

Natural Remedies to Relax & Unwind

a Talk for Parkinson's Edinburgh Group

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Introduction

Hello, I'm Fiona Morris. I am known as The Natural Healing Guide through my work helping people to heal through creative connection with nature.

I do this through my work as a Medical Herbalist and Massage Therapist, running holistic healthcare clinics at Neal's Yard Remedies Edinburgh and The Salisbury Centre, and leading foraging walks and remedy making workshops, for the Edinburgh City Council Adult Education Programme, for a local mental health and wellbeing organisation called Outlook Project, as well as through my own business, Nourish and Flourish.

I really enjoyed meeting with many of you last year when you invited me to give an introduction to how natural remedies may be beneficial to people with Parkinson's. I'm delighted to be invited back and share a bit more about the health benefits of herbal medicine. Today I'd like to explore a theme that I think is beneficial for all of us - how natural remedies may help us to relax and unwind.

First, I'd love to get to know each other a bit, to find out a bit more about you, are you already using natural remedies to relax and unwind, and if so which ones? I'd be interested to know which specific areas of life can feel stressful and difficult, and the symptoms that may manifest for you, so I can tailor the content to what would be most beneficial for you. I'd be interested to know what your go to methods are to relax and unwind so we can share our collective wisdom in our gathering today.

Benefits of Relaxation

Balance activity with rest, allows body to heal, helps reduce inflammation, reduce risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, depression, fatigue, promotes increased energy & well being, improves sleep & general well being

Causes of Stress & Anxiety

Internal: Physical &/or Psychological Dis-ease, Adrenal Stress, Family traits

External: Diet, Habits, Work/Relationship/Financial/Emotional Stress, 24/7 Lifestyle, Shift Work, Work/Life out of balance (alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, stimulants)

Environment: Bedroom, Bed, Noise (snoring/restless partner, new baby, busy road, household appliances etc.), Light, Allergies & Sensitivities, Temperature

Natural Remedies to Relax & Unwind

Sharing of personal methods that have worked and not worked for us in the past, for example...

Natural herbal remedies, aromatherapy oils and nutritional supplements

Nutrients: B vitamins, Calcium & Magnesium, Tryptophan, Melatonin

Snack &/or milky drink 1 hour before bedtime: banana, avocado, oats, yoghurt, cherries, milk (dairy or non-dairy) & honey, poppy seeds, nutmeg, warm rose & cardamom milk

Regular patterns, healthy habits and rituals: Go to bed & get up at roughly same time daily, training body to get used to a regular rhythm

Natural light: Get out for a walk & fresh air every day. People who get plenty of natural daylight tend to relax & sleep better.

Regular exercise: Any will be beneficial, but particularly walking, swimming, yoga, tai chi. Not too close to bed time.

Relaxation before bedtime: Difficult to sleep when stressed. Try a warm bath, candle light, deep breathing, calming music, visualisation of calming, peaceful places & memories, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation/spiritual practice/prayer

Let go of worries: Write note of what needs to be done next day & mentally let go of past & future events

to reduce activity of the mind

Waking up at night:

If worried or anxious, note what appears to be the current theme and focus on what can be done to help resolve this during the day.

Try relaxation technique such as focus on breath, visualisation or meditation without getting out of bed.

If still difficult to get to sleep, use relaxing methods, non stimulating activity like reading a book, light snack or herbal tea (keep lights dim to not trigger your body clock into thinking it's time to wake, avoid turning on lights or from screens on mobiles, TV, computers etc)

Note the time: If always the same time waking, this can indicate over-activity of certain organs.

Health assessment: Visit your GP, herbalist & natural health practitioners to investigate any underlying health conditions or nutritional deficiencies that may be contributing to stress and anxiety that can be identified and addressed through a holistic treatment plan for long term health & well being benefits.

Plants & Herb Actions to Promote Relaxation

Herbs may be taken as teas, tinctures, inhaled, absorbed through the skin to enjoy their beneficial effects on promoting relaxation...

Lavender essential oil & Relaxing Oil Blends – self-massage, aroma diffuser

Regular Massage by self, partner &/or professional therapist (if not weekly, at least every month)

Herbal Sleep Pillows

Herbal Teas & Tinctures (balancing day & night blends can be personally prescribed by your herbalist)

Herbal Bath/Foot Bath

Actions: Relaxant, Sedative, Anti-spasmodic, Adaptogen, Nutrient, Emotionally Uplifting

10 common herbs to promote enhanced relaxation

Chamomile (calming sedative) Passionflower (sedative and anti anxiety)

Lavender (calming relaxant) Linden Blossom (gentle relaxant)

Skullcap (anti spasmodic relaxant) Hops (strong relaxant & sedative)

Frankincense (calming anti inflammatory) Valerian (strong relaxant & sedative)

Lemon Balm (calming anti viral) Rose (“hug in a bottle”)

Calming & Uplifting Teas

Select your favourite herbs and blend together or take as single herb (lavender, hops & valerian in smaller amounts – their tastes are strong). 1 teaspoon dried herbs per cup boiled water. Infuse 5-10min. Strain & drink in early evening & at bedtime.

Pre-blended herb blends are also available from herbalist shops and health food shops.

Lavender & Hops Sleep Pillows

Lavender, Hops and other aromatic relaxing herbs can be made into a simple pillow with a small square of fabric & a length of wool, rope or ribbon.

For the more crafty, you can make pillows in various shapes and sizes, even an eye mask, particularly if light can cause sleep disturbance. Try adding a filler such as some uncooked rice, barley, wheat, or flaxseed to give your pillow a bit of weight and this can be warmed up in microwave, or oven (wrapped in foil), or put in plastic bag in freezer for over 3 hours to use cold.

Aromatic Relaxing Oils

Try essential oils such as: lavender, chamomile, frankincense, orange, mandarin, geranium, cedarwood, lemon jasmine, neroli, or pre-blended oils for relaxation.

> Put essential oils in aromatic oil burners or diffusers for inhalation

> Put in bath – 5-8 drops dissolved into milk to emulsify or added to base oil

> 1-3 drops of relaxing essential oils of your choice per 5ml base oil to massage into skin as required, particularly into neck, shoulders, chest over heart area.

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