



How Adaptogens Can Improve Energy & Heal Adrenals

Guest: Dr. Shiroko Sokitch

The purpose of this presentation is to convey information. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, or cure your condition or to be a substitute for advice from your physician or other healthcare professional.

Wendy: Hello, everyone. Wendy Myers here, from livetol110.com. Thank you for joining us for the groundbreaking Medicinal Supplements Summit, where the world's top experts in health and nutrition have come together to discuss one of the most important aspects of your health, proper supplementation.

I wanted to host this summit because I'm committed to helping you experience vibrant health by making the right supplement choices. You deserve to feel good. Today my friend and special guest is Shiroko Sokitch. We will be discussing adaptogenic herbs and how they reduce stress and heal the adrenal glands, the glands that release and make our stress hormones.

Shiroko Sokitch, M.D., is a doctor who cares about you. Her mission is to help you heal and regain the health and vitality you deserve when no one else has found the answers. She does this by using a unique blend of Chinese and western medicine to help you learn to listen to your body and find out what works for you.

Trained in general surgery and working as an ER doctor for ten years while attending acupuncture school gave Dr. Shiroko a broad range of medical experience. In addition to practicing integrative medicine for 23 years, she hosted a public access TV show *Perspectives on Healing* for two years and has had a Sonoma County news column for 15 years. She's also writing her second book, *Seven Keys to Accelerated Health*, which will be out next year. Shiroko, thank you so much for coming on the show.

Dr. Sokitch: Sure, my pleasure. It's delightful.

Wendy: So why don't you tell us a little bit about your story. How did you get into this type of medicine?

Dr. Sokitch: It's a long story. When I was five I decided I wanted to be a doctor, partly because my great grandmother died right in front of me. She was my very best friend. And she collapsed in front of me. And she was taken to a hospital. And I couldn't see her for a while. Then they told me that her heart had stopped beating.

And so on the day that I heard that, I was like, "I've got to solve this. And I've got to understand what happened." And I started imagining well, what was the heart and trying to figure out how to maybe make a heart beat again. I'm five years old. And something in me woke up when I was that age. It was like I've got to find answers.

So I've always been curious and interested in health and healing. And I wanted to be a doctor because I thought that was the way I was going to get to save lives. So I went into surgery because that was the first time I got to save a life, was in the operating room. And then as a surgery resident, I'm wandering around in the halls, and I'm seeing patients in extreme pain. I'm seeing people just suffering.

And I had always also been interested in herbs. And as a kid I had a garden, and I grew herbs. I was like the earth should be able to heal you. But I had kind of lost touch with that as a surgeon because it's kind of a different world. You're inside all the time and never leave a hospital.

So during my second year of residency, I had this sort of crisis because I was seeing that I wasn't helping people in the way that I wanted to and that maybe saving a life from death's door wasn't the only aspect to keeping someone healthy and alive. And I started looking for other answers. I took a month off from my residency, and I began to search for other answers. And I found this book on Chinese medicine, and I just fell in love because, for me, healing and health and our bodies are miraculous.

And for most of the time as an undergrad when I was studying science and when I went to medical school, for me it was this huge miracle. And when I was in surgery residency I kind of lost sight of that. And then when I read this book it was like, again, this awakening of the miracle of health and the miracle of our bodies and how energy flows and all of that. So I decided I was going to study Chinese medicine.

Wendy: So what can you tell us about herbs? What did you learn in your many years of study?

Dr. Sokitch: Well lots of things. But for me, again, way back when I was six, I was thinking there had to be an answer in nature that would help somebody. If earth could produce something, then there was an answer in nature. So I always had an interest in how herbs worked. What I love about how Chinese medicine uses herbs is that everything in Chinese medicine is about balance and getting your body into balance and getting your energy flowing and having your body be in a state of harmony with everything around it.

And for me what herbs do is they help you get into that state of harmony. Herbs can also be used as medicine. So in western medicine or in western herbal medicine, people use herbs just the way we use drugs, where you take the herb, and you take it with an intention in mind. But what I like about using them for Chinese medicine is that you still have an intention, but the intention is balance and wholeness and unity inside of yourself.

Wendy: And so how do you go about prescribing herbs? What is kind of your philosophy with using herbs to heal people?

Dr. Sokitch: Well first of all, I do this whole intake with people. And so I spend an hour and a half with each patient. I listen to all of their problems. Then I go over what they eat and how they take supplements and what they take for supplements. And I've spent over 20 years researching supplements, not just herbs but supplements also, like you, committed to finding the best of what is out there.

And there's so much crap. And that's what everybody talks about, that there's stuff out there that's not good. And there are all these companies that make things and sell them and market them really well, but they're still not high quality. So I'm really committed to finding the things that will help a person.

So how I use herbs is a lot of things. One is partially my intuition, partially what's going on with them. In Chinese medicine you feel the pulse. And you look at the tongue to see what's out of balance. And then based on their story and what's out of balance, and also where they're from and how they live their lives, is how I choose herbs.

We were going to talk about adaptogens. And adaptogens are some of my favorite herbs. In Chinese medicine they're called the emperor herbs. And the reason they're called the emperor herbs is because they're like the kings of all

the herbs. They're psychic. Well, I want to say they're psychic because when you take them, they know what your body needs. And they go into the places where you need balance. And in particular, a lot of the "adaptogenic" herbs help your adrenals.

So they help balance the energy of your adrenals and your overall sense of energy. So when you take them, they know where to go, and they know what to do. And so sometimes you'll have a condition where you have too much energy. Or you'll feel anxious and be really wired. But another time you'll feel very, very tired. And one herb will know the difference and be able to help you in both directions. And those are the coolest herbs of all.

Wendy: What are adaptogenic herbs? And what are some of your favorites, and favorite brands too? What are the things that you use with your clients and that you really love?

Dr. Sokitch: Sure. So adaptogenic herbs are herbs that help you adapt. So the herbs are adaptable in your body. And again, like I said, they're the herbs that when they go inside of your body, they're able to help you be more balanced. In Chinese medicine we describe things as either excess or deficient. Or there are all these different ways of describing imbalances. And one of them is if something's excessive in your body. So you could have excessive anxiety or be really tired or really deficient in energy. And an adaptogen will help your body adapt to what it's going through.

Some of the adaptogenic herbs are holy basil. It's also called tulsi. It's an ayurvedic herb. There's another herb called ashwagandha. These are some of my favorites. There's rhodiola. I'm going to give you these as an example because they're all kind of similar in what they do. Maca, it'll do more for your sex hormones. It'll help balance your estrogens and your progesterones and your testosterone. And it'll know which one of those to help you with. I have a friend who's actually created a formula called Mighty Maca. And she gives it to her 80-year-old father and her 7-year-old daughter. And it helps both of them.

So it's not harmful to her 7-year-old daughter. It's wonderful for her 80-year-old father. And that's how those herbs work. But maca can also help overall balance your adrenals. And the cool thing is, maca is from the rainforest. Rhodiola is from Russia. And it also helps your adrenals. And ashwagandha is an ancient Indian herb. And then there's ginseng, which is Chinese.

And they're all kind of similar in that they have all these qualities that help balance your energy. And one of the ways that I choose herbs is based on the

origin of my patients. So if I have a patient that's more Latin in their origin or comes from California, which is kind of Latin in its nature, then I will give them maybe a rainforest herb, like maca.

Or, oh, I forget the name of the other one that I use from the rainforest. Or if they're from northern Europe, then I'll give them the Russian herb, the rhodiola. So you can choose herbs based on sort of somebody's nature or their own qualities so that the herb and the person's body become friends. So that's one of the things that I do. I'm trying to think of some of my other favorite herbs.

Wendy: Maybe like schisandra berry?

Dr. Sokitch: Oh, I love schisandra, yeah. Schisandra's not really one of the adaptogens because it has a more specific frequency. What I call the adaptogens are the herbs that are big herbs. So they do a lot. And mostly they help support your energy. Schisandra is an herb that kind of balances your heart and your liver.

And so a lot of times people have trouble; they're feeling really, really stressed out all the time. To Chinese medicine, the liver and the heart help you sleep and relax. And if you're having trouble with that, then you would take Schisandra. It's an herb that's really good during menopause because it kind of takes the edge off of all that anxiety and all of that stress.

Wendy: I see it in a lot of adrenal formulas.

Dr. Sokitch: Yeah, because it's calming.

Wendy: To help calm you, yeah.

Dr. Sokitch: And so I would love to address this little thing about how herbs are manufactured and what brands I like to use. I'm really picky about herbs. And my favorite herbs are organic and whole herbs. One of the things that I've noticed in the time that I've been in practice is there's always one really super popular herb.

But what people do is they do the research, and then they take out, they extract, what is believed by the research to be the active component. So they take out that one little component. Let's say in ginseng they call it ginsenoscience. Or in ashwagandha there's something called withania

somnifera or something. And so they take out those pieces. And they don't have the whole herb. To me, that makes the herb behave more like a drug.

Wendy: Yes.

Dr. Sokitch: And that removes some of its high quality essence. That makes it less effective to me. Or it makes it more like a very specific vibration because they take out the part of it that they believe to be active and then put that with a bunch of sawdust in a capsule. And that's what you're getting, 20 percent ginsenosides or something.

But that's not a whole herb. And ginseng is one of those herbs that the Chinese cultivate it. And they grow it for 20, 30 years. And then they pick those roots that are shaped like a man. And those roots are supposed to be the best. And so there's this whole essence and energy behind each herb and the way it's processed and the way it's made.

So one of my favorite companies for individual herbs is a company called Tattvas. I don't know if you've heard of them. They mostly process ayurvedic herbs. But a lot of ayurvedic herbs are also Chinese herbs. And they're all organic. And they're processed with carbon dioxide so that they hold most of their energy. And they're really high quality herbs. They're a really good company. Another company that I like is Mountain Rose because all their herbs are organic and, again, whole herbs. When I give individual herbs, that's what I do.

You were asking me also to talk about heavy metals, which I'm happy to do. There are certain companies that make Chinese herbs in the United States. And they have all these certifications. And they will give you the documentation of how their herbs are processed, how they're tested, make sure there's no pesticide, make sure there's no heavy metals and all of that stuff. And that has to be done in order to be safe when you're taking herbs.

So you want to take a high quality product. Any time you look for herbs, this is one of the things, you go to Whole Foods or even the local grocery store, and you'll find all these herbs that are some percentage of the active ingredients. And they're processed with all kinds of other things. And I don't think that you can get the effect that you want by doing that sort of thing.

Wendy: Yeah, because some of the herbs that are grown in India or China have been shown to have really high levels of lead and cadmium and arsenic and other metals because herbs draw minerals and metals out of the soil

pretty effectively. And so you have to be careful not to purchase herbs that have been grown in contaminated soil. And that's a big problem in China and India.

Dr. Sokitch: It's a big problem, really, everywhere because even here in northern California, where I am, recently there was an article about kale and how it's full of thallium.

Wendy: Yeah.

Dr. Sokitch: And so we have to be careful with everything right now, especially China. Not only do they have herbs that have heavy metals, but they also put drugs in some of their formulas. So there are some formulas that are supposed to help with sinus. And they have found that in those formulas there are actually decongestants or antihistamines. And then for some of the analgesic formulas, some of the pain formulas, they've actually put drugs in there.

So you don't want to buy Chinese herbs that come directly from China. If you buy Chinese herbs you want to get them from a company that manufactures them here in the U.S. And then they have a certain kind of certification. And you can usually find it on their website. Some Chinese herbs will actually have it on the bottle. It's called a CGMP, which is a certification that it has been tested for heavy metals and tested for pesticides.

That's the other thing. In China, nobody regulates how much spray they use and chemical pesticides and things like that. And I think this is true also for green powders and things like that. You want to make sure they're organic because if they've been sprayed with chemicals and then you dry them and concentrate them, then you're getting concentrated chemicals in addition to whatever the nutrients are.

Wendy: And you get to pay for the pleasure, also.

Dr. Sokitch: Yeah, exactly.

Wendy: So let's talk a little bit about how adaptogenic herbs specifically heal the adrenals. A lot of people today are exhausted. They have adrenal fatigue. They're under a lot of stress. And their adrenal glands that make our hormones, our stress hormones, our sex hormones, are failing in so many people. Can you talk a little bit about how we can heal those with herbs?

Dr. Sokitch: Oh, yes, one of my subjects. So the adrenals make over 20 different hormones. And they're always on the job. Mostly they help us deal with stress. So when we have a lot of stress, then our hormones start to go through stuff. Stress can be a pain. It can be physical pain.

Some people who are in chronic pain, nobody ever thinks about people in pain having low hormones. But over a period of time, if you're in pain, or you've been sick for a long time, your hormones start to be a mess too. And your thyroid is also a hormone-producing gland. So those adaptogenic herbs can help both your adrenals and your thyroid.

And how they work is, again, they seem to know when you need more energy and when you need less energy. I use specific herbs for specific hormones. So ashwagandha is one of my favorite herbs to use when both your adrenals and your thyroid are low. And again, I choose things based on what's happening with my patient. And it's very individual.

So it's not a shotgun approach, here I do this for everybody, especially for people who don't want to take hormones or use bioidentical hormones or something. Then I will give them herbs to address various issues. For people who have really a lot of stress and feel a lot of anxiety, holy basil is my favorite herb. I call it holy basil batman because it's a super herb.

So when your cortisol level is really high, the holy basil can help balance your cortisol so that it's not too high. But it also helps you feel calm and energetic at the same time. So you're not that wired and tired thing. So that's what I use holy basil for.

And then ashwagandha, like I said, I use that for DHEA and for low energy, like low thyroid and low energy. I use maca a lot for the sex hormones, depending on how a person wants to take it. And again, it helps balance all the sex hormones. So it'll help progesterone and estrogen and testosterone. And it kind of depends on the person. Now again, everybody's different. And there are thousands of other herbs. So I'm just naming a few that are fairly well known.

Wendy: You said Mighty Maca. Is there any other brand of maca that you like?

Dr. Sokitch: There are two. There's a company called Navitas. They're actually here in northern California. And they have a maca that's really nice. It's all organic and clean. And it's in capsules or in powder.

One of the things about looking for organic herbs is that they're sometimes hard to find. And there are seasons of the year where you can't get them. So sometimes I have to go searching, which is another good reason to have a wide variety of choices.

Wendy: Yes.

Dr. Sokitch: And the other maca is Mountain rose that I use.

Wendy: Okay.

Dr. Sokitch: Or Tattvas. So there are a few companies that make maca because it's a fairly well known herb.

Wendy: Okay. So can herbs be dangerous? A lot of people can think, "Oh, it's natural. It's totally safe." Can you talk a little bit about herbs and some that could be dangerous or maybe even be avoided?

Dr. Sokitch: Sure. So herbs can be dangerous. Of course, they're just like medicine. And you can use the wrong herb for the wrong thing. There's been a lot of controversy about herbs because I think when people learn about a particular thing, they think if a little is good, more is better. And one of the really famous ones is the herb ma huang, or ephedra.

And it used to be used for weight loss. But in Chinese medicine it's used for clearing colds. It's sort of a natural decongestant. But then because it was for weight loss it became really popular. And people were using it everywhere. And people were getting sick and dying because they were taking too much.

And it can cause heart palpitations and side effects in your heart. There are herbs that can be dangerous if they're full of chemicals or if they're not the right kind. But then if you're also taking medications, you should always check to make sure that the herb that you're taking doesn't interact with your medications.

Wendy: Okay.

Dr. Sokitch: And there are places online that you can research all that stuff. There's a website called [naturalproductdatabase](#) or something like that. And they have the side effects with their interactions with medications. And there's another called the consumer something. I'll send you the links so that you can

put that on as a resource for people. But it's like a *Consumer Reports* for supplements.

Wendy: Yes.

Dr. Sokitch: And they do all kinds of studies, and they look at all different products. And they see whether they're actually effective and whether they have any chemicals added to them and all kinds of good stuff. And they really do a lot of research. So yes, herbs can be dangerous. And they can interact with medications. Gingko, for example, gingko is an herb that helps memory and blood circulation.

And if a person's taking a blood thinner and they take gingko at the same time, it can make their blood more thin. And they can have more bleeding complications. The adaptogenic herbs, one of the things that's cool about them is that they have very few negative impacts. The ones that I've mentioned, they're used commonly. And they're pretty safe.

And that's why they're called emperor herbs, because they have a wide range of effectiveness and very low toxicity. But then there are massive numbers of Chinese herbs that can be toxic or that can be dangerous if they're used in the wrong way.

Wendy: Yeah, I go to an acupuncturist. And I've bounced around over the years going to different practitioners. And I'll go to the real hard core traditional old Chinese practitioners. And they'll give me a baggie with some herbs in it. "Here, take this." I'm like, "No, I don't think so," because I know it's from China.

And I know that it's going to have metals, mainly lead probably. So I tend to avoid those because I don't know what's in it. It's not in a bottle. There are no ingredients. There are no certifications on it. It's definitely not organic. So I've avoided those for that reason. But I like your approach, know what you're taking, use organic herbs, a much better approach.

Dr. Sokitch: I originally started doing this because I'm a modern person. And Chinese herbs, like you said, you get that baggie, and you cook it, and your whole house stinks for weeks. Those herbs smell bad. But the other thing about it is we don't have hours to cook things or decoct it and process it and stuff. So for my patients and for me, it has always been easier to take a pill or a powder and mix it up and drink it. But the other thing is, there's always been that safety concern. And so if your herbs are manufactured in the U.S.

and certified in all of these different ways, then you know you're getting a product that you're not going to be harmed by.

Wendy: Yes.

Dr. Sokitch: So that's what you want to do.

Wendy: So what should we look for? What should we avoid when choosing herbs?

Dr. Sokitch: Personally I like products that have the herbs separate from the vitamins separate from the glandulars. So in the whole supplement world you can get all these different kinds of products. So you can you get herbs and vitamins and supplements and some of the supplements where they put animal glandulars mixed in with different vitamins. I try to avoid that. I think vitamins are food, and glandulars are medicine, and herbs are medicine of a different sort.

And so you want to be conscious about how you take everything and about how you use it. Even if you take it all at once, there's this mental separation at least. And I look for products, again, that are made by reputable companies. And I have certain companies that I like to work with that really take care of their processing and how they make things and then how they produce it.

And I always say you look at the bottle, and you look at the list of ingredients. You want the herbs to be high quality. And you don't want them to have been separated out into fractions and whatever chemical is in there. And then you don't want a whole long list of added ingredients.

So if you go to Costco and you look at some of their supplements, even their herbal supplements, there's here's the main ingredient, and then here's this long list of all these chemicals that they've added. And I just think that's insane. You're trying to be healthy. Then you're taking all these extra chemicals. So you want to, for sure, avoid anything like that. When you look at a list of ingredients, and there's a long list of things you can't pronounce, don't buy it.

Wendy: Yeah, and a lot of times when you see the combination products where they have a lot of different herbs in them, some of them there's a really long list of the herbs, there's not enough of any one of those herbs to have the effect that you're looking for. Not always but that can definitely happen. And people think because there are so many ingredients it must be working really

well or be a great product. And I just caution people to look out for that. That's why I like using single herbs too.

Dr. Sokitch: Yeah. And that's another thing. When we eat healthy, healthy food is simple. You have vegetables, and you have a little bit of protein, and you have your healthy fats. And you keep it all balanced. But really, healthy food doesn't have piles and piles of other stuff on it. I don't like really super fancy restaurants because of that. They usually have all these ingredients. And it's the same with supplements. If you want a really high quality supplement, you want them to be really clean and not a ton of other stuff in them.

Wendy: Well thank you so much for joining us. Can you tell the listeners more about where they can find you and how they can work with you?

Dr. Sokitch: Sure. My website is hearttoheartmedicalcenter.com. But my business is Heart to Heart Medical Center. And I call it Heart to Heart Medical Center not because I do heart medicine but because my work is about connecting from my heart to your heart.

And I think the biggest part of healing is all about love and making sure that you start with love as the main ingredient. That's how you pay attention to yourself. That's how you get cared for. And they can work with me if they like once they see what's on my web page. And then I have a little booklet that I wrote about what to look for when buying supplements. So I wrote a whole list of all the different ingredients that are bad or what to look for in terms of ingredients and how to choose.

Wendy: And the listeners can get that on your website?

Dr. Sokitch: They can get that on my website, yeah.

Wendy: Okay, fantastic. Well thank you so much for joining us. I really appreciate your expertise and joining us on the summit.

Dr. Sokitch: Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

Wendy: And everyone, thank you, again, for joining us on the Medicinal Supplements Summit. Today's talk on adaptogenic herbs, I hope you enjoyed it. I take them for their stress relieving, adrenal healing, and sleep inducing effect. Due to the many stressors that we deal with in our modern world, they are probably a really good idea to add to your supplement regimen.

If you enjoyed this talk, please enjoy 36 more talks by purchasing the Medicinal Supplements Summit in its entirety. We discuss every aspect of supplementation, how to take them properly, what ingredients to avoid, the best testing to customize supplements to what your body needs. That's all covered on the Medicinal Supplements Summit. My name is Wendy Myers. And my hope is that you experience the health that you deserve. And that all begins with taking the right supplements for you.