



Best stress-busters

Adaptogenic herbs do just that – help your body adapt to stress, so you become more resilient, says naturopath **Toni Green**.

Rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*)

This herb increases our red blood cells' oxygen-carrying capacity, so – as we usually don't breathe optimally when we're stressed – it offsets this deficit, making us feel calmer. It also reduces the stress hormone cortisol: while some cortisol is necessary, constant exposure to elevated levels lowers blood sugar response, impairs memory, reduces cellular energy production and immune function, and triggers abdominal weight gain. By countering cortisol release, rhodiola helps to balance the nervous system network in the long-term, as well as boosting energy, mental focus, and disease resistance. It also up-regulates hormone-sensitive lipase, an enzyme which triggers the body to utilise fat stored in abdominal cells.

Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

Used in traditional herbalism for centuries to counter anxiety and stress, modern-day studies in Phytotherapy Research and Phytomedicine confirm that combining lemon balm with valerian reduces stress in adults and treats restlessness and insomnia in young children, respectively, while findings in Psychosomatic Medicine show that, even on its own, lemon balm increases calmness, alertness, and cognition. According to Neurochemical Research, lemon balm reduces cortisol and inhibits an enzyme that degrades GABA, which is commonly targeted in anti-anxiety medications, and research published in Neuropsychopharmacology suggests its mood- and memory-enhancing prowess may make it a valuable adjunct in treating Alzheimer's.

in another, published in the Chinese Journal of Physiology, it improved endurance in athletes. Siberian ginseng can be safely used over a long period, and will also strengthen memory and help you to stay focused and clear, even under pressure.

Passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*)

According to a Phytotherapy Research study, taking passionflower tea before bed improves sleep quality. This herb is particularly effective against generalised anxiety disorders, including pre-surgery anxiety. Other applications include: insomnia; gastrointestinal upsets, especially if they are anxiety-related; seizures; hysteria; ADHD; irregular heartbeat; nervousness and excitability; and relieving symptoms related to withdrawal from narcotic drugs.

D-I-Y with Toni:

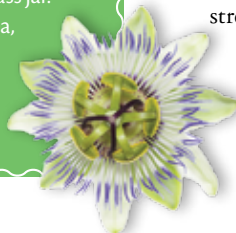


Soothing tea

Store equal parts of dried lemon balm, passionflower and oats in a glass jar.

To make tea, steep 1

teaspoon of the mixture in 1 cup of boiling water for 5 minutes. Drink twice daily.



Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*)

This herb improves our resistance to stress and also reduces the cortisol elevation and immune dysfunction that is usually triggered by the stress response. It has a powerful energising effect, especially if stress is accompanied by lethargy. In one study, published in the Archives of Pharmacology, Siberian ginseng was shown to relax blood vessels, therefore decreasing any stress-induced increase in blood pressure;

Withania (*Withania somnifera*)

Also known as ashwagandha, or Indian ginseng, this herb helps the body resist stress and maintain a constant state of inner balance. Plus, a Fertility & Sterility study shows it improves semen quality and testosterone status by reducing the usual rise in lipid peroxidation caused by chronic stress.

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