

8 Herbs that Improve Sleep Quality



by
DR. JOCKERS

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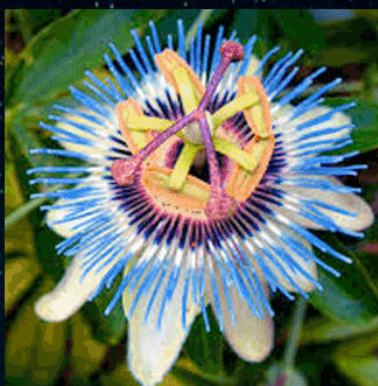
8 Herbs That Improve Sleep Quality

Getting to sleep in our society is becoming more and more of a science. To help you unwind I'm going to outline the top 8 herbs that improve sleep quality so you can feel more prepared for the demands of tomorrow.

For our ancestors, it was as simple as sundown = sleep. Our body was designed to flow with the rhythms of the earth but with introduction of modern lighting fixtures, electronic devices, and just the general fast-paced lifestyle that we all live, sleep doesn't come as naturally as it should.



VALERIAN



PASSION FLOWER



LEMON BALM



LAVENDER



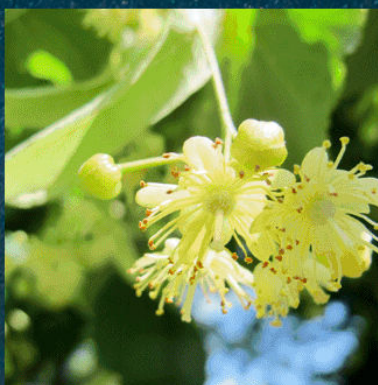
8 HERBS THAT IMPROVE SLEEP QUALITY



PEPPERMINT



CHAMOMILE



LINDEN FLOWER



CATNIP

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Valerian

Valerian is an herb commonly found in tea blends marketed for night-time use, *but does it really do anything?*

Research on valerian is mixed but studies mostly report that valerian has anti-anxiety and sedative effects which likely accounts for its ability to help you fall asleep *faster* and even get a *higher-quality* of sleep (1, 2).


Research also suggests that valerian is able to induce a state of relaxation through a series of actions that result in higher GABA production in the brain. Specifically, a compound within valerian called *valerenic acid* is thought to be responsible for this effect (3). Optimal **GABA** levels is crucial to improve sleep quality.

Finally, valerian has been found to be effective in combination with herbs such as: lemon-balm, hops, and kava kava for improving sleep quality.


THE BENEFITS OF VALERIAN ROOT

Valerian is a perennial plant that grows up to 4 feet tall and produces fragrant white or pink flowers. It is native to Asia, Europe and is grown in the US and is commonly called "Nature's Valium".


Valerian root has high amounts of valerenic acid which promotes the production of the calming neurotransmitter GABA.




Decreases Time to Sleep Onset




Improves Sleep Quality




Reduces Anxiety




Uplifts Mood



Improves Levels of Calmness





Passion Flower

Similar to valerian, passion flower may contribute to a better night of sleep by upregulating GABA levels in the brain. Different studies have also shown that using passionflower has beneficial effects on anxiety, blood pressure, **insulin levels**, and inflammation.

Caution: Passionflowers acts as a mild MAOI (monoamine oxidase inhibitor) which is similar to the effects of some anti-depressant medications. Do not use passionflower if you are currently taking an MAOI because it can amplify the effects.

THE BENEFITS OF PASSION FLOWER

Passion Flower is native to Europe, India, North and South America and contains beautiful purple pedals. There are over 500 different species of these and the name "passion" was in reference to the "Passion of Christ." The Spanish missionaries in the 15-16th century adopted the various flower parts as symbols of Jesus and his last days.

- Helps Reduce Anxiety & Nervousness
- Speeds up the Onset of Sleep
- Improves Overall Sleep Quality
- Supports Digestive Health
- Relaxes Mind and Supports Positive Mood

Passion Flower active ingredients include indole alkaloids, flavonoids, benzoflavones and a natural form of the neurotransmitter GABA.

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Lemon Balm

Lemon balm is a traditional European remedy that has been used for hundreds of years to calm the nerves and improve mood. Also known as *Melissa*, it is commonly used for aromatherapy purposes and to improve sleep quality.

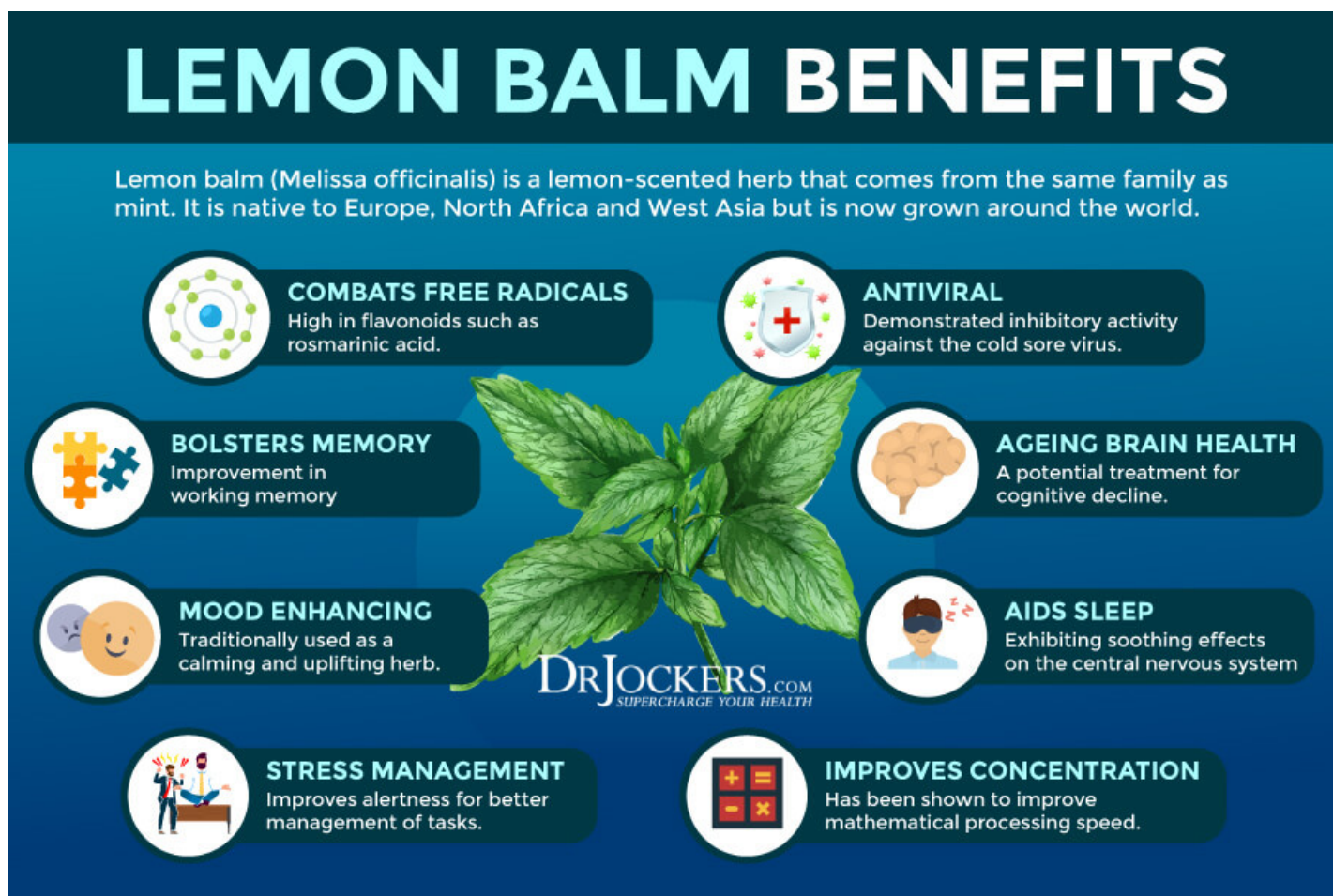
The documented benefits of lemon balm are actually pretty broad and include anti-depressant, **PMS relief**, anti-microbial, and of course as a sedative. Lemon balm is thought to promote relaxation by increasing levels of the inhibitory neurotransmitter GABA in the brain. It is

thought to achieve this action by inhibiting the enzyme that breaks down GABA, allowing it to remain active in the brain for longer (4).

Lemon balm can be used as a tea, tincture, or essential oil for the purpose of promoting feelings of relaxation before sleep.

LEMON BALM BENEFITS

Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) is a lemon-scented herb that comes from the same family as mint. It is native to Europe, North Africa and West Asia but is now grown around the world.



- COMBATS FREE RADICALS**
High in flavonoids such as rosmarinic acid.
- ANTIVIRAL**
Demonstrated inhibitory activity against the cold sore virus.
- BOLSTERS MEMORY**
Improvement in working memory.
- AGEING BRAIN HEALTH**
A potential treatment for cognitive decline.
- MOOD ENHANCING**
Traditionally used as a calming and uplifting herb.
- AIDS SLEEP**
Exhibiting soothing effects on the central nervous system.
- STRESS MANAGEMENT**
Improves alertness for better management of tasks.
- IMPROVES CONCENTRATION**
Has been shown to improve mathematical processing speed.

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Lavender

Lavender is one of my favorite herbs to improve sleep and relaxation. It is likely that your most common encounter with lavender is in essential oil form as it is one of the most popular oils on the planet.

Not only does the scent of lavender evoke feelings of relaxation and comfort, but it smells amazing and has extending benefits.

Studies have shown that just inhaling the vapors from lavender can upregulate antioxidant systems in the body. On top of the sleep-improving effects of lavender this may be a health

game changer. Other benefits include: headache relief, topical treatment for acne, and blood sugar balancing effects.

My favorite methods of using lavender that I recommend for those who are struggling with insomnia or generalized anxiety are:

Healing Bath: Add 10-15 drops to a bathtub of warm water along with a cup of Epsom salt and soak to relieve tension. In [this article](#) we go over a number of different healing baths.


Diffuser: Diffuse [lavender oil](#) in your bedroom and other areas of the house where you spend a lot of time. You can also sprinkle a few drops of lavender oil over your pillow before bed. Here is a great [diffuser](#) and a brand that makes a good peppermint and lavender essential oil [here](#).

Topically: Mix a few drops of lavender oil with a carrier oil like coconut, almond, or even magnesium oil and apply to the back of the neck, bottoms of the feet, and abdomen before bed.


THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF LAVENDER

Lavender is a member of the mint family with various species growing all over the world. The Egyptians, Ancient Romans and Israelites in the Bible all used lavender for a wide variety of purposes.


The main constituents of lavender are linalool, linalyl acetate, 1,8-cineole B-ocimene, terpinen-4-ol and camphor. These compounds help to modulate and balance the glutamate-GABA neurotransmitters and have the following benefits.




Improves Mood




Reduces Anxiety




Supports Better Sleep Quality




Promotes Relaxation



Reduces Muscle Cramping



Supports Digestive Health



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Peppermint

Peppermint is often associated with stimulation but it may actually help you get a better night of sleep. Although I wouldn't diffuse **peppermint** essential oil in my bedroom at night, it might be a great addition to your nighttime tea.

Peppermint doesn't necessarily *induce* sleep, but it can provoke some physiological changes in the body that may help improve the *quality* of your sleep.

Peppermint may improve sleep by:

1. Opening airways and allowing for healthier breathing and better oxygenation of tissues during sleep. Result: More effective healing
2. Relaxing the intestinal tract to prevent any unwanted activity that might keep you awake
3. Relaxing other muscles that are holding tension and inhibiting full relaxation

7 Benefits of Peppermint Oil

- Focus
- Headache-relief
- Nausea-relief
- Yummy
- Refreshing
- Fever-fighter
- Energy

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Chamomile

When you think of a nighttime tea, chamomile is probably the first thing to come to mind. Most of us know that chamomile is great for relaxation and the research supports that belief (5). It is thought that chamomile provides a sedative effect due to a flavonoid called *apigenin* that binds to GABA receptors in the **brain** to promote relaxation. Apigenin is also well known for its anti-cancer properties.

My two favorite methods of using chamomile are in a high-quality tea or by aromatherapy. Additionally, chamomile oil can be combined with lavender oil in a healing bath. Some of my patients report that after a healing bath with lavender and chamomile oils they have gotten some of the best sleep of their life!

Regular use of chamomile will also benefit oral health, inflammation due to oxidative stress, better immune function, and digestion.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF CHAMOMILE TEA



Chamomile is a carminative herb that contains chamazulene, an aromatic compound that possesses anti-inflammatory, analgesic and antispasmodic properties.



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Reduces
Bloating



Relaxes
Muscles



Improves
Sleep Quality



Improves
Nausea and
Indigestion



Supports
Healthy Immune
Response



Relaxes the Mind
& Promotes
Happiness



Reduces
Inflammation



Supports
Healthy Bowel
Movements

Linden Flower

Linden flower is commonly found alongside chamomile and valerian in teas for relaxation. While the research on linden flower is pretty low, it has been used for thousands of years for the purpose of relaxation.

Many report to have successfully used Linden flower as a relaxing agent before bed and a small amount of research supports the sedative properties of this herb (6). Although probably not the most potent sleep aid on its own, a blend of known relaxing **herbs** along with linden flower may be beneficial.

A close-up photograph of several bright yellow linden flowers with prominent stamens, surrounded by large, vibrant green leaves. The background is a dark green with a subtle pattern of light dots and glowing bokeh effects.

Linden Flowers

are a good source of:

- Antioxidant Flavonoids
- Astringent tannins that help improve gut health
- Phenolic Acids that have immune-boosting and anti-inflammatory Effects

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Catnip

It's likely that we've all witnessed the effect that catnip has on our feline friends at some point in our lives. Upon smelling the stuff cats take on a mix of erratic and affectionate behaviors that have led it to being equated to cannabis for cats. *Can this herb so endeared by our pets also give us a sense of calm and relaxation?*

The evidence on this one is slim in terms of formal research and yet it can be found in many herbal sleep blends. There is a decent amount of anecdotal evidence that catnip is able to settle the nerves and help one relax and typically is regarded as safe for human consumption.

It is said by some herbalists that catnip also contains a similar composition to valerian which provides a little more insight into why it may improve sleep quality for many individuals. We offer many of these herbs in our [Relax Calm product here](#)

RELAX CALM CLINICAL BENEFITS



- ✓ Helps Promote Muscle Relaxation
- ✓ Reduces Pain and Muscle Tightness
- ✓ Improves Anxiety and Restlessness
- ✓ Promotes States of Deep, Restorative Sleep

Nighty Night Tea (Traditional Medicinals)

I love this brand of tea because they are one of the few that use all organic ingredients and a strict set of quality/potency standards for every one of their herbs.

This blend contains many of the herbs mentioned in this article including passion flower and chamomile alongside some other herbs traditionally used for lifting the spirits including lemon verbena and lemongrass. I always recommend this tea for my patients who are having sleep issues although it is great for anyone who would like to improve sleep quality.

It can be purchased in most grocery stores, health food stores, or online [here](#). This same brand also makes a Nighty Night tea with the addition of valerian that has great reviews. It can be found [here](#).

Give these a try and leave some feedback, I'd love to know how they work for you!



Final Remarks

Occasional inability to fall asleep can be remedied with the use of natural herbs such as the ones found in this article. If you find yourself consistently unable to fall asleep and must rely on these substances then it is possible that some deeper issues need to be addressed.

I would recommend that anyone who is experiencing chronic insomnia first take a look at their nighttime routine and ensure they are properly priming their mind and body for a night of rest. For a deeper dive into how to naturally improve sleep quality, check out the strategies outlined in [this article](#).



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The **Inflammation Crushing Ebundle** is designed to help you improve your brain, liver, immune system and discover the healing strategies, foods and recipes to burn fat, reduce inflammation and Thrive in Life!

As a doctor of natural medicine, I have spent the past 20 years studying the best healing strategies and worked with hundreds of coaching clients, helping them overcome chronic health conditions and optimize their overall health.

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Yes

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Dr. Jockers

Dr David Jockers is passionate about seeing people reach their health potential in mind, body and spirit. He is the host of the popular “Dr Jockers Functional Nutrition” podcast and the author of the best-selling books, “The Keto Metabolic Breakthrough” and “The Fasting Transformation.”

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comments

Comments

Kaye

April 18, 2017 at 10:51 am

Excellent Round-up!!! Lots of Info packed in here. Thank you.

[Reply](#)

Dr. Jockers

April 20, 2017 at 11:21 am

Thank you Kaye!

[Reply](#)

Allan Cortzen

April 19, 2017 at 9:34 am

Hops could also be mentioned.

There are studies for Hops+Valerian:

<https://www.progressivehealth.com/hops-can-help-improve-sleep.htm>

[Reply](#)

Dr. Jockers

April 20, 2017 at 12:20 pm

Yes good point Allan, thanks for sharing!

[Reply](#)

Gary Clemens

April 21, 2017 at 5:43 am

While diffusing essential oils for sleep can definitely help....people need to understand to not leave on the diffuser for more than 30 minutes at a time with at least an hour before diffusing again(if a timer is available on the diffuser).

Essential oils can be counter productive if inhaled too much.

Inhalation is the most effective way to get the results from essential oils and goes directly into the blood stream through the respiration process.

[Reply](#)

Dr. Jockers

April 24, 2017 at 10:40 am

Gary,

I have not heard of this effect. I would, however, only suggest diffusing a few drops of essential oil over the course of hours for aromatherapy use. Thanks for sharing!

[Reply](#)

Syl

April 25, 2017 at 5:10 am

Excellent article for also helping 10 % of the population that suffer with chronic insomnia ...thank you !

Reply**Dr. Jockers**

April 25, 2017 at 1:21 pm

Yes Syl, definitely a big problem!

Reply**Emily**

May 21, 2017 at 2:19 pm

Dear Doctor ,

I am suffer from insomnia for more 8 years and Menopause for 6 years which cause me cannot Fall asleep naturally .

After see doctor they said I am lack of seronton

Any vitamin you can Recomend that I can buy ,

I had try the below vitamin but it only work for 1 to 2 months each n my condition getting more

Worse — gaba , valerian , melatoni , L- tryptophan already but all only works for 2 to 3 months , pls kindly help and advise ?

Reply**Dr. Jockers**

May 23, 2017 at 10:29 am

Hey Emily, there are likely some deeper causes. Since you have gone through menopause, hormones that may help with regular sleep cycles are likely out of balance. You will probably need to take dietary and lifestyle strategies to see improvements in your sleep. Start with the strategies in these articles:

<https://drjockers.com/12-ways-to-eat-during-menopause/>

<https://drjockers.com/5-benefits-healing-diet/>

<https://drjockers.com/15-strategies-beat-insomnia-naturally/>

[Reply](#)

kate

September 24, 2022 at 12:46 pm

My sleep is impacted by annoying bouts of restless legs. Topical Magnesium oil is helpful but not always effective. I wondered if you would recommend any of the sleep nutrients or herbals specifically for RLS. Thank you

[Reply](#)

Dr. Jockers

September 25, 2022 at 10:05 am

Hello Kate, yes here is a helpful article on RLS <https://drjockers.com/restless-leg-syndrome/>

[Reply](#)

cis

July 6, 2023 at 6:02 pm

Don't agree at all about peppermint!!!

I HATE peppermint, it always gives me heartburn, NO WAY would I want to consume it before bedtime! Yuck!

Plus, as an aromatherapist, I would much prefer to use it during the day for its airway opening qualities and also focus.

[Reply](#)

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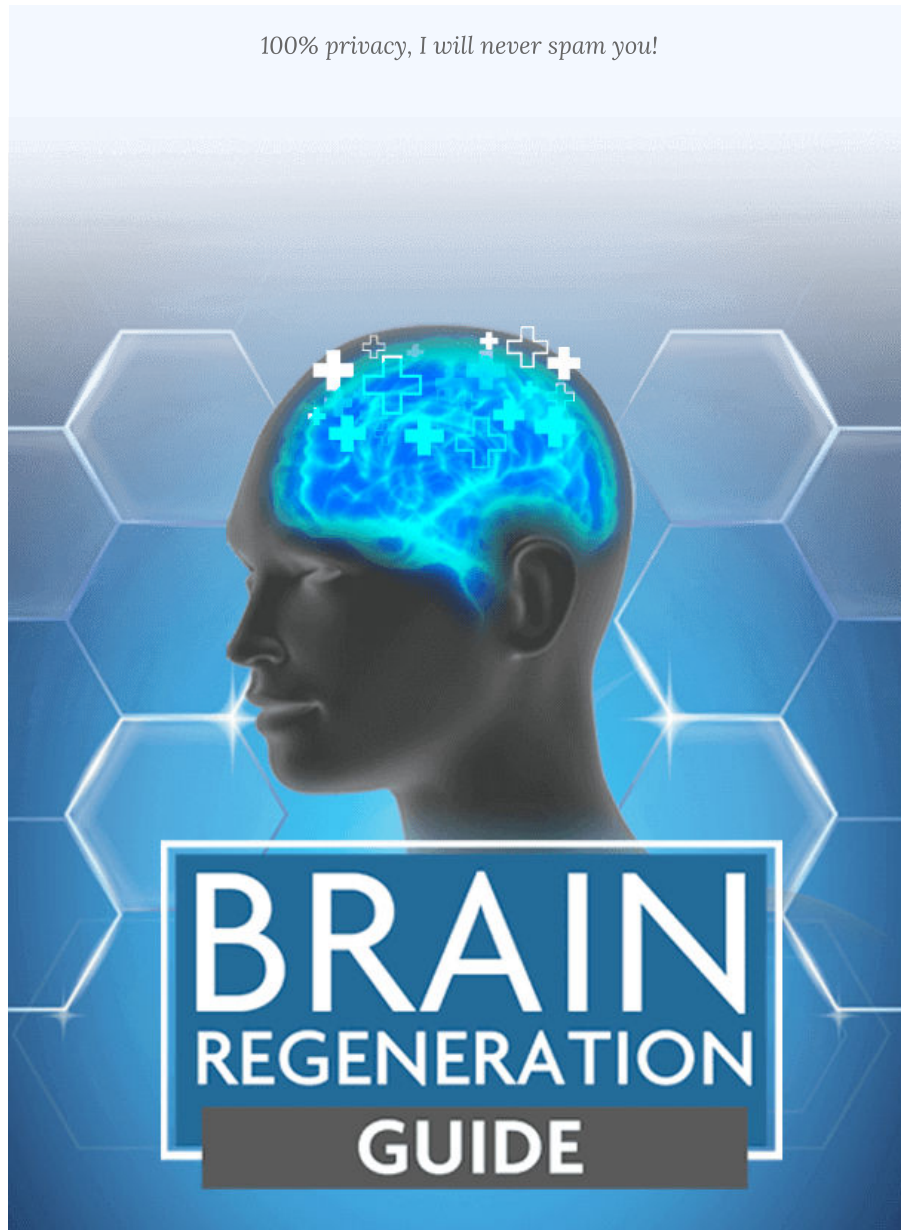
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