Harris Anthropological Research LLC

Therapeutic Philosophy

Herbal Inquiries, a service of Harris Anthropological Research LLC

As a clinical herbalist, my knowledge doesn't just exist in some vacuum. My herbal education draws on three inherited ways of paying attention. I name all three because honesty about where knowledge comes from is part of the work, and I keep the people, protocols, and history behind each one visible.

Physiomedicalist Herbalism: tissue states and energetics

This Western herbal lineage runs through the Physiomedicalist and Eclectic physicians of the nineteenth century and gives my consults their working vocabulary. Rather than matching a plant to a named disease, it **asks where a person's constitution currently sits along five axes**: hot to cold, damp to dry, tense to lax, excessive to deficient vitality, and excited to depressed in nervous tone. It then looks at plants suited to that pattern.

In a consult this becomes the constitutional pattern map, a plain-language picture of where someone runs hot or cold, tight or loose, wired or worn down. It is my primary framework for the physical patterns of a constitution. It is **a way of observing**, not a diagnosis, and energetics here is a **working metaphor and a useful heuristic for regulatory load**, not a claim about invisible forces.

Historical American Ethnobotany: rooted in place

I name this strand because it widens what I can draw on. Physiomedicalism remains my approach, but much of the Western herbal tradition rests on European texts and European plants. Learning how the peoples of this continent used the plants of their own regions gives me sustainable, locally available ways to serve the same aims, and more knowledge than those texts hold alone.

It matters most when the latest supplement trend points to a plant from far away. A rare import can strain the place it comes from, and a plant that grows near you may offer similar dietary support. For example, you do not have to buy imported açaí or goji powder when elderberries, huckleberries, serviceberries, or chokeberries may serve the same purpose without straining a wild population, and many Native peoples ate these fruits long before the trend began. Indigenous peoples learned over many generations what works in each region, and I look to that record first, then check any local plant against current bioscience. Local equivalents can be wildcrafted or grown at home.

Culturally significant plants are discussed, and any harvesting is approached, with attention to Tribal protocols and treaty relationships, never as ingredients taken without the story behind them. Historical use is not proof of safety, so I check every plant against current bioscience for safety, dosage, and interactions before it enters a plan.

Ashkenazi and Hungarian Folk Healing: an inherited domestic tradition

The third strand comes from home. It is an inherited Ashkenazi and Hungarian Jewish folk tradition from my mother's side, carried in everyday practice: hot mineral water, avoiding cold and chill (*ne hűlj meg*, do not let yourself get cold), chicken soup as a tonic, pickled foods and apple cider vinegar, colorful food as healthier food, and windows opened for light and air once an illness has passed. It is my doorway into thinking about eating habits and surroundings, not a set recommendation for any one person. I describe it in plain words and keep sacred terms from Jewish tradition out of my marketing.

The tradition also holds that healing is never only physical. Attention to a person's connections to themselves, to their community, and to the Sacred is part of it. The Sacred does not require any deity. I do not proselytize, and I respect all faith traditions.

How the three meet

The three are not blended into one system. Each keeps its own logic, sources, and name. What they share is one question: what does this person, in this season of life, actually need?

> Where a use comes from a specific tradition, I say so. A recommendation that credits its sources is scholarship. The same recommendation without them is appropriation.

What I weigh for each client

No two plans look alike, because I weigh the whole person. For the body, I look at your health history, existing conditions, medications, supplements, diet, and daily habits. I check each herb I might suggest for contraindications against your constitutional pattern and against everything you take, and if an herb or supplement could interact with a medication, I tell you and ask you to confirm with your prescriber or pharmacist.

For the rest of you, I look at your connection to yourself, to the people around you, and to the Sacred, as you understand it. I call this the Connections Paradigm. It is not a fourth tradition. It is the Jewish strand's own insistence that wellbeing includes these relationships, given a plain structure a consult can use. It fills in where the physiomedicalist framework is silent, by noticing how relationships, mental habits, and behavioral patterns shape a constitutional pattern. It is an observation of social and environmental influences on physical wellbeing, not diagnosis or treatment of mental health.

How a consult unfolds

I listen first, with open questions and little interruption. We then look at what supports you and what wears on you, agree on goals, and only then build a plan, with herbs coming last. Goals come in two sizes: what you want to have changed by your next visit, and the longer arc. I explain the reason behind every step in plain words, translating any traditional term so it never puts me above you.

What this practice is, plainly

These are educational consults. I do not diagnose, prescribe, or treat any medical condition, and nothing here is medical advice. See my Scope of Practice for the full limits. If a question about these traditions, or about how they appear in a session, is not answered here, ask me rather than guess.