



Gut - Heart - Mood Relief!

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“Health from the Heart of Nature”



*This presentation is for informational purposes only and not to be construed as medical advice.
If you need medical care, please consult the practitioner of your choice.*

Workshop Goals:

- Review how the Gut, Heart and Nervous System work together
 - Explore the impacts that each can have on the other
- Consider a Materia Medica that can support each system and all of them together.

The Connections

There is a highway... That connects the organs that are found in the trunk of the body.
Vagus from Latin, “to wander”. Also called the 10th cranial nerve

- ◆ The autonomic nervous system's longest nerve
- ◆ Plays a role in “rest-digest” responses
- ◆ Oversees a vast array of crucial bodily functions, including control of mood, immune response, digestion, and heart rate
- ◆ Carries information between brain and organs

Information flows both ways

More from organs to brain (*Afferent*)
than from brain to organs (*Efferent*)

HPA Axis (endocrine)

- ◆ Communication system between Hypothalamus-Pituitary Gland-Adrenal Glands
- ◆ In response to stressors (internal or external) releases cortisol to allow you to respond to stress.
- ◆ Triggers “fight-flight” chemical cascades
- ◆ Short term is positive: Keeps us alert, helps us respond to danger
- ◆ Chronic is damaging to body and mind.

The Vagus Nerve is a key pathway in the
parasympathetic nervous system,
facilitating
rest ✧ digest ✧ ease

Vagus Nerve

Effect on heart: Regulates heart rate, blood pressure; sends signal to heart to release acetylcholine which slows the heart. Imparts sense of “heart’s ease”

Effect on gut: Helps us feel satiated after a meal.

Affected by gut if: Intestinal permeability “leaky gut”, microbiome disharmony or poor diversity, Inflammation. *(Can all activate vagus nerve and affect nervous system adversely)*

Effect on nervous system: Promotes production of calming hormone oxytocin and others Aids in memory formation. *“Over time, a strong vagal tone can increase stress tolerance which will lead to faster recovery time from illness, injury, stress, and emotional trauma.”²*

Recap Vagus Nerve Actions:

- ◆ Heart – slows and eases action
- ◆ Gut – promotes satiation
 - Adversely affected by
 - intestinal permeability “leaky gut”
 - microbiome dysfunction
 - inflammation
- ◆ Nerves
 - promotes production of calming hormones
 - aids in memory formation

Vagal Tone: Indication of how well the vagus nerve is working.

- ◆ Best measurement is heart rate variability (HRV).
- ◆ High HRV = good vagal tone

Low vagal tone associated with gastrointestinal and neurological conditions, IBS, colitis, heart disease, depression, epilepsy etc.

Good tone associated with *improvement* in gastrointestinal illnesses, cardiovascular function, mental health, anxiety, autoimmune conditions.

Goal

Support Vagal Tone
and
Coherence between Heart, Gut and Nervous System



When one system is adversely impacted it can affect the others too.

Examples:

- ◆ You eat food your body doesn't like and get heart palpitations
- ◆ You become anxious and get sick to your stomach
- ◆ your microbiome is weakened and you become anxious

conversely . . .

When one system is positively impacted it can affect the others too.

Examples: You drink a relaxing tea and

- ◆ stomach quits churning
- ◆ heart rate slows
- ◆ breath slows
- ◆ mood lifts

Coherence

Order of intervention: Start anywhere — but — for long term, gut has high impact!

- ◆ As long as gut is sending alarm signals to the nervous system, the heart and organs stay alarmed too.
 - Immune system is reacting with inflammation.
 - Makes it harder for other systems to respond with ease.
 - As heart is eased, makes it easier to bring into coherence; and entrain other organs.

Gut:

Is part of the nervous system and has its own nervous system.

- ◆ Produces neurotransmitters;
- ◆ Affects mood;
- ◆ Affects endocrine system involved in production some hormones and many neurotransmitters.

Houses Gut Microbiome — The living world of bacteria, fungi & viruses in gut.

- ◆ It communicates with the enteric nervous system and ANS via chemical signaling.
- ◆ Some consider microbiome *part of* ANS and immune system.
- ◆ Its state affects heart field, brain, mood. What we eat matters!

Food tip: Remove inflammatory foods!

*For many people this will include wheat & glutenous grains, cow's milk and dairy, soy.
For best results work with all three systems, gut. Heart and nervous system at once.*

Medicines and Amount

Most of these herbs will work well as *tinctures, teas or glycerites*. (*Dose: consider the person.*)

Teas – 1-3 teaspoons / cup H₂O, depending on freshness and strength of herb. Steep 30 min.

Strong infusions – 1 cup dried herb +/- per quart H₂O. Steep overnight. (Best for vulneraries.)

Tinctures - 15-30 drops. Try 20, and adjust according to response.

Glycerites – Dried 1:7 or 1:8; 60% glycerin, 40% water for most herbs, or can do 50%-50%.

Gut Principles of care:

Warm the stomach, relax the stomach, promote digestive secretions, support tissue healing.

Herbal Actions: *Warming Carminatives, Bitters, Vulneraries*

Materia Medica - Gut

Anise (*Pimpinella anisum*) Seed. Warming carminative, diffusive, astringent. Tincture, or tea in or foods. Caution: pregnancy.³

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) Flower. Warm, dry. Antimicrobial; promotes wound healing, liver alterative, lymphatic support. (tea)

Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) Flowers. Warming Carminative, astringent, moderate bitter.

Dandelion (*Taraxacum off.*) Root. Cold, bitter, dry. Decoction, tincture, syrup or in foods.

Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) Seed. Warming carminative, drying, diffusive, antispasmodic. Chew, tea, or in food.

Ginger (*Zingiber off.*) Root. Hot, carminative, drying, diffusive, antiemetic. Tea or food: Limit commercial extract to 1500 mg (1.5 g)⁴; Tea only in pregnancy⁵

Marshmallow (*Althea Officinalis*) Cool, demulcent, antimicrobial,* antiinflammatory, immunomodulator, vulnerary. (cold infusion)

Oregon Grape Root. (*Berberis aquifolium*) Cold, bitter, dry.

Peppermint (*Mentha x piperita*) Leaf and flower. Complex temp: warm then cooling. Diffusive. Tea after meal. (Contra: Avoid in reflux – let them say.)

Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*, *P. major*) Strong antimicrobial;* promotes wound healing, lymphatic support, liver alterative.

Yellow Dock (*Rumex crispus*) Root. Cold, dry, bitter, liver tonic, antimicrobial (tincture).

Heart Principles of Care

Avoid herbs with coumarins or blood thinning actions if person on blood thinners or coagulants.

Avoid most circulatory stimulants / “blood movers” except in food doses, if pregnant or prone to flooding at menses. If in doubt, avoid.

Materia Medica – Heart

Basil – (*Ocimum basilicum*, *Ocimum tenuiflorum*) Leaf. Warm, dry, relaxant-stimulant. Eases tears, promotes deep breath, eases heart rate(temp.)

Cayenne – (*Capsicum annuum*) Fruit. Hot, Acrid. Diffusive circulatory stimulant. “Opening.” Diaphoretic, supports peripheral circulation.

Hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.) Slightly cool, moist. Has been shown to help heart tissue heal; lower BP. Leaf & Fl, berry, thorn: smaller amounts berry – ¼ to 1/2 tsp in tea or drink.

Linden (*Tilia* spp.) Leaf & flower. Cool, demulcent. Cardiorelaxant, slightly sedative some people.

Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*) Fresh flowering tops. Hypotensive, relaxant, cardiotonic.

Rose (*Rosa* spp.) Cooling, astringent, self love, release long - buried grief.

Rosemary (*Salvia rosemarinus*) hot, dry. Blood moving, diffusive. Disruption, Grief (resolve and move on. (Care / avoid in pregnancy)

Solomon’s Seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*) Cool, moistening; affinity for tendons; yin tonic.

Violet (*Viola* spp.) Heart tonic. Alterative, cooling, astringent (flowers), demulcent (leaves).

Nervines: Act on & support nervous system Including the vagus nerve

Nerves Principles of Care:

Dose: Milder / low dose daytime, stronger at night

Constitutional Dryness – Affects Mood: Restlessness, anxiety, insomnia. ⁶

Materia Medica - Nerves

Blue Vervain (*Verbena hastata*) Cool, dry, bitter, “sympathetic interrupt”

Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) Warm, dry, bitter, sedative, daytime low dose

Oats (*Avena Sativa*) Cool, moist. Any form: food, straw, esp. milky tincture trophorestorative.

Passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*) cool, dry, nervine, sedative

Peony – White (*Paeonia lactiflora*) Cooling. Antispasmodic, relaxant, “sympathetic interrupt”.

Scullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*) cool, dry, relaxant, nervine tonic. Strong Trophorestorative for nerve tissue. Do not boil.

Wood Betony (*Stachys betonica*) Cool, dry, relaxant, diffusive. Meditative quality.

Formula Strategies

Gut

- ◆ bitter (mild)
- ◆ carminative
- ◆ demulcent
- ◆ vulnerary

Heart

- ◆ Tonics
- ◆ Trophorestorative
- ◆ other herbs for specific actions

Nerves

- ◆ trophorestorative
- ◆ daytime nervines
- ◆ stronger nervines at night with Blue Vervain and / or Peony.

References

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