 125 drops—and 1/2 teaspoon of skullcap (though with skullcap, smaller quantities are usually more sedative than large ones), and 1/2 teaspoon of California poppy (here the higher quantity is potentially more sedative).

Grief-Healing Infusion

This is a good recipe for shock and/or grief that results in a lot of physical tension, tightness, and agitation, with or without crying. It will help relax the mind and the muscles, nourish and soothe the nerves, and aid circulation and oxygenation to help the heart.

- 1 cup dried linden blossoms
- 1 cup dried violet leaves
- 1/2 cup dried hawthorn berries and/or flowers and leaves

Pour 1/2 gallon of boiled water over these herbs in a half-gallon jar. Fill it to the top, as full as possible, then cap it. Let it steep overnight, and then decant. Refrigerate, or heat and put in a thermos.

NOTE: Linden (*Tilia americana* and other species) is not only a popular wildflower for making honey, but is a "honey" of a tree. Linden opens the emotional and spiritual heart even as it improves cardiovascular circulation. If you are willing, linden helps you dance with current grief and clear our old, "stuck" grief. Linden has a divinely inspired way of opening you to the bliss of your true multidimensional nature—the larger reality we're all part of.



Linden Blossom Bath

This luscious mixture is a perfect infusion to celebrate life and love when your heart is happy, or to help you heal when your heart is aching or broken, or when you've just soured on life in general. It is mood-altering, like a good glass of red wine. Taken over time, it is a transformative blend.

This tart yet sweet aromatic recipe is one you can count on to help you heal when you are grieving, even if you have turned inward, isolating yourself physically and/or emotionally and psychically. These plants have a way of helping you be with your feelings. When you allow your feelings space simply to be what they are, you can and will heal.

Taking a linden blossom bath is a particularly magical way to experience the linden tree's special medicine. • 2 to 3 cups dried linden blossoms

Pour boiling water over the herbs in a half-gallon jar. Cap tightly and let sit 1-2 hours. Pour the liquid through a good strainer and add it to a bathtub filled with hot water. Then pour another half-gallon of boiling water over the herbs in the jar, and let that sit overnight to drink the next day (cool or reheated). Refrigerate the remainder after that.

Aid worker's elixir (keep going and keep it together) A Formula for Aid Workers
Whether responding to a local disaster or supporting a friend experiencing trauma or distress in their life, responders need support too, especially anyone providing aid over the long haul. Here's a formula I love for just this type of work:

Eleuthero (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) Eleuthero is an adaptogen, which means that it helps the body manage stress in a fairly generalized way. Recently, adaptogens are starting to be defined as herbs that have explicit action on the HPA axis or on the stress-response functions of the endocrine system as a whole. In other words - adaptogens can help you keep going. Eleuthero is stimulating, but it has a somewhat different quality than caffeine. You definitely get the uplifting action, but it's not quite as much of a spike as caffeine can be, and it doesn't have the tendency to cause "jitters" or upset digestion. Eleuthero is fantastic when you need to keep working even in extreme conditions without enough resources - and in fact, that's how a lot of the studies on this plant were done!

Angelica (*Angelica archangelica*) Angelica is a plant of extremes - it lives most happily up near the Arctic Circle, where it's either all day or all night. Even in the summer, though the sun is out 20+ hours a day, it's never really warm. Angelica is a tall plant with a large, heavy flower head, and yet it's stem is a strong spine that can support that weight even in forceful winds. Angelica can give you energy to last through extremes without losing your balance, and to support others even when you're feeling tossed about.



Rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*) Rhodiola is another Arctic Circle plant. It thrives on extreme rocky outcroppings and can hold things together. Often this plant is touted as an "anti-depressant", but traditionally it was thought of more as an endurance plant. Imagine Vikings rowing in open boats across cold seas - physically, that's a tremendous feat. When you can't see the shore (and might not for a few days), everything is grey and damp and cold, and you just have to keep moving without losing your internal compass: that's Rhodiola!

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) Yarrow is a battlefield plant - traditionally it was an ally to wounded soldiers. And of course, with its strong ability to staunch bleeding, it's easy to see why. But the protective qualities of Yarrow were so strong that in naming the plant, botanists reference Achilles, who was protected (or "armored"!) against all harm except for the place on his heel where his mother held him to dip him into the magic river. Physiologically, we work with Yarrow for bleeding, and emotionally that can be true too - to prevent your own resources from bleeding out of you while you're supporting others. But the mythology behind Yarrow - though we haven't invented the microscope that can explain it yet - also plays a part: Yarrow is like "emotional armor". When you need to be strong in difficult situations, when you need to put on your armor and head out to the emotional battlefield, Yarrow has an amazing shielding quality.

Blend a strong decoction or make a tincture of these plants in equal parts. I like to add something sweet – **maple** syrup would be my first choice, or molasses, because of the mineral content and nourishing aspect, though honey is also a good choice. Just like chocolate helps you recover from the emotional onslaught of the Dementors in the Harry Potter stories, there's something particularly magical about the ability of sweet things to feel soothing in difficult times!

Consume freely as needed. And of course, once you and your community are safe, let yourself sleep for a week! This formula is fantastic whether you're working in a first aid tent after a natural disaster, supporting a loved one through hospice care, or even "just" supporting your teenager as they navigate the pits and falls of high school!

Wild Rose Cordial

1. Collect wild rose flowers and buds. De-stem the blooms.
2. Roughly chop the petals and pack lightly into a pint or quart mason jar. *(Add one intact bud for extra invocation of fullness and enchantment, the beginning of something new.)*
3. Pour brandy over the mixture until the petals are almost covered.
4. Add a good dash of honey to fully cover your flowers, with at least 1/2 inch of honey (a ratio of around 1/4 honey to 3/4 brandy. If you want a sweeter elixir, try 1/2 honey and 1/2 brandy).
5. Cover and let the cordial sit in a dark place for at least four weeks. (If the mixture reaches close to the rim of the jar, line the underside of the lid with parchment paper.)



6. Sneak off spoonfuls as needed (eating the petals as you go) or simply strain by pouring through a fine cheesecloth into a clean jar or decanter. If your honey mixture is stubbornly thick, pour the contents of the jar into a double boiler and gently heat until the honey is warm enough to run.

7. If you want to experience a full-spectrum cordial, let your mixture sit until the wild rose hips are fruiting in the fall. Add a handful of rose hips to your mixture. Stir and let sit with both hips and petals for another six weeks before you decant.

8. Sip, enjoy, luxuriate.

If avoiding alcohol, you can substitute any kind of vinegar for the brandy and store in the fridge for up to a year.

Violet paste: 1 cup violet blossoms (packed); 2 tablespoons lemon juice; 1/4 cup water; 2 1/2 cups honey. Give 1/4 teaspoon at a time, once an hour or so, as needed until relief is sought. **Violet honey** without the lemon is beautiful also.

Mimosa Bark Tincture (Dried)

1. Combine 1/2 cup dried mimosa bark with 1 cup of alcohol of choice.
2. Let sit for four to six weeks, shaking occasionally.
3. Strain alcohol from the herbs. Take in dosages of 5-15 drops up to four times a day.

Folk Hawthorn Cordial/Hawthorn Berry Elixir

Hawthorn berries (dried or fresh) & Brandy

Honey If you've collected fresh berries, simply siphon them into a mason jar and cover with brandy! If you are using dry berries, pack the jar 1/2 to 3/4 full with berries and then pour brandy to the bottom of the jar lip. 6 weeks then strain

Herbal Bath - most any herbs can be used in the place of or along with the lime blossom

Pour 1 1/2 pt of boiling water on to 1 or 2 handfuls of Lime Blossom, leave it to stand for half an hour, then strain the liquid and add it to the hot bath, which should be taken just before bed. This may be a fully body bath, a foot bath or a hand bath. Light a candle, get cozy, meditate or read a fairytale and relax.

Herbal Grief Tea

Ingredients

6 parts motherwort

4 parts [rose petals](#)

2 parts each of hawthorn berry, linden, and violet

1 part each of [cardamom](#) and cinnamon bark

Directions

- Combine herbs and mix well. Store in a labeled glass jar.



- To use, add 2 teaspoons of herbal grief tea mix to 8 ounces of just-boiled water. Steep 10 minutes before straining and composting herbs.
- Sweeten as desired, drink, and enjoy 2-3 cups a day!
- The star herb in this herbal grief tea blend is none other than motherwort. Motherwort works to not only strengthen the cardiovascular system, but it's bitter and nervine properties are thought to drive melancholy from the heart and cheer the mind.
- Rose is an age-old botanical commonly used after loss. Rose can be used to encourage the heart to stay open and soft as opposed to closing up and pulling inward, retreating from life after experiencing deep hurt.
- Hawthorn, linden, and violet are all supportive herbs that are not only used to support the cardiovascular system but the nervous system as well. Hawthorn provides protection, strength to face the day, and grounds us in our present lives. Linden is truly a supportive herb for the heart and mind, especially when it comes to grieving as it works silently to ease physical symptoms caused by grief. Violet, often referred to as "heart ease," assists the body in the movement of lymph fluid and helps to move stagnation or obstructions which are particularly helpful during the anger phase of grief. Violet, like rose, helps to soften the heart, allowing it to feel again.
- Cardamom and cinnamon are not only used to enhance the flavor of herbal grief tea, but they work to stimulate circulation, clear the mind, move energy, and lift the spirits as well.

Heal My Heart and Give Me Strength Tea Blend

- Dried hawthorn berries – I like to decoct these in the boiling water before pouring over the rest of the herbs
- Dried holy basil leaves
- Dried skullcap
- Dried nettles
- Pinch of fresh spearmint
- Borage flower essence
- just a pinch of Motherwort



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