30-Day *Herbal Protocol To Manage Stress · Anxiety · Sleep*

Terrapy Hub

Firstly, well done for taking action to improve your quality of life. I also have been a long-time sufferer of stress, anxiety, and poor sleep, which caused inflammation in my body. Furthermore, it had an impact on my relationship with my family, as we tend to drop any filter with the close ones, don’t we?

Though I have relapses from time to time, since introducing herbal & holistic medicine in my life has changed everything for the better.

I've put together a science-backed, plant-based programme combining **Ashwagandha, Lemon Balm, St John's Wort & Valerian Root** with therapeutic **breathing practices** to help you restore calm, build resilience, and reclaim restful sleep.

Are you ready?

Ashwagandha | **Lemon Balm** | **St John's Wort** | **Valerian Root**

Compounds & protocols sourced from PubMed peer-reviewed clinical trials and systematic reviews

The Science Behind The Magic: Plants In Action

Two key body systems they target — the HPA stress axis and the GABAergic calming system



Ashwagandha
(*Withania somnifera)*

Bitter - Hot - Sweet



Lemon Balm
(*Melissa officinalis*)

Aromatic - Astringent - Cooling - Sweet

The HPA Stress Axis

When you experience stress, your brain signals the Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Adrenals (HPA) axis to release cortisol, the primary stress hormone. Chronically elevated cortisol disrupts sleep, worsens anxiety, impairs immunity,and depletes resilience.

- **Ashwagandha** directly modulates HPA axis activity, reducing serum cortisol by up to 30%
- **St John's Wort** downregulates β1-adrenoceptors, reducing adrenaline-driven arousal, the 'edge' of anxiety.

The GABAergic Calming Pathway

Gamma-Aminobutyric Acid (GABA) is the brain's main 'off-switch'.

- **Valerian sensitises** GABA-A receptors;
- **Lemon Balm** blocks the enzyme that breaks GABA down;
- **St. John's Wort** (SJW) prevents GABA reuptake.

Together they create a sustained calming signal, without dependency.



St John's Wort
(*Hypericum perforatum*)

Bitter - Aromatic - Astringent



Valerian Root
(*Valeriana officinalis)*

Bitter - Aromatic - Astringent - Sweet

30-Day *Protocol Overview*

A progressive, phased introduction — starting gently, building to full protocol by Week 3

Please be aware of the cautions and contraindications on the last page.

WEEK 1
Foundation

Days 1–7

HERBS

Ashwagandha - morning

Lemon Balm - morning + evening (60 min before bed)

BREATHING

- **4-7-8 breathing** (before bed, 4 cycles)
- **Physiological Sigh** (as needed during day)

Reset the HPA axis · establish baseline calm · begin GABA support

WEEK 2
Deepen

Days 8–14

HERBS

Ashwagandha - morning

Lemon Balm - morning + evening (60 min before bed)

St John's Wort - midday (add now)

BREATHING

- **Box Breathing** (morning, 6 rounds)
- **4-7-8 breathing** (before bed, 4 cycles)
- **Physiological Sigh** (as needed during the day)

Broaden neurotransmitter support · lift mood · anchor daytime calm

WEEK 3
Sleep

Days 15–21

HERBS

Full protocol as Week 2 +

Valerian root - evening (add now - 60 min (before bed

BREATHING

- **Alternate Nostril** (morning, 8 rounds)
- **Box Breathing** (midday)
- **4-7-8 breathing** (before bed, 4 cycles)

Build sleep architecture · deepen GABAergic tone · improve recovery

WEEK 4
Integrate

Days 22–30

HERBS

Full protocol as Week 3 +

Ashwagandha may increase up to 30% tif needed

Valerian may increase to 30% if needed

BREATHING

Full protocol as Week 3

Consolidate gains · assess response · plan maintenance protocol

Plant Active Compounds & Dosage

What each plant contains, in what form you can consume it, and how much of it you should take.

Please be aware of the cautions and contraindications on the last page.

Ashwagandha



Withania somnifera

Withanolides · Alkaloids · Sitoindosides · Triethylene glycol

1. **Tincture**: 7ml (140 drops)/day in 100ml water
2. **Decoction:** 3g (1.5 tsp)/day of dried root by decoction (350ml water - boil the root for 10 minutes)
3. **Infusion:** 3g (1.5 tsp)/day of root poweder (250ml hot water - steep for 10 minutes)

Stress management - Fatigue - Insomnia - Anxiety - Fertility & libido problems

Lemon Balm



Melissa officinalis

Rosmarinic acid · Ursolic acid · Oleanolic acid · Citral · Apigenin

1. **Tincture**: 3ml (60 drops)
2. **Fluid extract:** 2ml (40 drops)
3. **Infusion:** 3g (1.5 tsp) dried lemon balm herb (250ml hot water - steep for 10 minutes)
4. **Capsules:** 300–500 mg dried lemon balm

Anxiety - Digestive complaints - Stress-related indigestion - Low mood

St John's Wort



Hypericum perforatum

Hyperforin · Hypericin · Pseudohypericin · Biapigenin · Procyanidins

1. **Tincture**: 7ml (140 drops)/day in 100ml water (140 drops)
2. **Infusion:** 2g (1 tsp)/day of powedered root (250ml hot water - steep for 10 minutes)

Chronic fatigue - Anxiety - Depression - Menopause

Valerian Root



Valeriana officinalis

Valerenic acid · Valerenol · Valepotriates · Isovaleric acid · Hydroxypinoresinol

1. **Tincture**: 5ml (100 drops) 60 min before bed
2. **Infusion:** 2g (1 tsp) of dried root (250ml hot water - steep for 10 minutes)
3. **Capsules:** 400–900 mg of the dried root

Anxiety - Stress - Insomnia - Dysmenhorrea - Muscle relaxant

Breathing Techniques *to Anchor the Protocol*

Please be aware of the cautions and contraindications on the last page.

Use these daily — they work synergistically with the plants by directly activating the vagus nerve and parasympathetic system



4-7-8 Breathing

ANXIETY · PRE-SLEEP

When: Evening, before sleep, or during acute anxiety

1. Inhale through nose — 4 counts
2. Hold the breath — 7 counts
3. Exhale through mouth — 8 counts
4. Repeat 4 cycles (do not do more than 4 when starting)

Activates the vagus nerve. The prolonged exhale stimulates the parasympathetic system, lowering heart rate and cortisol. Synergises with Valerian + Lemon Balm at bedtime.



Box Breathing

STRESS · FOCUS

When: Midday reset, pre-meeting, or any moment of overwhelm

1. Inhale — 4 counts
2. Hold full — 4 counts
3. Exhale — 4 counts
4. Hold empty — 4 counts · Repeat 6×

Equal-ratio breathing balances the autonomic nervous system. Used by military special forces for acute stress regulation. Enhances Ashwagandha's cortisol-lowering effect when practised consistently.



Physiological Sigh

PANIC · INSTANT CALM

When: Any moment of spike anxiety or overwhelm

1. Take a full inhale through the nose
2. At the top — take a short second sniff
3. Exhale fully and slowly through the mouth
4. 1–3 repetitions is enough · most powerful of all

Scientifically shown to reduce stress faster than any other single technique. Deflates alveoli in the lungs that balloon during stress, rapidly resetting the CO2/O2 balance and calming the nervous system.



Alternate Nostril

BALANCE · MORNING

When: Morning practice · pairs with St John's Wort

1. Close right nostril. Inhale left — 4 counts
2. Close both. Hold — 2 counts
3. Open right. Exhale right — 4 counts
4. Inhale right, switch, exhale left = 1 round. Do 8–10 rounds

Nadi Shodhana (ancient yogic technique). Balances the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Studies show it reduces anxiety and improves cognitive function. Excellent alongside St John's Wort for mood and clarity.

Weeks 1 & 2 — *Foundation & Deepen*

Please be aware of the cautions and contraindications on the last page.

Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4

Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4

Morning

Morning

1. Alternate Nostril breathing — 5 min upon waking (skip Week 1; add Week 2)
2. Ashwagandha (with breakfast, food improves absorption)
3. Lemon Balm (take it with Ashwagandha)

Afternoon

Midday

1. St John's Wort with lunch (Week 2 onwards only)
2. Physiological Sigh: 1–3 breaths if stress spikes
3. Hydrate well — both herbs work best with adequate water intake

Evening & Night

Evening

1. Lemon Balm (tea is ideal — the ritual helps signal rest)
2. 4-7-8 breathing — 4 cycles, lying down or seated
3. Dim lights 60 min before bed · no screens

Week 2 Additions

Days 8–14: Adding St John's Wort and expanding your breathing practice

Add St John's Wort with lunch

Take in the day, NOT evening. Its serotonin-raising effect is energising & needs consistent daily use for 2–4 weeks to reach full effect. Take it with food.

Begin Alternate Nostril Breathing (morning)

5–8 rounds upon waking before checking phone. This sets the parasympathetic tone for the day, enhances the mood-stabilising effect of St. John’s Wort (SJW).

Track your baseline this week

Keep a simple daily note: sleep quality (1–10), anxiety (1–10), mood (1–10). You will use this to check progress by Week 4. Even a voice note works.

St John's Wort Caution — check your medications

SJW interacts with SSRIs, oral contraceptives, blood thinners, HIV medications. If you take any of these, consult your GP or practitioner before adding SJW, or simply avoid for this protocol.

Weeks 3 & 4 — *Sleep & Integration*

Please be aware of the cautions and contraindications on the last page.

Week 1 | Week 2 | **Week 3** | Week 4

Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | **Week 4**

Week 3 — Adding Valerian Root

Days 15–21: The sleep phase. Add Valerian Root in the evening.

Valerian Root — 60 min before bed

Take it consistently. Valerian is most effective with 2–4 weeks of regular use — it is not primarily a 'take when needed' herb. The GABA-A receptor modulation builds cumulatively.

Breathing: Box breathing midday

Add Box breathing during your day to soothe your nervous system and support it moving forward in the evening.

Double Lemon Balm in the evening

Take Lemon Balm in the evening alongside Valerian for a sustained calming signal through the night.

Sleep hygiene anchors (non-negotiable)

Consistent bedtime ± 30 min. No screens 60 min before. Room temp 16–18°C. Dark room. These amplify the herbs' effect, without them, you are fighting uphill.

Review your Week 1 baseline at Day 21

Compare sleep, anxiety, mood scores. Most people notice meaningful change in sleep quality and daytime calm by Day 21. If anxiety is worse, check SJW dose or interactions.

Week 4 — Integrate & Assess

Days 22–30: Full protocol. Observe, fine-tune, and plan what comes next.

Full daily protocol active

All four plants are now working. **Morning**: Ashwagandha + Lemon Balm + SJW. **Evening**: Lemon Balm + Valerian. Full breathing routine AM and PM.

Dose adjustment (if well tolerated)

Ashwagandha **may** be increased to 9ml or 4g/day if stress levels remain high. Valerian to 7ml or 3g at night if sleep is still disrupted. **Do not increase SJW** without practitioner guidance.

What to assess at Day 30

Sleep onset time, night waking frequency, daytime anxiety score, overall mood, energy on waking, stress resilience (how quickly you recover from stress). Compare to Week 1 baseline.

♻ Maintenance vs cycling

Consider: continue for another 30 days (Ashwagandha is safe for 90 days; SJW 12 weeks); or cycle off 2 weeks and reassess. Ashwagandha benefits persist 1–2 weeks after stopping.

When to seek practitioner guidance

If symptoms worsened, if sleep is still severely disrupted, if you experienced any unusual side effects, or if you want to combine this protocol with existing medications — consult a qualified herbalist or integrative GP.

Your Daily *Schedule*

Full protocol — print and place on your fridge or save to phone

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Morning	Ashwagandha + Lemon Balm with breakfast	Alternate Nostril Breathing - 8 rounds Ashwagandha + Lemon Balm with breakfast	Alternate Nostril Breathing - 8 rounds Ashwagandha + Lemon Balm with breakfast	Alternate Nostril Breathing - 8 rounds Ashwagandha + Lemon Balm with breakfast
Take herbs with food (tea or tincture). Practice breathing before checking phone.				
Midday / Afternoon		St. John's Wort with lunch	St. John's Wort with lunch Box breathing - 6 times	St. John's Wort with lunch Box breathing - 6 times
Physiological Sigh (1–3 breaths) any time anxiety rises. SJW tea/ tincture.				
Evening/ Night (60 min before bed)	Lemon Balm 4-7-8 Breathing - 4 cycles	Lemon Balm 4-7-8 Breathing - 4 cycles	Valerian Root + Lemon Balm 4-7-8 Breathing - 4 cycles	Valerian Root + Lemon Balm 4-7-8 Breathing - 4 cycles
Do the breathing lying in bed. Increase Valerian & Lemon Balm quantities ONLY if needed.				

Some sleep-inducing foods to consider (Yin energy):

- Black sesame, pumpkin seeds
- Goji berries
- Tofu
- Cucumber
- Bananas, pears, kiwi
- Spinach
- Almonds, walnuts

Please be aware of the cautions and contraindications on the last page.

Important *Cautions* & Indications

⚠ St John's Wort — Most Interactions

Interacts with SSRIs, SNRIs, MAOIs → risk of serotonin syndrome — do NOT combine

Reduces efficacy of oral contraceptives, HIV antiretrovirals, warfarin, cyclosporin (CYP3A4 induction)

Not suitable during pregnancy or breastfeeding

Do not take alongside any prescription antidepressant without GP guidance

⚠ Valerian Root — Sedation Cautions

Do NOT combine with benzodiazepines (diazepam, lorazepam) — additive CNS depression

Do not combine with alcohol, antihistamines, or opioids

Not recommended in pregnancy

Discontinue 2 weeks before any surgery involving anaesthesia

⚠ Ashwagandha — Less Common but Real

Not suitable in autoimmune conditions (Hashimoto's, lupus, RA) — may stimulate immune activity

Avoid in thyroid disorders without practitioner guidance (may increase T3/T4)

Rare reports of liver injury at very high doses — stick to recommended doses

Safety data available for ~3 months continuous use — then reassess or cycle off

Ensure that your supplies of ashwagandha consist solely of the root, NO leaves, and avoid products that are high in withanolides

Avoid if you suffer with severe liver conditions, including cirrhosis or liver cancer. Additionally, it is best to refrain .from using ashwagandha if you regularly consume paracetamol (Tylenol)

⚠ Lemon Balm - Caution to Hypothiriodism

Pregnancy & Breastfeeding: precaution is strongly advised

Thyroid conditions: Lemon balm may inhibit TSH receptor binding, so it should be used cautiously or avoided in people with hypothyroidism or those on thyroid hormone therapy

May enhance sedative effects — consult a qualified medical herbalist before combining with medications like benzodiazepines or sleep aids

Antihypertensives: A theoretical risk of additive hypotension exists, though not yet confirmed in clinical trials.

Important *Cautions* & Indications

⚠ General Protocol Cautions

This is an educational protocol only — it is not a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment

If symptoms are severe (clinical depression, panic disorder, PTSD) — seek professional care first

Herb quality varies enormously — seek standardised, third-party tested products

Herbs take time. Most require 2–6 weeks of consistent use for meaningful effect

Do not stop prescription psychiatric medications to take these herbs without medical supervision