

BY DR. MALTZ

# TOP 5 HERBS FOR STRESS & ANXIETY

Integrative  
Doctor  
Approved!



WEST HOLISTIC MEDICINE

---

# DR. MALTZ'S TOP 5 HERBS FOR STRESS AND ANXIETY

---

While the diagnosis of anxiety is a HUGE topic in and of itself, most of us experience distress, dis-ease, irritability, fatigue and the general feeling of “running around like a chicken with it’s head cut off” at least from time to time.

Ultimately, our feelings about the world don’t change unless we change deepseated habits, behaviors and thoughts. Doing things like regular exercise, getting 7- 8 hours of sleep per night, avoiding social media, cutting back on activities that don’t bring us joy and sharing in engaging community events can definitely prevent or even treat mild, generalized anxiety. Ideally, we’d all live our lives to the fullest, engaging in fulfilling work that pays us well and leaves us enough time to stay active, sleep well, laugh with friends and family and volunteer.

But, in reality, that simply is not the case for many Americans. They simply don’t have the time, mindset or resources to do all of these things. While I do think people need to check their perfectionism at the door, simplify their lives and work on themselves regularly to highlight what they truly want out of life, I am realistic that some aren’t ready to change their habits and that’s ok too.

In fact, I believe as time speeds up (which it is!) and our lives get busier and busier, we create this feeling of busyness in order to “get everything done”. So, sometimes we need a little help. Be that in the form of meditation, exercise, herbs or supplements, I’m all for it. I’m also FOR people who’ve tried these techniques and feel they need medication to help them out while they transform their habits and negative thinking. That’s where herbs and supplements may be of benefit (and occasionally medication).

## **HERE ARE MY TOP 5 NATURAL HERBS AND SUPPLEMENTS FOR MILD, GENERALIZED ANXIETY...**

You know, when your mind is spinning and going 100 mph; your heart is pumping a bit more than usual; and maybe you experience diarrhea or constipation when it worsens. I am NOT talking about panic disorder, PTSD, or severe anxiety (although the herbs/supplements discussed can help with those too):

# LAVENDAR

---

This herb is one of the most calming scents known to man and it goes without saying that it's beneficial to most. I have written about it's unique properties as an essential oil and I often recommend it to be taken internally by those who are extremely sensitive to other herbs/supplements.

In fact, on particularly tough days at my old job, we used to pass out cotton balls with lavender oil on them for all employees and staff. It really helped us stay calm and not react to external situations happening in the clinic. And our patients love when we are relaxed as we became more attentive to their needs.

It's calming to the entire nervous system when used both internally or aromatically. I highly recommend inhaling this essential oil throughout the day to decrease sympathetic tone (fight or flight) and increase parasympathetic tone (rest and digest) in the body.

For internal use, I love a product called Lavela by Integrative Therapeutics, which is a brand that only healthcare practitioners and some local pharmacies can distribute (ie, People's Pharmacy in Austin)



# ASHWAGHANDA

---

This herb from India is a potent adaptogen (meaning it helps you adapt to the world better) and can be found in many herbal formulas for anxiety, stress and the sleep. As it is a more "male" herb (the energetic blueprint of the herb), I often prescribe it with other herbs that compound it's effects in a gentle way.

It is a member of the nightshade family and thus, some people may not tolerate it. Also, given it's latin name is *Withania somnifera* (with somno- being the latin root word for sleep), it can compound sedative effects of anxiety medications and antidepressants, so it should only be taken as prescribed by a knowledgeable practitioner. I highly recommend starting it at night to see it's effect



# KAVA KAVA

This root native to Polynesia and the South Pacific has been used ceremoniously and medicinally for centuries to improve sleep, decrease anxiety and promote relaxation. More recently, the herb received some bad press due to a few case reports (25 to be exact) of fulminant liver failure/damage after using the herb. It was subsequently banned from use in the U.S., but has since replenished its reputation after those case reports were found to have been isolated and potentiated by a mix of factors, such as alcohol and prescription drug use.

In fact, the herb has become so popular, that Kava root bars are popping up nationwide! You can drink custom kava tea creations while getting work done or socializing! Win-win! What I love about kava (and it's not for everyone), is that it relaxes the body while not affecting the mind. It can relax the mind as well, but it generally is not a mental sedative.

My favorite form of this relaxing herb is in a tea made by Yogi Tea – it works well and tastes great! Beware of possible GI side effects such as upset stomach and diarrhea and make sure to consult with your doctor about any possible liver issues you have before starting this herb. Otherwise, you should feel relaxed and restored after drinking it.



# LEMON BALM



Otherwise known as *Melissa officinalis*, this herb is in the mint family and can be used aromatically or internally for its calming effects.

The plant is generally used to attract bees for honey making, thus I think of this herb as a happy plant. Only happy, thriving bees can make honey for their Queen. And this herb can help keep people calm in times of chaos.

I generally recommend it in essential oil or tea form for nighttime use. It is often found in combination form with similar herbs that promote sleep and reduce restlessness. It, like most calming herbs, can cause sedation and can interact with prescription medications, so please consult your Integrative Medicine provider before starting the herbs listed.

# **L-THEANINE (FROM TEA)**

**This amino acid found in green and black tea has been researched for it's direct effects on the nervous system.**

While it is not generally my personal go-to recommendation, many people find it helpful for improving sleep, agitation and restlessness. It has been found to work directly on the brain and does so without sedation.

Each cup of black tea contains about 25 mg/cup of L-theanine while green tea contains about 8 mg/cup.

In order to get the recommend daily dose (200 mg), supplement form is promoted and is generally well tolerated. While this is just a partial list of herbs and supplements to help with mild to moderate generalized anxiety, I urge you to try one or two remedies (after consulting with your health provider and/or local herbalist) to see how they affect you.

**YOU WILL LIKELY FIND THEY ARE BENEFICIAL AND HAVE MINIMAL NEGATIVE SIDE EFFECTS.**

Other ways to achieve more calm in your day include using the breath (see my blog post on the 4-7-8 breath), exercise, acupuncture, journaling, yoga and just stepping out in to nature for some fresh air and vitamin D.

Like always, you will need to consult with your healthcare provider before starting any of these herbs as they may interfere with medications you're on and/or may not be right for you.

If you'd like to learn more about any of the techniques or herbs/supplements mentioned, please contact me directly at [amaltz@westholisticmedicine.com](mailto:amaltz@westholisticmedicine.com).

The possibilities are endless!

In Health,  
**Dr. Maltz**

