

SOOTHE THE SHEN

Soothe the Shen is a new remedy that complements the existing mental-emotional remedies: it treats depression and/or anxiety. It is based on a variation of two separate formulae: Gan Mai Da Zao Tang Glycyrrhiza-Triticum-Jujuba Decoction and Bai He Zhi Mu Tang Lilium-Anemarrhaena Decoction.

The ingredients of Soothe the Shen are as follows:

- Zhi Gan Cao Radix Glycyrrhizae uralensis preparata
- Fu Xiao Mai Fructus Triticis levis
- Da Zao Fructus Jujubae
- Zhi Mu Radix Anemarrhaenae
- Bai He Bulbus Lili
- Dang Gui Radix Angelicae sinensis
- Wu Wei Zi Fructus Schisandrae
- He Huan Pi Cortex Albiziae
- Yuan Zhi Radix Polygalae
- Fo Shou Fructus Citri sarcodactylis
- Suan Zao Ren Semen Ziziphi spinosae

Actions: tonifies Qi, nourishes Blood and Yin, moves Qi, opens the Mind's orifices.

Patterns: Qi, Blood and/or Yin deficiency, Qi stagnation.

Indications

Depression, sadness, anxiety, mental confusion, poor memory, tiredness, poor appetite, scanty periods.

Tongue: Pale or normal. In case of Yin deficiency: no coating.

Pulse: Weak, Choppy or Floating-Empty.

Classical antecedent

Gan Mai Da Zao Tang Glycyrrhiza-Triticum-Jujuba Decoction and Bai He Zhi Mu Tang Lilium-Anemarrhaena Decoction.

Explanation

The classical indications for Gan Mai Da Zao Tang Glycyrrhiza-Triticum-Jujuba Decoction are: disorientation, melancholy, crying, inability to control oneself, restless sleep, night sweating, yawning. This formula is found in Zhang Zhong Jing's Jin Gui Yao Lue of AD 220 AD. It is in chapter 22 on women's problems entitled "Pulses and Patterns of Complicated Women's Diseases" (Fu Ren Za Bing Zheng Mai): "Women suffering from anxiety are affected by sadness and crying, they are like lost souls [Shen ling] and yawn frequently: use Gan Mai Da Zao Tang."¹

Interestingly, also the formula Bai He Zhi Mu Tang Lilium-Anemarrhaena Decoction is found in the same classic. This would seem to indicate that mentalemoional problems were as common in those ancient times as they are now. In fact, also the formula Ban Xia Hou Po Tang Pinellia-Magnolia Decoction used for plum-stone syndrome with stagnation of Lung-,

Stomach- and Heart-Qi is found in the same classic (this formula is called Open the Heart in the Three Treasures).

There are many different interpretations of the formula Gan Mai Da Zao Tang that is within Soothe Shen. The prevailing modern view is that this formula is for a condition of Heart-Yin deficiency, Spleen deficiency and Liver-Qi stagnation. In the original text, the formula is for Zang Zao which literally means "visceral agitation".

The rationale usually given for the use of this formula for Liver-Qi stagnation is from chapter 22 of the "Simple Questions" (Su Wen) which says that the sweet taste soothes the Liver (reverse Controlling cycle of the Five Elements).

The formula Gan Mai Da Zao Tang naturally tastes very sweet. I personally find this explanation unconvincing and one that reflects the modern Chinese tendency to overemphasize Liver-Qi stagnation. I personally use the formula for patterns of deficiency which may be of Qi, Blood or Yin (not Yang deficiency).

It is an intriguing formula as it has a profound mental effect and yet it is composed of only three apparently mild herbs, two of which are items of food as well as herbs, i.e: black dates, licorice and wheat husks.

I find this formula excellent when the patient is not only depressed and anxious but also mentally confused and kind of "absent". Often, this can be the result of heavy cannabis use in the past.

I use this formula when these mental-emotional symptoms occur against a background of deficiency of Qi of the Spleen, Heart and Lungs and of Heart-Blood deficiency.

This formula may also be effective in the treatment of Attention Deficit Disorder and hyperactivity in children.

The second formula Bai He Zhi Mu Tang Liliun-Anemarrhena Decoction is used for the Liliun Syndrome (Bai He Bing) described in the Essential Prescriptions of the Golden Chest (Jin Gui Yao Lue, ca AD 220), chapter 3-1. This syndrome sounds remarkably like the description of a depressed patient.

"The patient wants to eat, but is reluctant to swallow food and unwilling to speak. He or she wants to lie in bed but cannot lie quietly as he or she is restless. He or she wants to walk but is soon tired. Now and then he or she may enjoy eating but cannot tolerate the smell of food. He or she feels cold or hot but without fever or chills, bitter taste or dark urine [i.e. it is not external Wind nor internal Heat]. No drugs are able to cure this syndrome. After taking the medicine the patient may vomit or have diarrhoea. The disease haunts the patient (hu huo) [hu means "fox" and huo means "bewildered"] and, although he or she looks normal, he or she is suffering. The pulse is rapid."²

Modern books describe the symptoms pertaining to this formula as "absent-mindedness, as if in a trance, mental restlessness, bitter taste, anxiety, depression, dark urine, red tongue (which may be without coating), rapid pulse."

The treatment principle recommended by modern doctors is to moisten and nourish the Heart and Lungs, tonify Qi, nourish Yin, clear Heat (or Empty Heat), calm the Mind, strengthen the Will-Power (Zhi).

I use this formula primarily when there is a deficiency of Yin of the Heart and Lungs and the patient is anxious and sad. As the formula consists of only two herbs, I frequently add this

formula to another formula in any situation when a patient is depressed against a background of a Lung and Heart syndrome, but especially Qi and Yin deficiency of these two organs or Heart-Heat.

The combination of these two herbs is particularly good to treat sadness and grief.

Within Soothe the Shen, Zhi Gan Cao Radix Glycyrrhizae uralensis preparata, Fu Xiao Mai Fructus Triticis levis and Da Zao Fructus Jujubae form the original formula Gan Mai Da Zao Tang to tonify Qi and Blood and calm the Spirit. Fu Xiao Mai is the emperor herb within this formula. Please note that Gan Cao is here not to harmonize but it is a minister herb to tonify Qi and Blood and calm the Spirit. For this reason, it is not in the usual small dose but a higher dose (about 9% of the total).

Zhi Mu and Bai He constitute the formula Bai He Zhi Mu Tang and they are here to nourish Qi and Yin and calm the Spirit; in particular, they treat sadness.

Dang Gui nourishes Blood and calms the Mind. Wu Wei Zi nourishes Yin and calms the Spirit. He Huan Pi Cortex, Yuan Zhi and Fo Shou move Qi, open the Mind's orifices and stimulate the movement of the Hun to relieve depression. Suan Zao Ren nourishes Yin, calms the Spirit and settles the Hun to relieve anxiety.

The relationship between Mind (Shen) of the Heart and Ethereal Soul (Hun) of the Liver is all important in the pathology of depression. The Hun gives the Mind inspiration, creativity, ideas, plans, life-dreams, aspirations: this psychic energy is the result of the "coming and going of the Hun" and it is the psychic manifestation of the free flow of Liver-Qi (and in particular, of the physiological ascending of Liver-Qi).

On the other hand, the Shen needs to control the Hun somewhat and to integrate the psychic material deriving from it. It is in the nature of the Hun to "come and go", i.e. it is always searching, it has ideas, inspiration, aims, life-dreams, etc. It will be remembered that the Hun is the gui of our human nature and it has its own independent existence.

The Shen needs to integrate the material deriving from the Hun in the general psyche: the Hun is the source of many ideas simultaneously; the Shen can only deal with one at a time. Therefore "control" and "integration" are the key words describing the function of the Shen in relation to the Hun.

When the "coming and going" of the Hun is deficient, there is a lack of inspiration, creativity, ideas, plans, life-dreams, aspirations: this is an important feature of mental depression. It is important to note that the psychic "coming and going" of the Hun may be deficient either because itself is deficient, or because the Shen is over-controlling it. The latter is common in individuals with strong, rigid beliefs ("religious" in a broad sense) which lead the Shen to suppress the psychic ideas coming from the Hun. This situation may also arise as a consequence of guilt.

In severe depression, there is a disconnection between the Shen of the Heart and the Hun: the Hun lacks its normal "movement" and the person lacks creativity, ideas, imagination and, most of all, plans, projects, life-aims and inspiration so that depression results.

The Table below summarizes and differentiates the remedies for depression and anxiety.

Remedy	Pattern	Organ	Condition
Open the Heart	Lung-and Heart-Qi stagnation	Lung, Heart, Stomach	Anxiety, depression

Bright Spirit	Qi stagnation and Phlegm	Liver, Lungs, Heart, Stomach	Depression, anxiety
Clear the Soul	Phlegm-Heat Lungs and Heart	Lungs, Heart	Depression, anxiety
Settling the Soul	Phlegm-Heat in the Liver	Liver, Heart	Anxiety, manic behaviour
Nourish the Soul	Yin deficiency	Liver, Heart	Anxiety, insomnia, slight manic behaviour
Searching Soul	Qi deficiency	Liver, Heart, Kidney-Yang	Depression
Soothe the Shen	Qi, Blood or Yin deficiency, slight Qi stagnation	Heart, Lungs, Liver	Depression, anxiety
Calm the Shen	Blood deficiency	Heart, Spleen, Liver	Anxiety, insomnia, depression
Heavenly Empress	Yin deficiency	Heart and Kidneys	Anxiety, insomnia
Breaking Clouds	Qi deficiency	Liver, Spleen and Heart	Depression
Release Constraint	Qi stagnation	Liver	Depression
Root the Spirit	Yin deficiency	Liver, Heart	Insomnia, anxiety

Endnotes

1. He Ren 2005 Essential Prescriptions of the Golden Chest (Jin Gui Yao Lue), People's Health Publishing House, Beijing, p. 83. The Essential Prescriptions of the Golden Chest was written by Zhang Zhong Jing and first published c. AD 220.
2. A New Explanation of the Essential Prescriptions of the Golden Chest, p. 26.

YOUR CASE HISTORIES WANTED

Many practitioners are using the Three Treasures remedies all over the world. Your clinical experience is valuable: please share it with fellow practitioners. I appeal to all the Three Treasures customers to send in your case histories with the clinical results obtained by using the remedies. These can be brief, with the age and sex of the patients, brief description of the main presenting problems, remedy used and clinical results.

I am particularly interested in the clinical results from Chemo-Support as the opportunity has arisen for a clinical trial on this remedy. The very first stage of a clinical trial is the collection of anecdotal evidence on the clinical results obtained with the use of Chemo-Support to counteract the side-effects of chemotherapy.

As a reward for sending your case histories, I will send a CD with some of my Powerpoint presentations on the diagnosis and treatment of various conditions to every practitioner who sends in three case histories.

- Giovanni Maciocia

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Animal Ingredients

As you know, the Three Treasures and Women's Treasure remedies are now completely free of any animal ingredient (and also mineral ingredient) to comply with European law. As a result, the remedies have been approved as vegetarian products by the Vegetarian Society in the UK.

Yellow Card Scheme

To comply with UK law, we have joined the Yellow Card scheme to report any adverse reactions to the remedies. This is operated in the same as the Yellow Card scheme operated by medical doctors for drugs. The Yellow Cards are reported directly to the UK Department of Health.

Forum

We would like to remind you about the [Forum](#) operated by Giovanni on threetreasures.com. In this Forum, Giovanni will answer your questions related to the use of the Three Treasures remedies. By browsing through the Forum, you can also benefit from the experience of other practitioners and maybe find the answers to the solution of some clinical cases.