

# SUBSTANCES THAT CALM THE SPIRIT

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**Sources:**

- Bensky, D. (2004). *Chinese Herbal Medicine: Materia Medica*. Seattle, WA: Eastland Press. pp. 909-941
- Wiseman and Brand (2008). *Concise Chinese Materia Medica*. Paradigm Publications. pp. 337-355

## Substances the Calm the Spirit

Substances that Calm the Spirit treat shen problems like irritability, insomnia, profuse dreaming, palpitations, and anxiety. These symptoms arise when Heart's function of storing the spirit is disturbed.

There are two subcategories:

**Substances that Anchor, Settle, and Calm the Spirit:** these are heavy shells and minerals that weigh down the spirit. They are generally used for shen problems due to excess conditions (Heart fire, Liver fire, Liver yang rising, phlegm-fire harassing the Heart).

**Herbs that Nourish the Heart and Calm the Spirit:** these are sweet herbs that nourish the Heart. They are generally used for deficiency patterns (HT yin deficiency, HT blood deficiency).

## Substances the Calm the Spirit

### ANCHOR, SETTLE, AND CALM

- lóng gǔ
- mǔ lì
- cí shí
- zhēn zhū
- zǐ shí yīng
- hǔ pò

### NOURISH THE HEART

- suān zǎo rén
- bǎi zǐ rén
- hé huān pí
- yè jiāo téng
- yuǎn zhì

## Substances that Anchor, Settle, and Calm the Spirit

<b>Taste:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sweet</li> </ul>
<b>Temperature:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• neutral or cool</li> </ul>
<b>Channels:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HT, LV</li> </ul>
<b>Main Action:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anchor and calm the spirit</li> </ul>
<b>Cautions &amp; Contraindications:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These herbs are minerals, which are difficult to digest. They may injure Stomach qi.</li> <li>• Not for longterm use.</li> </ul>
<b>Other:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are heavy substances that weigh down Heart to calm shen. They can also weigh down ascendant Liver yang or rebellious Lung qi.</li> <li>• These substances mainly treat branch symptoms of shen disturbance. Combine with other herbs that treat the root.</li> </ul>

# lóng gǔ

## *fossilia ossis mastodi*

**Temp:** neutral

**Taste:** sweet, astringent

**Channels:** HT, LV, KI

**Dosage:** 15-30 grams (boil 30-60 minutes longer)

### 1. anchors and settles the spirit

- for restlessness, insomnia, palpitations, anxiety, mania-withdrawal

### 2. anchors Liver yang rising

- for irritability, restlessness, dizziness, blurred vision, irascibility (bad temper) due to yin deficiency with yang rising

### 3. induces astringency to stop leakage

- for seminal emission, vaginal discharge, frequent urination, flooding and spotting, spontaneous sweating, night sweating
- use calcined Long Gu (called Duan Long Gu)

### 4. closes sores and generates flesh

- for chronic, non-healing sores
- use calcined *Duan Long Gu* and apply topically as powder

龙  
骨

# mǔ lì

## *ostreae concha*

**Temp:** cool

**Taste:** salty, astringent

**Channels:** LV, KI

**Dosage:** 9-30 grams (boil 30-60 minutes longer)

### 1. anchors and settles the spirit

- for palpitations, anxiety, restlessness, insomnia

### 2. anchors Liver yang rising

- for irritability, insomnia, dizziness, headache, tinnitus, blurred vision, bad temper, red face due to yin deficiency with yang rising

### 3. induces astringency to stop leakage

- for spontaneous sweating, night sweats, seminal emission, vaginal discharge, flooding and spotting
- use calcined Mu Li (called Duan Mu Li)

### 4. softens hardness and dissipates nodules

- esp for lumps on the neck, such as goiter and scrofula

### 5. reduces Stomach acid

- for abdominal pain, acid regurgitation, sour taste in the mouth

牡  
蠣

# cí shí

## *magnetitum*

**Temp:** cold  
**Taste:** acrid, salty  
**Channels:** KI, LV  
**Dosage:** 15-30 grams (boil 30-60 minutes longer)

磁  
石

1. anchors and settles the spirit
  - for restlessness, palpitations, insomnia, tremors
  - esp. for Kidney deficiency with Liver yang rising
2. tonifies Kidney and subdues Liver yang
  - for dizziness, vertigo, childhood convulsions due to Kidney deficiency with Liver yang rising
3. sharpens hearing and brightens the eyes
  - for deafness and dim vision due to Liver-Kidney deficiency
4. helps Kidney grasp Lung qi
  - for chronic asthma and wheezing due to Kidney deficiency

# zhēn zhū

## *margarita*

**Temp:** cold  
**Taste:** sweet, salty  
**Channels:** HT, LV  
**Dosage:** 0.3 - 1.0 grams

珍  
珠

1. anchors and settles the spirit
  - for tremors, palpitations, childhood convulsions, seizures
2. clears Liver heat to brighten eyes
  - for painful, red, swollen eyes; blurred vision due to pterygium
  - usually used topically as powder
3. promotes healing and generates flesh
  - for chronic, non-healing sores (usually throat and gums)
  - also used topically in beauty products

Use caution during pregnancy.

zhēn zhū mǔ  
*margaritiferae concha usta*

**Temp:** cold  
**Taste:** sweet, salty  
**Channels:** HT, LV  
**Dosage:** 15-30 grams (boil 30-60 minutes longer)

1. anchors and settles the spirit
  - for palpitations, anxiety, insomnia
2. clears Liver heat and anchors yang rising
  - for headache, dizziness, vertigo, tinnitus, insomnia
3. clears Liver heat to brighten eyes
  - for painful, red, swollen eyes; sensitivity to light
4. stops bleeding
  - primarily for upper-body bleeding (nosebleed);  
or for continuous uterine bleeding

Use caution during pregnancy.

珍  
珠  
母

**zǐ shí yīng**  
*flouritum*

**Temp:** warm  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** HT, LV  
**Dosage:** 9-15 grams

1. anchors and settles the spirit
  - for disorientation, insomnia, palpitations, anxiety due  
to either Heart blood deficiency or Liver yang rising
2. warms Lung and descends rebellious qi
  - for cough, wheezing, asthma due to cold
3. warms the uterus
  - for profuse menses or infertility due to cold in the  
womb

紫  
石  
英

# hǔ pò

## *succinum*

琥  
珀

**Temp:** neutral

**Taste:** sweet

**Channels:** UB, HT, LV

**Dosage:** 1.5-3 grams (swallow as powder or pill; do no decoct)

1. anchors and settles the spirit
  - for palpitations, anxiety, profuse dreaming, insomnia, forgetfulness, tremor, seizure
2. invigorates blood
  - for painful menses, amenorrhea, or fixed abdominal masses due to blood stasis
3. promotes urination to treat lin syndrome
  - esp. for bloody lin
4. closes sores and generates flesh
  - used topically for sores, carbuncles, ulcerated sores that fail to close
  - also for swelling and pain in the scrotum or vulva

## Herbs that Nourish the Heart and Calm the Spirit

<b>Taste:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sweet</li></ul>
<b>Temperature:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• neutral</li></ul>
<b>Channels:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HT, SP, LV</li></ul>
<b>Main Action:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nourish the Heart and calm the Shen</li></ul>
<b>Cautions &amp; Contraindications:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These herbs are mild with few side effects</li></ul>

# suān zǎo rén

## *ziziphi spinosae semen*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet, sour  
**Channels:** GB, HT, LV, SP  
**Dosage:** 9-15 grams (crush before decocting)

1. nourishes the Heart to calm shen
  - for irritability, insomnia, palpitation, and anxiety due to yin-blood deficiency of the HT and LV
2. induces astringency to stop sweating
  - for spontaneous sweating and night sweats

The raw form is slightly cool and better for yin-deficiency insomnia with heat.  
The dry-fried form (Chao Suan Zao Ren) is slightly warm in temperature.  
For insomnia, Suan Zao Ren can be taken as a single herb swallowed as powder (1.5-3g)

酸  
枣  
仁

# bǎi zǐ rén

## *platycladi semen*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** HT, KI, LI  
**Dosage:** 3-9 grams (crush before decocting)

1. nourishes the Heart to calm shen
  - for irritability, insomnia, forgetfulness, palpitation, anxiety
  - also for night terrors in children
2. moistens Large Intestine to relieve constipation
  - for constipation in elderly, debilitated, and postpartum women due to yin or blood deficiency
3. stops night sweats due to yin deficiency

Be careful storing Bai Zi Ren at room temperature; because of the oils it can easily go rancid  
Raw seeds may cause nausea. For patients with weak digestion or sloppy stools, use Chao Bai Zi Ren.

柏  
子  
仁

# hé huān pí

## *albiziae cortex*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** HT, LV  
**Dosage:** 6-15 grams

1. relieves constraint and calms the spirit
  - for bad temper, depression, insomnia, irritability and poor memory due to constrained emotions
2. invigorates blood
  - for injury, trauma, swelling, and pain
  - for heat-toxicity sores and swellings
  - mild

Use caution during pregnancy.

合  
歡  
皮

# yè jiāo téng

## *polygoni multiflori caulis*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** HT, LV  
**Dosage:** 15-30 grams

1. nourishes the Heart to calm shen
  - for insomnia and irritability
  - esp. for dream-disturbed sleep
2. tonifies blood and unblocks the channels
  - for weakness, pain, soreness, and numbness due to blood deficiency
  - for pain due to bi syndrome
3. used externally for itching and rash

Ye Jiao Teng is also called Shou Wu Teng. It is the vine of He Shou Wu.

首  
烏  
藤



# yuǎn zhì

## *polygalae radix*

**Temp:** slightly warm  
**Taste:** bitter, acrid  
**Channels:** HT, LU  
**Dosage:** 6-15 grams

远志

1. calms the spirit and sharpens the mind
  - for insomnia, profuse dreaming, palpitations, forgetfulness
  - for cases of emotional constraint or Kidney and Heart not communicating
2. transforms phlegm to open Heart orifices
  - for disorientation, mania-withdrawal, spasms or seizure
  - also phlegm in the Lung (cough with copious sputum)
3. treats abscesses, swellings, and sores
  - used internally or externally for boils, abscesses, sores, and painful swollen breasts

Unprepared Yuan Zhi can easily irritate the Stomach. Use caution in patients with gastritis or peptic ulcer.

# líng zhī

## *ganoderma*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** HT, LV, LU  
**Dosage:** 3-15 grams

灵芝

1. nourishes the Heart to calm shen
  - tonifies Heart qi and Heart blood
  - for insomnia, fright palpitations, forgetfulness
2. transforms phlegm and stops cough
  - esp. for cold patterns of cough with copious phlegm
3. tonifies qi and blood
  - for deficiency taxation with shortness of breath, poor appetite, cold limbs, irritability, agitation, and dry mouth

# Summary

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**lóng gǔ**  
*fossilia ossis mastodi*

anchors and settles the spirit

- subdues LV yang rising
- induces astringency to stop leakage
- regenerates flesh

**mǔ lì**  
*ostreae concha*

anchors and settles the spirit

- subdues LV yang rising
- induces astringency to stop leakage
- softens hardness and nodules (goiter, scrofula)
- reduces ST acid

**cí shí**  
*magnetitum*

anchors and settles the spirit  
• esp for KI deficiency with LV yang rising

- subdues LV yang rising
- sharpens hearing and brightens eyes
- aids KI grasping LU qi

**zhēn zhū**  
*margarita*

anchors and settles the spirit

- brightens eyes
- regenerates flesh

**zǐ shí yīng**  
*flouritum*

anchors and settles the spirit

- descends rebellious LU qi
- warms uterus (infertility)

**hǔ pò**  
*succinum*

anchors and settles the spirit

- invigorates blood
- treats lin syndrome
- regenerates flesh

**suān zǎo rén**  
*ziziphi spinosae semen*

nourishes HT to calm shen  
• esp. for insomnia

- stops sweating

**bǎi zǐ rén**  
*platycladi semen*

nourishes HT to calm shen

- moistens Large Intestine

**hé huān pí**  
*albiziae cortex*

relieves constraint and calms shen

- invigorates blood

**yè jiāo téng**  
*polygani multiflori caulis*

nourishes HT to calm shen

- tonifies blood and unblocks channels (bi syndrome)
- itching and rash

**yuǎn zhì**  
*polygalae radix*

calms shen  
• transforms phlegm and opens HT orifices