

Complementary & Alternative Medicine (CAM) for Anxiety & Depression

This handout is meant to provide a resource of other complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) options that you could use for anxiety & depression. While there have been many studies done on CAM, they are not as rigorously tested as more traditional treatment options. This list is meant to introduce you to other CAM possibilities but is not an endorsement of any specific option. We encourage you to review the listed potential CAM options and talk to your provider with any questions.

Supplements & Herbs

Always check with your psychiatrist or primary care provider (PCP) before starting to use any herbs or supplements since they can have side effects and may interact with medications you are taking.

- The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) is a part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The NCCIH website includes a page titled *Herbs at a Glance* which contains info about many different herbs and what evidence there is to support their use in mental health care.
<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/herbsataglance>
- Some of the herbs and supplements that may help with mood, anxiety, and sleep include chamomile, lemon balm, lavender, magnesium, zinc, and vitamin D.

Aromatherapy Essential Oils

- Aromatherapy is the use of oils from different plants to help improve your health and well-being. The oils can be inhaled or diluted and massaged into the skin. (Follow the directions that come with the oil that you are using.)
- It is important to note that the quality of essential oils that you can buy varies greatly. Essential oils are not regulated, so the bottle may not list all the ingredients. This is the reason it is important not to ingest the oils. The Johns Hopkins Medicine website includes some excellent information to help you choose the highest quality essential oils. <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/aromatherapy-do-essential-oils-really-work>
- Some essential oils that may help with anxiety & depression include chamomile, lavender, lemon, neroli, bergamot, lemongrass, and orange.

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT Tapping)

- Although it is still being researched, people have been using tapping to help treat anxiety for years.
- EFT is like acupuncture except that acupuncture uses needles to put pressure on certain points on the body and EFT uses pressure from your fingertips. This makes it easy to do anytime and anywhere.
- Some of the points that are tapped include the top of the head, under the eye, and the chin.
- We recommend watching a video to learn how to do EFT tapping. Links to two simple videos are below, but you can find many others online.
 - [Tapping 101 – Learn the Basics of the Tapping Technique \(thetappingsolution.com\)](https://www.thetappingsolution.com)
 - [How to Tap with Jessica Ortner: Emotional Freedom Technique Informational Video - YouTube](#)

Equine Therapy

- Horses have been used for therapeutic purposes since the time of the ancient Greeks. It is a treatment method that uses the connection between people and horses to enhance physical and/or emotional healing.
- Equine therapy is usually used along with more traditional treatment such as psychotherapy. There are different forms of equine therapy that can be used depending on the client's needs.
- There are several facilities that offer equine therapy in the Boulder area. Search online for "equine therapy in boulder Colorado" to explore your options.

Movement

- **Yoga:**
 - "Studies have suggested possible benefits of yoga for several aspects of wellness, including stress management, mental/emotional health, promoting healthy eating/activity habits, sleep, and balance" (NCCIH, 2022).
 - There are many different styles of yoga, so you may need to try several to find the one that works best for you. An easy way to start is to find an online video or download an app to your phone. Here is a simple example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sxddnugwu-8>
- **Tai chi & qi gong:**
 - Tai chi and qi gong are ancient Chinese, low-impact, slow-motion movement exercises that can help reduce stress and anxiety. Again, there are many videos and apps that you can check out. Here are some examples.
Tai chi: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PYVKgSjFPo>
Qi gong: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiby-6_7qsl

Others

- **Meditation:** Studies have shown that even 30 minutes of meditation a day can help change how your brain reacts to stress and anxiety. There are various websites and apps that can help you learn to meditate. For example: <https://www.calm.com/>
- **Weighted blanket:** While there are not a lot of studies done on weighted blankets, people who use them say they have helped depression, anxiety, and insomnia. They work by putting gentle pressure to your entire body to give you a feeling of being hugged or swaddled.
- **Light therapy:** This treatment can be very helpful for people who have seasonal affective disorder (SAD) which is a type of depression that happens during the fall and winter. These lights mimic outdoor light. One recommendation is the Carex Daylight Classic Plus which can be purchased on Amazon. These lights should be used in a specific way, so talk to your provider before using.
- **Music:** Over the years, studies have shown that music therapy helps reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety when used along with other treatments such as psychotherapy and/or medication. Search online for "music for depression or anxiety" and you will find many examples to try.

BCH Center for Mind Body Medicine (CMBM)

- The CMBM at BCH offers patients evidence-based tools to help alleviate or significantly improve stress-related emotional and physical illnesses, chronic pain, and hard-to-treat medical conditions. For more information about the services we provide, please go to <https://www.bch.org/our-services/mind-body-medicine/> .