General Nervine

General Nervine is a calming combination for the nervous system — traditionally used to quiet a racing mind, ease into restful sleep, and support the body through emotional stress and crisis.

This Herbal Combination



Skullcap Herb — one of the most trusted nervine herbs, traditionally used to calm nervous tension and quiet a racing mind without dulling mental clarity.



Hops — a gentle sedative herb, traditionally used to ease restlessness and support deep, restful sleep.



Valerian Root — traditionally described as giving an almost exhilarating sense of calm, and especially valued for supporting women through the emotional swings that can come with the menstrual cycle.



Gentian Root — one of the most bitter herbs in the herbal kingdom, traditionally used to support digestion — included here because a settled digestive system and a calm nervous system go hand in hand.



Black Cohosh — long used to support women's hormonal balance and ease the nervous tension that can come with hormonal shifts.

How It Works

This is a quieting combination for the nervous system. It tends to settle the mind, easing the transition into sleep and allowing you to wake up alert and clear rather than groggy. It has also traditionally been used to help ease the agitation of addiction recovery, and to support calm and focus in both children and adults who struggle with restlessness, hyperactivity, or difficulty settling their attention.

Emotional First Aid

Beyond sleep support, General Nervine has a second, very different use: as emotional first aid during an acute crisis. At a lower daytime dose — about ¼ to ½ teaspoon, or 20 to 30 drops for someone very petite — it won't cause drowsiness the way the full bedtime dose can, but it can take the sharpest edge off overwhelming emotion, giving the mind room to process what's happening instead of spiraling. Body mass makes a real difference in how much of any formula a person needs, so it's worth adjusting the dose to what actually works for the individual.

Suggested Use

For sleep, add 2 to 4 droppers full to a hot tea at bedtime. For emotional first aid during the day, use ¼ to ½ teaspoon (20 to 30 drops for someone very petite), adjusted to what works best for the person's size. As with any herbal tonic, use your own best judgment — this is an herb, not a drug. The only adverse effect I've seen is sleepiness at higher doses.

Used topically as a salve, General Nervine is also an excellent aid for nerve pain — see our G-Nervine Salve for that application.

From Dara’s Practice

One story stays with me. Years ago, after a class lecture, a grandmother approached me, desperate for help. She'd taken in her grandchildren after a very difficult situation at home, and the youngest — still quite small — had become an extremely disagreeable child. At night she would tear her bed to shreds in her sleep, and the school was ready to bar her from after-school care, which her grandmother needed in order to work. I prayed for direction, and General Nervine came to mind strongly — I knew it was restorative and good in a crisis, but I'd never thought to use it quite this way. The grandmother agreed to try it: 10 drops before bed. The next morning, the child woke to a bed that barely needed the sheet straightened, came into the kitchen, and politely asked for hot chocolate. Her grandmother told me you could have knocked her over with a feather. The child asked for her drops every night after that, at that same 10-drop dose, for an extended stretch of time. Years later I ran into them again — she was in her late teens by then, calm and sweet. The herb doesn't do all the work; there's always deeper emotional healing a person has to do for themselves. But sometimes a child's mind just needs help calming down enough to cope with what it can't yet begin to comprehend.

This information is provided for educational purposes as part of traditional herbal practice and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. Always consult a qualified healthcare provider regarding any health condition.

For more on this formula, see my blog posts “A Calming Formula for Sleep and for Crisis” and “Emotional First Aid” at www.daradietz.me.