

IN THE LEAVES

HERBS and NUTRIENTS for the MIND: A Guide to Natural Brain Enhancers. By Chris D. Meletis and Jason E. Barker. Praeger Publishers, 2004. Hardcover 304 pp. \$39.95.

This impressive book addresses natural healing methods for emotional conditions. The actions that herbs and nutritional supplements have on brain biochemistry is explained for 18 diverse conditions, such as insomnia, ADHD, anorexia, bipolar disorder, multiple sclerosis, and Parkinson's Disease. There are excellent discussions on the functioning of serotonin, GABA, and other aspects of brain chemistry, with profiles on the most popular remedies to enhance them. This is an authoritative, well researched, and highly referenced book, yet the science is nicely conveyed in laymen's terms. The recommended dosages and protocols make this an excellent reference for both practitioners and people seeking self-healing. I especially like this book because it is written by a couple of naturopaths who comprehend the principles of holistic healing, and their compassion for people struggling with any of the disorders is evident. Meletis is a Professor of Natural Pharmacology at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine and has authored *Natural Health Complete Guide to Safe Herbs* and *Better Sex Naturally*. Barker, previously a professor at the same university, is now in private practice.

HERBS for the MIND: What Science Tells Us about Nature's Remedies for Depression, Stress, Memory Loss, and Insomnia. By Jonathan Davidson and Kathryn Connor. 278 pages. The Guilford Press, 2000. Softcover \$24.95.

Two Duke University psychiatrists trained in complementary medicine review four popular herbal remedies in this book: St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) for depression, kava (*Piper methysticum*) for stress and anxiety, ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) for memory loss, and valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) for insomnia. They offer more than a scholarly approach since they have taken these herbs and prescribe them to patients. Their book examines the symptoms and causes for these conditions, as well as medical treatments to determine how herbs best fit into a treatment plan. It also analyzes pros and cons of drug treatments and suggests ways to enlist a doctor's help in developing a self-help program. This user-friendly text guides the reader in determining if an herb is working, then when to switch to different herbs or brands or to stop using it. The limitations of scientific understanding about herbs and potential side effects and dangers of long-term use are also covered—and perhaps over rated. A glossary defines terms, and a resource section lists herb and mental health books, journals, and organizations that offer more information.

THE PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY of HERBAL MEDICINE: Plant Drugs That Alter Mind, Brain, and Behavior. By Marcello Spinella. The MIT Press, 2001. 15 b/w sketches, 500 pp. Paperback \$29.95.

This book covers all of the major classes of plant chemistry that alter mind, brain, and behavior, from caffeine to morphine. There is detailed information on basic neuroscience and how it relates to pharmacology, backed by extensive references. Serving as a more technical reference than the previous book, it also takes on a larger scope. Not only brain enhancing and antidepressive herbs are addressed, but also pain relievers, sedatives, stimulants, as well as help for cognition functions, such as attention, learning, and memory. It discusses how herbs such as ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*), ginseng (*Panax ginseng*), and coffee (*Coffea arabica*), work on various aspects of human behavior, describing their effectiveness and safety concerns. A discussion on psychotherapeutic herbs includes marijuana (*Cannabis sativa*) and hallucinogens like peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*) and angel's trumpet (*Brugmansia candida*). Detailed explanation is given in order to understand neurotransmitters and the clinical efficacy of herbal medicines. Charts and diagrams help to illustrate the information.

CONCISE HANDBOOK of PSYCHOACTIVE HERBS: Medicinal Herbs for Treating Psychological and Neurological Problems. By Marcello Spinella, PhD. Haworth Herbal Press, 2005. 234 pp. Paperback \$34.95.

Another research-based book by Spinella, this one also takes a scientific look at herbs that produce psychological

effects. There is information on how the brain works, including a chapter on the mechanisms of addiction. Similar in scope to his earlier work (see above), chapters detail herbal painkillers, stimulants, brain enhancers, and hallucinogens, herbs to treat mental illnesses—all in a more condensed format with updated information. One nice addition is a glossary on herbal compounds and brain chemistry. Spinella is a psychology professor at Richard Stockton College in New Jersey.



1900 ADVERTISING POSTER, FROM DANGEROUS GARDEN.

Copyright of American Herb Association Quarterly Newsletter is the property of American Herb Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.