

# Stress less!

Naturopath Toni Green shows you how taking a healing herbal tea break will boost your resilience to stress and anxiety.



## \* D-I-Y with Toni: Anti-stress smoothie

Place 1 peeled banana, 1 peeled orange, 2 tablespoons dried chamomile flowers, 2 sprigs fresh lemon balm leaves, 2 tablespoons chia seeds, 1 cup of purified water and 1 cup of ice in a blender – whiz, and enjoy!



### Kava (*Piper methysticum*)

Kavalactones, the active ingredients in this traditional Polynesian remedy, are sedative, anti-stress, analgesic, anxiolytic, anti-convulsant, anaesthetic, and neuroprotective. They work by binding to brain receptors associated with cravings and addictions, suggesting significant potential for treating substance abuse. Kava is effective against stress, without the side effects and addiction problems associated with benzodiazepines. Interestingly, it improves mood and cognitive performance, unlike anxiolytic prescription drugs which decrease cognitive function. Caution: Don't take kava with melatonin, 5-HTP, or St John's wort.

### St John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

This contains the chemicals hyperforin, hypericin, and pseudohypericin, which delay or decrease reabsorption of the antidepressant neurotransmitters serotonin, dopamine, norepinephrine and gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) by nerve cells, effectively keeping more of them available for the body to use. It enhances feelings of stability and control, and alleviates panic attacks, anxiety, menopausal mood swings, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and cravings for alcohol, nicotine, and opiates. It is useful for treating the depression associated with chronic fatigue syndrome and seasonal affective disorder (SAD), and has none of the addictive qualities linked to conventional antidepressants. Caution: St John's wort is an MAO inhibitor and alters the effect of certain drugs. Consult a qualified practitioner; do not self-prescribe.

### Vervain (*Verbena officinalis*)

A mild sedative and natural tranquilliser, this works on the parasympathetic nervous system to promote relaxation. It is considered to be a 'quietening' herb with an 'opening' quality that makes you feel more present and connected,

which is why it is also used for spiritual healing. Vervain is thymoleptic in action, meaning it modifies and lifts mood, so it's great for tension, melancholy, nervous exhaustion, convalescence, and stress related to work or trauma. Add a strong brew to a warm bath for a supremely nurturing experience.

### Zizyphus (*Zizyphus jujuba*)

Excellent for treating insomnia or restlessness, especially when accompanied by fatigue, muscle weakness, lightheadedness and mental confusion, zizyphus is rich in iron which boosts blood flow, therefore oxygenating and nourishing all your body organs. It has many anti-anxiety and calming effects, positively impacting hormonal levels, and relaxing mind and body. The alkaloids found in zizyphus increase the activity of an enzyme required for the synthesis of the neurotransmitter acetylcholine, which counters the effects of stress. Research shows zizyphus reduces waking during the night and disturbed dreams, and significantly prolongs sleep time.

### Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

A carminative herb, meaning it eases indigestion, as well as a mild sedative, this is ideal for people whose stress manifests as an upset stomach, heartburn, and indigestion. It contains volatile oils shown to both calm the nervous system and relieve migraines triggered by stress or anxiety, and rosmarinic acid which boosts levels of GABA in the brain, in turn producing a soothing effect. One study showed that taking lemon balm, in combination with other calming herbs, reduced anxiety-associated symptoms and insomnia in 81 percent of participants, who also reported feeling more alert on waking. Lemon balm's actions are similar to benzodiazepine drugs, but without the side effects and addictive potential. ❄️

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