

# Adaptogens Handout: Herbs for Stress Support & Energy



Download lengthy notes  
“Zen Herbs”  
off the Class Notes page  
of my website!

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**PLEASE READ:** The information in this handout has not been approved by the FDA and does not in any way intend to diagnose or prescribe. Always consult with your health practitioner before taking any remedy.

**Above this, I also recommend that you...**

1. Research an herb in at least three good sources before ingesting it (see website for sources),
2. Listen to your body/intuition to determine if an herb resonates or doesn't resonate with you.
3. Take proper steps to ensure that any wildcrafted or cultivated plant is what you think it is, AND
4. Check with your pharmacist for herb-drug interactions if you take prescriptions.

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT STRESS?

**Sympathetic Nervous System:** Fight or flight system. Adrenaline is the prominent hormone/ neurotransmitter. Cortisol kicks in with long-term stress. Most of us experience stress in this system.

### What happens during sympathetic nervous system mode (STRESS)?

- Adrenaline may flood both nervous system and endocrine system pathways. Adrenaline is strong partly because it acts as both a neurotransmitter and as a hormone. There are many receptor sites throughout the nervous system that adrenaline can bind to.
  - ↳ Stress hits us quickly but can take a while to subside.
- Blood is shunted to the heart, brain, lungs, muscles.
  - ↳ We think and breathe better, muscles work better (at least initially).
- Heartbeat goes up, increased force of contraction. Blood pressure & viscosity increases.
  - ↳ Increased blood pressure, stress on the heart
- Lungs, bronchi dilate to bring more air and more O<sub>2</sub>
- GI peristalsis slows. Digestive sphincters contract to keep food in spot.
  - ↳ Poor digestion and constipation
- Liver glyconeogenesis (breaks down stored sugar) and glycogenesis (new sugar made from fatty acids, not glucose) for ATP (cellular energy) production.
  - ↳ Initially: increased energy levels, increased blood sugar
  - ↳ Long term: blood sugar issues, poor storage of nutrients, abdominal obesity, insulin sensitivity
- Mental activity increases.
- Immune system decreases.
- Libido decreases
- Wound healing (over time) goes down
- Detoxification slows
- Metabolism increases
  - ↳ Initially: weight loss
  - ↳ Long term: blood sugar issues can cause abdominal obesity

### Some Stress Culprits:

Outlook on life  
Stressful jobs  
Multitasking

Lack of social connections  
Poor nutrition  
Inactivity, sedative lifestyle  
Too much structured time

Not saying no  
Not enough time in nature  
Negative past experiences  
“Wired” for it

### All-Natural Stress & Energy Support WITHOUT Ingesting Herbs...

- Breath Work (See Dr. Andrew Weil's 4-7-8 Breathing Exercise online)
- Exercise, especially aerobic, especially outdoors in a beautiful spot
- Spending time in nature
- Partaking in art, music
- Getting a good night's sleep
- Eating a healthy diet, taking/eating B vitamins, Omega 3s, vitamin D, iron etc. as needed
  - Valuing your personal time, health, and wellbeing. Saying no when you need to. Asking for help.

Get the LONG set of notes at [WintergreenBotanicals.com/classnotes](http://WintergreenBotanicals.com/classnotes) “Zen Herbs”

## An adaptogen...

1. is relatively non-toxic.
2. has broad action on body systems and is non-specific. It provides resistance to a broad spectrum of biological, chemical, and physical factors.
3. can regulate or normalize body functions. Ginseng may increase or decrease blood pressure according to what the person needs.
4. is likely to work by regulating hormones, particularly stress hormones, via the hypothalamic/pituitary/adrenal (HPA) axis, and the sympatho-adrenal system (loosely, what we talked about in the first part of the lesson).  
Adaptogens seem to be able to raise or lower adrenaline, cortisol, and a variety of other hormones. They may also affect the nervous system directly, improve ATP (cellular energy) production, and oxygen utilization.

Compared to stimulants (i.e.: caffeine), adaptogens are more restorative over the long haul and have more beneficial effects on the body. However, they can be abused and have side effects, especially the more strongly “zippy” adaptogens. Adaptogens are best used for added support while you get your diet, lifestyle, and stress management back on track NOT as a substitute for taking care of yourself, getting enough sleep, etc. They can play wonderful supportive roles in blends for other health concerns that have a stress component. You can take them as tea, tincture, capsule... see recipes for more.

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## Zippy Adaptogens

- **Ginseng** (*Panax spp*) ~ *A classic but overused, often unsustainably sourced and adulterated adaptogen*
- **Eleuthero** (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) ~ *Stimulating herb to increase resistance to stressful situations including support of immune health.*
- **Rhodiola** (*Rhodiola rosea*) ~ *Mental & Physical Energy, Stimulating, Nerve & Brain Tonic*
- **Codonopsis** (*Codonopsis spp*) ~ *Poor Man’s Ginseng, Energy & Immune Support – Tasty and Sweet!*

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## Balancing Adaptogens

- **Maca** (*Lepidium meyenii*) ~ *Nutrition, Hormone & Stress Support*
- **Schisandra** (*Schisandra chinensis*) ~ *Balancing, Liver & Immune Support*
- **Reishi** (*Ganoderma spp*), possibly *chaga* (*Inotous obliquus*) ~ *Fungal Support, Tonic, Longevity, Immunity*

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## Calm Energy Adaptogens

- **Ashwagandha** (*Withania somnifera*) ~ *Nerve Tonic, Pain/Inflammation Support, Thyroid Booster, Mood*
- **Gotu Kola** (*Centella asiatica*) ~ *Support for Nerves, Connective Tissue, Circulation & Brain, Anti-Anxiety*
- **Holy Basil/Tulsi** (*Ocimum sanctum*) ~ *Zen Herb for Mind/Spirit, Blood Sugar Balancer, Anti-Inflammatory*

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## Adaptogen Recipes (remember to check for herb-drug RX)

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### Energizing Bonbons

Mix 2/3 nut butter 1/3 honey and a couple teaspoons of dry herb powders (maca, shatavari, ashwagandha, codonopsis, cacao, hawthorn, turmeric, bacopa, holy basil, gotu kola...). Roll into balls, coat in cacao powder, toasted sesame seeds, or toasted coconut.

### Deep Energy Immune Chai

In 16 ounces of water, simmer 1/2 teaspoon each adaptogen/immune herbs of choice (ashwagandha, codonopsis, chaga, astragalus, slice of reishi), 1 teaspoon each nettle and oat straw, with 7 whole cloves, 2 cardamom pods, 1 star anise pod, 2 cinnamon sticks, and an optional “coin” or slice of ginger for 20 minutes. Strain and add milk/sweetener as/if desired.

### Sweet-Tart Immune Tea

Steep 1 teaspoon each elderberries, hibiscus, and schizandra berries in 16 ounces hot water for 15+ minutes with a good dollop of honey.

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### Ashwagandha Golden Milk

Simmer or stir into hot milk: 1/4 teaspoon ashwagandha powder, 1/4 teaspoon turmeric powder, pinch each of nutmeg and black pepper and 1/2 teaspoon of honey or to taste. (For milk, use whole cow’s milk, almond, coconut, hemp, oat - the fat in these milks aids absorption).

### Holy Green Tea

Add to your favorite green tea (I love jasmine green, especially pearls) 1 teaspoon dry or 1 sprig fresh holy basil (tulsi). Steep 3-5 minutes. Also check out Organic India’s Tulsi Teas in stores.

### Sleep Tea

Steep 1/2 tsp each lemon balm, skullcap, passionflower & spearmint in 4-6 ounces of hot water for 15-20 minutes. Strain, sweeten with honey as desired.

**Broth:** reishi, astragalus, ashwagandha, codonopsis...

**Smoothies:** maca, ashwagandha, codonopsis, gotu...

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