

An excerpt from my upcoming book!

## **Staying Sane, Naturally: Affordable, Science-Backed Natural Remedies to Help You Beat Anxiety, Depression and Stress**

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### **Introduction to PART ONE: Moving, Eating, and Breathing**

Before we get to the different herbs and supplements that can help with stress, depression, and anxiety, there's something else that's EXTREMELY important to mention: the connection between overall physical health and mental health. Most of us know that a very low mood sustained for a long time, or a generally angry disposition, can affect your digestion, heart, skin, hormones, and more. But did you know it works the other way around, too? Not taking care of your body by getting enough exercise, eating right, and not breathing deeply enough can *cause* depression, anxiety, brain fog, difficulty concentrating, and even plain old crabbiness. And making sure you are doing these things can go a long way to fix those problems, too. So before we get to the herbal remedies, let's talk about these fundamentals.

### **Chapter 1**

#### **GET MOVING**

Here's the simple truth: One of the very best (and cheapest) ways to feel better, whether you're in permanent freak-out mode or can't even get out of bed, is getting more exercise. Studies of all kinds have shown this in a thousand different ways, a thousand different times. To sum it up briefly, the vast majority of health experts agree that we should all get at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise at least five times a week. Moderate-intensity exercise can be as easy as walking like you have somewhere to be, as opposed to strolling like you're at the mall. Or riding a stationary bike at home. (Even if your home is tiny. They make foldable ones that can fit in a closet!)

You can also do more strenuous, high-intensity exercise, like running (either forward or in one place), jumping rope (either with or without an actual rope), using an elliptical machine, or walking up and down a mountain of stairs, but moderate-intensity exercise is often enough to do the trick, especially if you're out of shape. And, while this recommendation for *overall* health calls for 30 minutes *five* times a week, studies show that for mental health, *three times a week is often enough*—and if 30 minutes is just more than you can manage, just 15 minutes often makes a big difference. It's like magic!

Getting at least this amount of moderate exercise has been shown in several clinical studies to be just as effective as the more common antidepressants at beating many forms of anxiety and depression, and to help both your mind and body manage emotional stress. This is for a whole host of reasons:

- Exercise boosts your body's production of feel-good brain chemicals like endorphins and serotonin, which are associated with feelings of happiness and euphoria. This is similar to how most antidepressants work, but with exercise, you're making your body do it on its own.
- At the same time, exercise decreases the amounts of stress hormones—specifically, adrenaline and cortisol—that are coursing through your body at any given time.
- Bumping up your heart rate increases not only blood circulation throughout your lower body, but your brain, too. This helps your brain produce more neurohormones, including norepinephrine, which not only elevates your mood but also improves your thinking. (Take *that*, brain fog!)
- On a more practical level, getting in shape often boosts self-esteem, which has a positive effect on mood. And the knowledge that you're taking concrete steps to help yourself (by exercising) does the same.
- Getting more exercise often leads to better sleep, and better sleep leads to better everything. Seriously. Good sleep and enough of it are the foundation blocks of mental *and* physical health.

The upshot of this is that you really, really have to just do it. Maybe you don't want to, but if you're reading this, you presumably want to know how to feel better, and this is it. Get moving, on the regular. No excuses. Find a way.