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# Chinese Herbal Medicine and the Peri- Psychedelic Experience

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## My background and interest in this topic

- Enthusiast
- Culturally adjacent for 35+ years to recreational, personal, therapeutic, and ceremonial use of psychedelic plants and substances.
- Herbal practice focused on mental health

I'm not:

- A trained psychedelic therapist
- Shaman
- Etc.

“I just wonder if you shouldn't feel, less concern about the deep unreal” Cosmic Charlie by Hunter/Garcia

## TCM Toolkit for achieving similar goals?

What tools do we have that may be an alternative?

What tools do we have that may complement goals?

Where may our tools be insufficient?

What training could we pursue to improve our collaboration with psychedelic therapists and/or consumers?

How do we make ourselves available to those taking or offering guidance?

What are ethical considerations for engaging with this population?

How can we advocate for our patients?

## Common Goals of Psychedelic Consumers

### Evidence Based Medicine:

- PTSD
- Depression
- Addiction
- Chronic pain
- Mood disorders
- End of life/terminal illness associated anxiety
- Spiritual cultivation
- Deepen connection to natural world
- Pursuit of meaning
- Play/euphoria/fun
- Escape
- Substitute for other ritual, community, access to mystical experience, or centering practice

## Barriers to Safe Psychedelic Medicine

- Legal
- Expense of medicines and/or therapies
- Lack of access
- Adulteration

### Solutions:

- Decriminalization
- <https://dancesafe.org/> and other harm reduction organizations
- Education
- Microdosing

## Beneficial Herb-Drug Pharmacodynamics

- Enhancing therapeutic effects
  - Potential for reducing drug dosing
- Buffering adverse effects
  - Allowing the patient to take a therapeutic drug dose
- Supporting the body under stress, illness, or tapering/withdrawal
- Repleting nutrients commonly depleted by drugs





## General principles of integrative mental health care



- Transitions in protocols hold the greatest potential for interactions and side effects that may affect intended therapeutic outcomes
- Individuals vary greatly in response to both drugs and herbs due to biochemical variability as well as health status and condition
- Professional management implies supervision by collaborating health care professionals with appropriate training in botanical therapeutics within an integrative framework

## Common Effects of Psychedelic Medicine

**Psilocybin:** confusion, fear, hallucinations, headache, high blood pressure, nausea, and paranoia

**LSD:** nausea, loss of appetite, increased blood sugar, difficulty sleeping, dry mouth, tremors and seizures, hallucinations, psychosis

- distorted visual perception of shapes, colors
- altered sounds
- anxiety and depression
- flashbacks (a return of the "trip" experience) days or months later
- rapid heart rate, increased body temperature and high blood pressure
- dilated pupils

**MDMA:**

clenching jaw  
grinding teeth  
tingling feeling in the limbs  
heightened senses  
sweating  
nausea or vomiting  
muscle aches and pains  
higher blood pressure and heartbeat  
reduced appetite  
anxiety and panic attacks  
paranoia  
irrational behaviour  
psychosis  
overheating and dehydration  
Irritability

**Ketamine:**

Disorientation, confusion, or loss of motor coordination.  
Dizziness, nausea, or vomiting.  
Increased blood pressure, heart rate, breathing, or body temperature.  
Changes in sensory perceptions, including visual or auditory hallucinations.  
Feeling detached from yourself, your surroundings, or your environment.

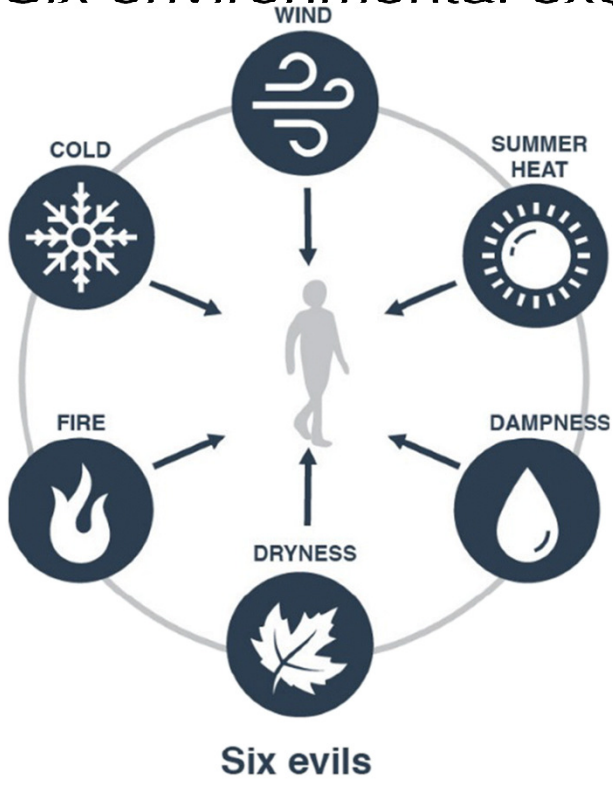
# TCM diagnostic tools & paradigms in mental health

- Traditional Causes of Disease
- Chinese Essence Spirit Diseases
- Treatment of Western Psychiatric Diseases with Chinese Medicine

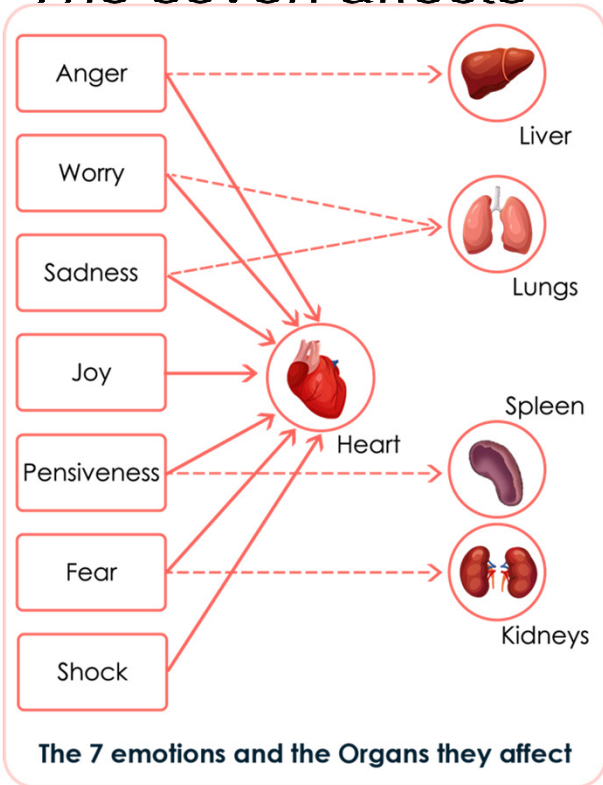


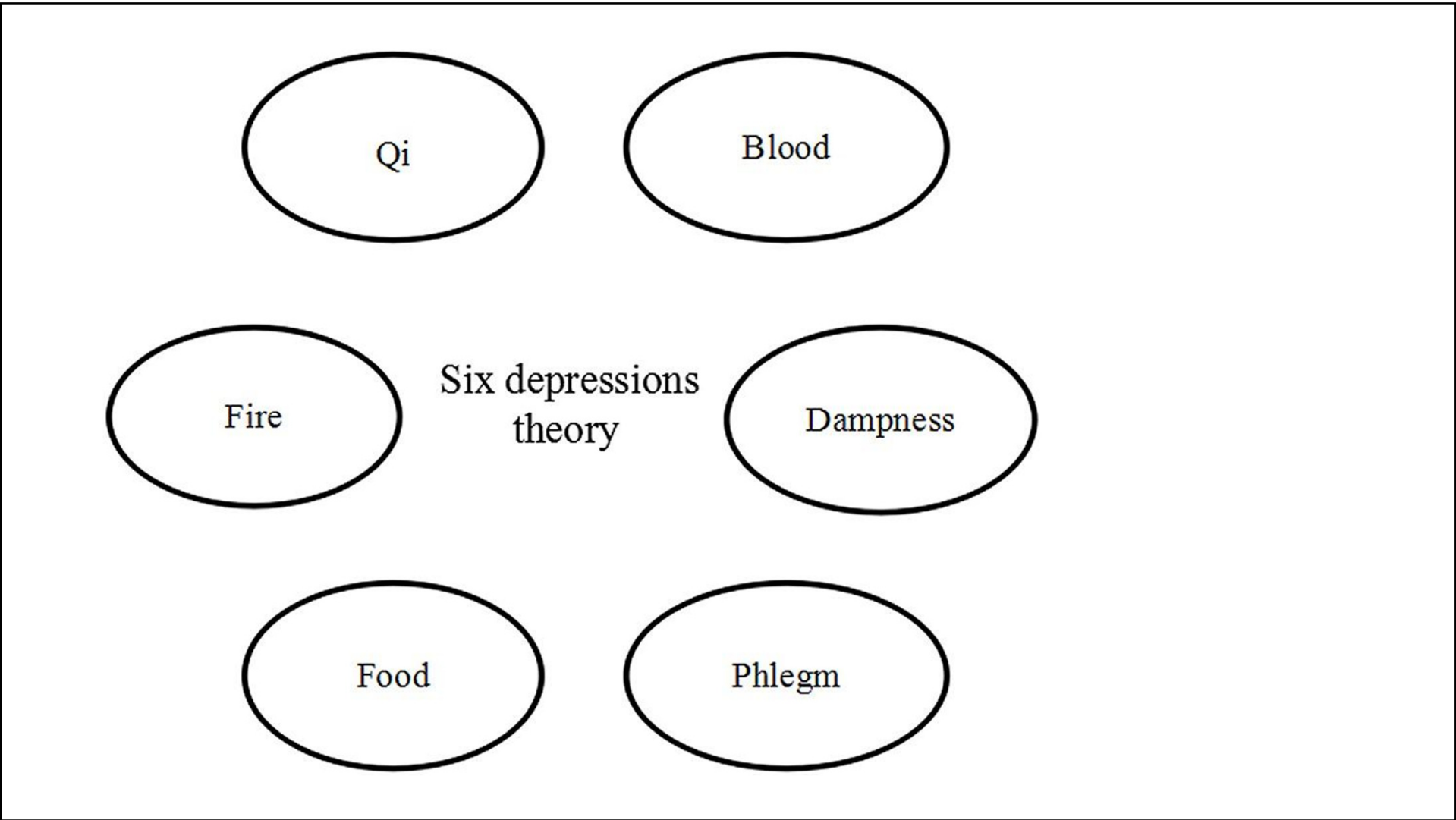
# Causes of Disease

## Six environmental excesses



## The seven affects





## Other recognized TCM causes of mental imbalance

- Faulty diet
- Lack of regulation between activity and stillness
- Lack of discipline in “bedroom affairs”
- Iatrogenesis
- Drug addiction
- Parasites
- Former heaven causes
- Age and sex
- Menstrual disharmonies

## Stages of psychedelic experience and herbal consideration

- **Preparation support**
  - Centering diet
  - Spirit calming herbs or formula
  - Constitutional balancing
  - Address symptoms
- **Support during actual experience**
  - Discuss which symptoms to address
  - Potentially provide access to more potent spirit calming medicinals as tea and/or tincture
  - Role of fragrance
  - Tool kit for difficult experiences from MAPS <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aBjoARwIOY>
- **Support in integration**
  - Ongoing focus on diet
  - Spirit calming herbs
  - Is experience is drastic or takes place in challenging environment i.e. desert or jungle consider impact on physiology
  - Role of fragrance
  - Integration Scale <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9168432/>
- **Ongoing constitutional support**



## Delivery system variations

- Infusions
- Decoctions
- Powders
- Standardized preparations
- Tinctures
- Essential oils
- Pastes and electuaries
- Washes
- Compresses
- Oils
- Encapsulations

Combine with the same delivery systems or combine delivery systems to achieve therapeutic goals

## California poppy - *Eschscholzia californica*

Flavor and Qi: acrid, bitter, cold

Combinations:

Channels Entered: liver, gallbladder, heart

Any calm spirit formula

- Clears heat from the heart and quiets the spirit
- Clears heat and resolves liver and gallbladder depression
- Relieves qi stagnation and blood stasis, and reduces pain

Look at facial pain formula



## Skullcap- *Scutellaria lateriflora*

Flavors and Qi: bitter, acrid, cool

Channels Entered: liver, heart

- Relieves heart depression and quiets the spirit
- Clears heat in the heart and liver and resolves qi depression
- Clears the liver, extinguishes wind, subdues liver yang, and stops spasms

Combinations:

Any Chai hu family formula to calm spirit, stop spasms, alleviate headache

Suan zao ren tang

Gan mai da zao tang

Dan shen + he huan hua

California poppy

Blue vervain

## Western Pasqueflower-*Anemone occidentalis*

Flavor and Qi: acrid, bitter, aromatic, warm

Combinations:

Channels Entered: heart, liver

Gui zhi jia long gu mu li tang

- Opens the heart orifice and calms the spirit
- Rectifies the qi and regulates the menses
- Harmonizes heart and kidneys

Gan mai da zao tang

Suan zao ren tang

California Poppy + Skullcap

Shi chang pu + yuan zhi



## Self directed use for substance use cessation

A 54 year old man with longstanding history of stimulant abuse goes on a 3 day methamphetamine and sex binge after self prescribing Ketamine.

One week later, the patient presents with symptoms including cold, fatigue, depression, anxiety, pain and cold in genitals, heart palpitations. He has a floating pulse.

Treatment:

Gui zhi jia long gu mu li tang (Cinnamon twig w/ oyster shell and dragon bone) granules

Anemone, Skullcap, California Poppy tincture

\* Several individuals: Dependent and/or addicted to substances of misuse or abuse including tobacco, alcohol, opiates, cocaine, or methamphetamine, consume psychedelics have revelations and believe they're at the end of their addictive cycle but then quickly resume use of said substances of misuse or abuse. NADA + herbs + therapy, etc.

## Vacuity taxation & Cinnamon Twig w/ Oystershell and Dragon Bone

If patients suffering seminal loss present with string-like tension in the lesser abdomen, yin-head cold, dizzy vision, hair loss, and a pulse that is extremely vacuous, scallion-stalk, and slow, this means clear grain, blood collapse and seminal loss. When you see this pattern along with frequent dreams of intercourse Cinnamon Twig with Oyster Shell and Dragon Bone govern.

Cinnamon twig (gui zhi)

Peony (shao yao)

Fresh Ginger (sheng jiang)

Licorice (gan cao)

Jujube (da zao)

Dragon Bone (long gu)

Oyster Shell (mu li)



## 17 y.o. Male using cannabis

\* 17 y.o. male consumes cannabis for a couple of months and begins to experience delusions, auditory hallucinations, sleeplessness, and paranoia. Exhibits irritable, argumentative tendencies, acne, intermittent constipation- chai hu jia long gu mu li + western herbs + psychiatric evaluation

### **Formula Category**

- Calm the Spirit
- Sedate and Calm the Spirit

### **Clinical Usage and Indications**

Used for heat that is lodged in the chest affecting all yang stages, also for phlegm in the liver/gallbladder. Generally used for a range of psychological conditions, aiding with drug withdrawal and related issues. Symptoms include chest oppression, anxiety, irritability, palpitations, excessive/delirious speech, heavy sensation of body, constipation, urinary issues.

Pulse: wiry and rapid

Tongue: red with a slippery tongue coating.

## Chai Hu jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang

- Chai Hu - Radix Bupleurum
- Huang Qin - Radix Scutellaria baicalensis
- Long Gu - Os Draconis
- Mu Li - Concha Ostrea
- Gui Zhi - Ramulus Cinnamomum
- Da Huang - Radix Rhizoma
- Ban Xia - Rhizoma Pinellia
- Fu Ling - Poria
- Ren Shen - Radix Panax ginseng
- Sheng Jiang - Rhizoma Zingiberis
- Da Zao - Fructus Ziziphus jujube

**Actions:** heat harassing the heart and spirit

**Indications:** with chest oppression, easy anger, restlessness, insomnia, heart palpitations, deranged speech, a red tongue with thick fur

**Associated Western Disease:** hypertension, AV block, hyperthyroidism, neurosis, schizophrenia, substance abuse, use, or withdrawal

## Two common patterns I've observed

Several individuals have participated in 3-5 day Ayahuasca ceremony, report profound experience followed by low appetite, tremulous tongue, floating pulse, and experience of "being inhabited by entities" but otherwise celebrate the experience.

Formulas to consider

Ban xia bai zhu tian ma tang

Chai hu gui zhi tang

Xiao chai hu tang + qing hao

Several individuals: Take very large dose of LSD resulting in profound hallucinations, veer into dysphoria, tremors, sweating, crying, fearfulness, unintelligible speech.

Assisted by MAPS -Zendo protocol + Anemone, Ca. Poppy, Skullcap

1. Create a safe space
2. Sit, don't guide
3. Talk through, don't talk down
4. Difficult is not necessarily bad

## 53 y.o. Woman following psilocybin journey

53 y.o. woman attends retreat and consumes a large amount of psilocybin and has profound journey, felt supported and guided by shaman, did what they considered meaningful process work, feels complete with the experience and isn't eager to pursue more ceremony. Reports sleeplessness, night sweats, feeling ungrounded, difficulty focusing, low appetite. suan zao ren tang + gan mai da zao +

### Ingredients:

- Zizyphus seed - Suan Zao Ren
- Ligusticum - Chuan Xiong
- Anemarrhena - Zhi Mu
- Poria - Fu Ling
- Licorice - Gan Cao

Actions: Nourishes the blood, calms the spirit, clears heat, and relieves irritability

Indications: Liver blood deficiency with internal disturbance of deficient heat marked by consumption, irritability, insomnia, easy upset, palpitation, night sweating, dizziness, dry mouth and throat, a red tongue, a thready and wiry pulse

Vacuity taxation with vacuity vexation described as feeling of unease and listlessness in the heart accompanied by unquiet sleep. Vacuity heat from yin *xu* harassing the heart.

## Running Piglet Qi *ben tun qi* Chapter 8 of JGYL

- Causes
  - Emotional stimuli such as fright or fear>liver depression transforming into fire>*qi* and fire surging upwards
  - *Yang* vacuity after sweating: Further contraction of cold evil or pre-existing water-rheum in patients suffering from kidney *yang* vacuity>water-cold surging upward.
- Patterns
  - Liver *qi* running piglet: Characterized by *qi* surging up into the chest, abdominal pain, and alternating cold and heat. Treated by downbearing counterflow and relieving pain with Running Piglet Pill -*ben tun wan*
  - Kidney *qi* running piglet already occurred: *qi* surging up from lower abdomen into the heart, with abdominal pain. Treated by assisting yang, dispersing cold, and downbearing counterflow, using *gui zhi jia gui tang*
  - Kidney *qi* about to occur: Palpitation below the umbilicus. Treated by warming yang, supplementing earth, and disinhibiting water with *fu ling gui zhi gan cao da zao tang*.

Thank you for your interest in and attention to my presentation!

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