

**SLAYING**  
*the*  
**DRAGON**

**Treating Alcohol and Drug Related  
Illnesses With Chinese Herbs**

**THOMAS R. JOINER**

**Books by Thomas Richard Joiner**

Blending Botany with Budo

Chinese Herbal Medicine Made Easy

Kung Fu Medicine

Martial Esoterica

Slaying the Dragon

The Warrior as Healer

# SLAYING *the* DRAGON

Treating Alcohol and Drug Related  
Illnesses With Chinese Herbs

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Note to reader: This book is intended as an information guide. The remedies, approaches, and techniques described herein are meant to supplement, and not to be a substitute for, professional medical care or treatment. They should not be used to treat a serious ailment without prior consultation with a qualified health care professional.

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# Dedication

## A Family Affair

For most of us childhood memories are a flash-back to some of the happiest times of our lives. Who could forget those fairy-tale years? Odds are it was probably reflections on the pleasures of that tender age that inspired the adage: remembrance of adolescence never fails to warm the heart, because it's the summer of our youth that's the source of some of our most cherished memories. Regrettably, that's not always true.

Make no mistake we definitely had our share of laughs, but along with the good times there were also times when we laughed until our sides ached always mindful that in the blink of an eye fun and laughter could give way to an alcohol-driven rage. Like the pause in a storm when a transient ray of sunlight allows birds to briefly leave their shelter and chatter among themselves, family reunions were just a temporary diversion from the turbulence that was always festering beneath the surface.

Even though I always suspected that we were slightly dysfunctional, it was during one of those family gatherings of the worst kind that my suspicions were confirmed. That's when I first noticed, with the exception of my great-aunt Ellen, who was a dyed-in-the-wool Christian; all of my other family members who never agreed on anything did have two things in common. They all drank alcohol, and more importantly they drank it on a daily basis. Even though there were the usual telltale signs the full extent of alcohol's influence on our lives didn't register until the day that Grandma affectionately known as "Big Mama," departed for her final rest.

With wounded hearts we struggled to come to terms with the fact that our beloved Queen mother was gone. As we sat there defenseless against an onslaught of inconsolable grief, as my uncle Bennie often said, "The silence was so intense you could hear a gnat pissing on cotton."

Other than the occasional outburst of wailing and moaning that briefly erupted on the ride home from the cemetery, not a word was spoken. Spellbound, we all sat with our eyes glazed over; desperately searching for anything that could relieve the unbearable heartache that left us staring aimlessly with a faraway look in our eyes. We remained in that semi-catatonic state until quite unexpectedly the silence was shattered by the sizzling sound of a pot boiling over.

Startled by the unsolicited intrusion, we struggled to gather our wits as we went in search of the cause of the commotion. The closer we got to the source of the sizzle, the stronger the aroma of fried chicken became, as we made our way down the hall to the

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kitchen. Carefully avoiding the chair where Big Mama usually sat, I took a seat at the kitchen table and immediately began working on a strategy to try to convince Mom to let me have one of the drumsticks.

As I sat there thinking about the first mouthwatering bite, suddenly it occurred to me that everything else would have to wait because there was only one thing that was capable of constraining the gut-wrenching despair that could erupt at any moment into a full-blown emotional outbreak. Removing her apron, Mom placed a fifth of Johnny Walker Scotch in the center of the table and handed each adult a glass. As the bottle passed from one person to the next, each one filled his/her glass to the rim and hurriedly drank the contents. Returning their empty glasses to the table, there was a noticeable reaction to the jolt caused by the alcohol hitting their systems. Slowly... the Johnny Walker began taking effect. It was at that moment that it finally dawned on me that it really didn't matter whether we were celebrating life mourning death or simply gathering to break bread and re-establish family ties, alcohol was an established necessity getting them through both good and bad times.

Like a light bulb that's turned on in a darkened room revealing previously unseen things, suddenly I realized that despite their best effort they were incapable of overriding the genetic pre-programming that was like a family curse handed down one generation to the next from mother to daughter and father to son. An essential nutrient—alcohol—was life sustaining, it was their water of life.

In the years that followed an unfortunate result of their seemingly unquenchable thirst was the noticeable increase in requiem gatherings that began occurring as alcohol-related diseases started taking their toll, and like a chain reaction one family member after another was stricken.

Although through the grace of God, a few were spared the usual pain and suffering. Regrettably, it was alcohol-related diseases that claimed the lives of nearly all of the aunts, uncles, and cousins who sat at the kitchen table and drank a toast celebrating Big Mama's arrival at the pearly gates. On what will always be remembered as one of the saddest days of my life.

*Slaying the Dragon* was written for family members and friends who lived life on their own terms, and in spite of often being under the influence, showed me tough unconditional love during the best and worst of times. This book is dedicated to all of you and last but not least, to my wife Judy Joiner and my mother Ruby Blanchard (10/22/24-1/21/82)... R.I.P. Mom.

## DEDICATION

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### **In Memorium**

Joyce Elaine Joiner Otis Smith...Sis

Bennie Belcher Jr...Uncle Bennie

Mackinley Belcher...Uncle Mac

Gilbert Muckle...Muk-Muk

Dwight Otis...Baby Boy

Tomie Joiner...Daddy

Harvey and Sparrow

Ethel and Neal

James Moore

Lou Waters





# About the Author

## **My Journey Began, N.Y.C. c.1970**

It was one of those beautiful spring days when the air's filled with avian sounds and the senses are treated to the delectable fragrance of blossoms on a gentle breeze. That's when a casual stroll through New York's Thompkins Square Park was interrupted when I paused to watch a martial artist perform the classic kung fu form known as Eighteen Buddha Hand. In hind-sight I doubt that anyone could have predicted how much my life would be changed by that chance encounter, not even someone with psychic abilities.

After observing the breathtaking execution of the quintessential kung fu form not only did it inspire me to begin training in the martial arts, it also ultimately led to my discovery of Chinese herbal medicine which became my life's work. Over the years I've come to realize that the events that took place that day were undoubtedly a result of astral influences that were advanced by that inexplicable introduction to the fighting arts.

Since that life changing encounter more than thirty years ago, I've trained in what I believe is one of martial art's preeminent styles and advanced to the level of Kyoshi 6th Dan in the Chinese Goju System. I had the honor of receiving the University of Martial Arts and Science Humanitarian Award for Notable Achievement and Excellence in Holistic Medicine; I was inducted into the Chinese Goju Hall of Fame by Grandmaster Shidoshi Ron Van Clief in 1994, and became a member of Chinese Goju International in 2013.

My background in Chinese medicine/Herbology includes: clinical internship in Chinese Medicine (Acupuncture) that was part of a three-and-a-half-year work/study program at the Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine First World Acupuncture New York City, advanced acupuncture and Chinese Herbology under Dr. Lai Fu Cai at the Academy of Chinese Culture and Health Sciences in Oakland, CA., and Chinese Herbology at the Institute of Chinese Herbology Berkeley, CA. I have also done an extensive study of Tien Tao Chi Kung, and Taoist, Christian, and Rosicrucian philosophies, as well as being the founder and president of an on-line company Treasures from the Sea of Chi that sells Chinese herbs for general health, and specializes in herbs used in martial arts training.

I've written six books: *The Warrior as Healer*, *Chinese Herbal Medicine Made Easy*,

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*Blending Botany and Budo, Martial Esoterica, Kung Fu Medicine*, and most recently *Slaying the Dragon*, in addition to being a contributing editor for Martialforce.com a martial arts e-magazine.

That said, I should mention that a guiding principle in all aspects of my life is my belief that there are no coincidences. Every event in our lives is a result of (universal, cosmic, karmic) law which ultimately determines our destiny and everything that happens... happens for a reason!

My life journey has brought me to this place in time for the singular purpose of writing this book. The idea for writing the book which I have given the implausible title *Slaying the Dragon*, is a result of years of training in traditional Chinese medicine/Herbology, as well as drawing upon childhood memories of growing up watching neighbors, friends, and family members in an on-going struggle with health issues that were often a direct result of poverty and substance abuse.

As fate would have it, an introduction to acupuncture and Chinese Herbology that was part of my early Wing Chun kung fu training, turned out to be the perfect vehicle in my search for a way to help poor, medically underserved, mostly minority communities, deal with some of the problems associated with substance abuse and addiction.

The five-thousand-year-old medicine's use of natural ingredients, its proven curative capability, its ability to treat practically every disease known to man and the fact that Chinese herbs can be used effectively by someone with little or no medical training are just a few of the reasons I was drawn to the centuries-old healing art.

Another influencing factor in my decision to study the ancient medicine, was Chinese medicine's well-documented history of successfully treating drug abuse and dependency (namely opium addiction) which I believe makes it uniquely qualified for treating illnesses associated with alcohol and drugs.

As in all of my previous books my primary goal in writing *Slaying the Dragon* is to empower people with health-management skills by providing insights into traditional Chinese medicine, as well as furnishing herbal prescriptions that give them the ability to use herbs to effectively treat ailments like those described in chapter three of this book.

In addition to the book's main goal of providing information about how Chinese herbs can be used to treat alcohol and drug related illness, *Slaying the Dragon* is also an honorarium that was written for all of our departed loved ones who were lost along the way to alcohol and drugs.

# Introduction

**E**ven though in the U.S. there's far greater access to alternative forms of medical treatment than in years past, I still shutter whenever I think about the days when anyone stricken with an illness that castor oil or aspirin was incapable of curing only had two options -- prescription drugs, or worse the dreaded scalpel. If the current level of interest in alternative medicine is any indication, it's apparent that I'm not the only one who found the limited treatment options unsettling. Unlike in years past when interest in treatments other than conventional Western medicine was minimal at best, nowadays when people discover that I'm into Chinese herbs, I'm usually besieged with a million and one questions about the ancient healing art.

With consumer dissatisfaction at an all-time high, there seems to be no end to the growing list of complaints about the American health-care system. Although there is displeasure over a wide range of issues, most critics agree that when you narrow it down, the three main reasons for the rise in interest in alternative medicine are a desire to avoid surgery, the sky-rocketing cost of Western medical treatment, and concern over the negative side effects of pharmaceutical drugs.

While there's no question that fear of going under the knife, and living in a drugged state in order to remain pain-free are definitely cause for concern, for the average working-class American, perhaps the greatest fear is reaching the point where he/she can no longer afford medical care. Sadly, in recent years the escalating cost of health care has become so expensive that it's forcing all except the wealthy to try and fend off illness while they frantically search for an affordable alternative. Despite the creation of Obamacare and questionable reforms in the American health care system, unacceptable numbers of people continue to fall through the cracks when it comes to affordable healthcare. Many of these average and lower-income earners, who may or may not have health insurance, usually fall into one of two categories. Those who know absolutely nothing about Chinese Herbology, and those who have heard of it but due to cultural differences mainly centering on language, have been stymied in their attempt to learn more about the five-thousand-year-old healing art. As you can imagine the first thing that people want to know when you get into a discussion about Chinese herbs is are they effective, or do they work? After informing them that herbs are capable of treating everything from the common cold to cancer, normally the next topic of conversation involves correcting some important misinformation about some of the substances used in the ancient herbal system.

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When you consider that for the average person the term “herbs” conjures up images of botanical substances such as: mushrooms, flowers, bark, roots, and twigs etc. that are used to treat illness. It’s understandable why many of them are shocked when I inform them that Chinese Herbology also uses things like minerals, insects, and animal parts.

Like most newcomers, when I first learned about some of the weird substances used in the ancient medicine there was absolutely no way to convince me that anyone who was willing to ingest these questionable ingredients had not taken leave of their senses!

Not in my wildest imaginings did I suspect that in time, not only would I overcome my aversion to some of the substances used in the ancient herbal system. In the end I would also be helping others to come to terms with their misgivings about these strange medicinal items. Even though I still find some of these “exotic ingredients” and their seemingly inexplicable ability to cure disease a little odd, I’m convinced when it comes to drug-free therapies for treating practically every disease known to man there’s no question Chinese Herbology is one of the world’s most effective forms of alternative medicine.

Now I’d be the first to admit the idea of using bugs and animal parts that you’re not likely to find at your local butcher shop to treat illness can be a stretch for most people. In fact, its concerns over some of the ancient medicine’s strange ingredients that is often the determining factor when it comes to getting the average person beyond curious conversation to the actual practice of using herbs.

If you’re wondering why I make such a big deal about trying to turn people on to Chinese herbs my honest answer, is after witnessing the healing power of herbs during my internship, not only did it help to resolve any lingering doubts about its effectiveness, it also convinced me that more than simple folk medicine Chinese Herbology is a sacred art that has never received the respect it deserves for its important role throughout history in minimizing the suffering of mankind.

I believe that when you teach people how to use nature’s divine gift, it provides them with an alternative to the undesirable and sometimes dangerous side-effects of Western pharmaceutical medicine. This valuable health maintenance skill can contribute to better health and in some cases relieve un-necessary pain and suffering. When you compare the cost of herbs to high priced prescription drugs, possessing basic herbal skills provides an affordable option. This cost differential is especially important for people living on the poverty level who can’t afford the high cost of Western medical treatment and far too often suffer in silence.

Years of working in acupuncture clinics, at the Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine in New York City and Oakland’s Academy of Chinese Culture and

## INTRODUCTION

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Health Sciences as part of my internship in traditional Chinese medicine, gave me the opportunity to observe first-hand the ancient medicine's effectiveness in treating common illnesses, as well as ailments that are often a result of life-styles that include alcohol and/or drug use. Those early observations of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine's effectiveness in treating illnesses associated with the two inebriants, was the inspiration for writing this book.

### **Ancient Cures for Modern Ills**

Despite the fact that a recent study conservatively estimates that nearly thirty-five to forty percent of the population in the U.S. has been treated with acupuncture, Chinese herbs, or both, a surprising number of Americans are unaware that not only is the ancient medicine capable of treating everything from simple headaches to life-threatening internal diseases, but there is also ample clinical evidence that substantiates its effectiveness in treating illnesses associated with the different forms of substance abuse.

Although it's one of the least-publicized abilities of the ancient healing art, references to traditional Chinese medicine's role in treating alcohol and drug-related illnesses including withdrawal and detoxification, has been written about in modern medical literature as well as in some of China's oldest texts dating back thousands of years.

In the spirit of the ancient texts, *Slaying the Dragon* was written to help people who prefer using natural remedies how to use Chinese herbs, to treat health issues that can develop from too much drinking and drugging. Whether I succeed or not will depend on whether those who suffer from alcohol or drug-related illnesses are able to use the herbal formulas in the book to effectively treat them, as well as my ability to promote public understanding that addiction is a disease whose solution lies in decriminalization and treatment.

### **The People's Medicine...**

#### **Prescriptions from the Land of the Dragon**

By most estimates it was fifty centuries ago give or take a few years that traditional Chinese medicine developed from seeds planted long before there was industry, agricultural systems, or organized states. Many medical scholars claim that the ancient healing art, which is only pre-dated by India's Ayurvedic tradition, can be traced all the way back to pre-historic times when the primary health care providers were shaman, witch doctors, sages, lamas and medicine men.

The treatment methods of these primordial physicians grew out of tribal healing

practices that involved the use of charms, ritual magic and incantations. There was also a shared belief among these ancient healers that all illness was a result of malevolent spirits or demons that had taken possession of the body, and the only way to affect a cure and restore someone's health was by exorcising or casting them out. According to ancient belief, the way to accomplish this was with ritual drumming, that created hypnotic entrancing rhythms, and by casting spells and administering potions that were empowered by intoning sacred words. Today's modern traditional Chinese medicine is a result of human experiments, intellectual growth, and scientific advancement that spans the ages and is deeply rooted in the ancient healing practices that can be traced all the way back to these early beginnings.

Out of the different therapies that make up the traditional Chinese medical system (acupuncture, herbal medicine, food therapy, moxabustion, plum blossom, cupping, Tui Na (massage) etc.), in no other therapy are the overtones of primitive healing practices more apparent than in the practice of herbal medicine. The use of ingredients like snakeskin, animal bone, and roots and stones, appears to be a throw-back to practices from centuries past when it is likely that in addition to their medicinal use, these items were also associated with mystical practices like divination and ceremonial magic. While there's no disputing that the passing of time and advances in science have brought about dramatic changes, many of the core concepts of the ancient medicine, such as the belief that man's relationship with nature and the environment has a profound influence on one's health, continues to be one of its most important guiding principles. For some it's the combining of ancient theories and modern science that gives Chinese medicine its appeal. While for others, the fact that some of its principles and theories are not supported by Western scientific research often unjustifiably casts doubt on its efficacy.

Be that as it may it's safe to say that there are some similarities shared by traditional Chinese medicine and its Western counterpart, as well as some significant differences. One of the most important characteristics that underscore the contrasting views of the two medicines is that unlike Western pharmaceutical medicine, since its creation nearly five-thousand-years-ago, Chinese herbal medicine has remained in the hands of the Chinese people. Unlike Western prescription drugs, Chinese herbs are not controlled by a government drug commission, doctors, pharmaceutical companies or pharmacists. Throughout China's history since the-curative-ability of medicinal plants was first discovered, herbs have always been accessible to anyone in need of them.

Today, as in years past, herbs are readily available and can be purchased in herb stores for treating minor ailments as well as serious life-threatening diseases. This unrestricted public access is in stark contrast to Western medicine's requirement to visit a state-licensed

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doctor's office in order to obtain a prescription for high-priced pharmaceutical drugs for everything except over-the-counter medicine for treating minor illnesses.

And while most would agree that having access to medicine is important, some might argue that an even more compelling feature that distinguishes one medicine from the other is traditional Chinese medicine's emphasis on identifying the underlying cause for a particular illness rather than simply treating the illness's physical symptoms.

When people are first introduced to traditional Chinese medicine they're often surprised at the amount of scrutiny given to evaluating a patient's emotional/spiritual well-being, and the importance in bringing these elements into balance along with resolving any physical complaints as part of the over-all treatment. This "body, mind, spirit" approach to treatment which has unquestionable value in regard to health in general, has even greater significance when it comes to treating substance abuse based on sociological studies that have determined beyond physical dependency, psychological and/or spiritual matters are at the root of all of the different forms of substance abuse and addiction.

Other dissimilarities between the two medicines are Chinese herbal medicine's relatively low cost when compared to high-priced prescription drugs and their lack of negative side-effects and overall safety compared to Western chemical medicines. More significantly, herbs can be administered with a minimal amount of training. It is in fact, the effectiveness of herbs in the hands of those who lack technical training that is the main reason for herbal medicine's popularity and continued use for thousands of years by Taoist sages and master herbalists, as well as ordinary people who possess little or no formal medical training. This long-acknowledged, user-friendly nature has made it possible for novices to effectively use Chinese herbs for treating illnesses such as those described in this book.

Over the years I have learned that through a conscious effort to use simple language and avoid complex medical terms, I have been able to get people who lack medical training to understand some of the basic principles of Chinese medicine, which has enabled them to effectively incorporate herbs into their daily lives to maintain their health. Although there are a few precautions that need to be taken into consideration when using Chinese herbs, such as not combining certain ingredients known to be antagonistic when used together. With few exceptions when the correct amount of each ingredient is used in a formula's preparation and the recommended dosage is strictly followed, most Chinese herbal formulas can be safely administered by someone with little or no experience.

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That said, it would be irresponsible not to mention that in all cases of illness diagnosis by a skilled physician is highly recommended. If any doubt exists about the first diagnosis a second opinion should be sought. Once you receive a definitive diagnosis, if you make the decision to treat the condition with Chinese herbs this information should be shared with your regular doctor/primary physician (if you have one). Some will take a positive attitude, others will prefer to wait and see, and some may be less than encouraging. In any event, it should not be forgotten that making choices concerning the type of medical care used for treating your body is a basic human right!





# CHAPTER ONE

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## Alcohol

**E**ven though the popularity of marijuana is at an all-time high and more people than are willing to admit smoke on a daily basis, you can't help but notice that there are also quite a few folks who have issues when it comes to alcohol consumption. I had always suspected that the numbers were high, but have to admit to having my mind blown by a recent scientific study on addiction that found the number of people addicted to alcohol exceeds those addicted to crack cocaine, ecstasy, methamphetamine, marijuana, oxycontin and all of the prescription drugs combined.

According to the experts while statistics on the exact number are difficult to quote with any certainty, it's conservatively estimated that there are approximately fourteen million alcohol dependent persons in the U.S. (7.4% of the population), and another seven million who have trouble controlling their consumption. Anthropologists tell us that long before drugs like crack cocaine, meth, and ecstasy, were invented alcohol earned the title and is still considered the most addictive substance known to man. If Robert O'Brien co-author of *The Encyclopedia of Alcoholism* is to be believed, there is no period in human history that is free from references to the production and consumption of intoxicating beverages.

Mr. O'Brien claims that even in pre-historic times dating back to the Neolithic period, descendants from stone-age cultures that could be described as inebriated cavemen, are known to have made fermented meads using honey as the primary ingredient for producing one of the earliest known forms of liquor. Furthermore, according to the author, since alcohol's discovery there has always been the tendency to use it in excess. It is well documented that throughout history any society where alcohol has been freely used has been affected by problems such as acute alcohol intoxication (drunkenness) and dependence. An amusing side-note that underscores this historical fact is according to some reports it was chronic alcoholism that was responsible for the death of none-other-than Attila the Hun.

Until recently social scientists were convinced that inherited genetic factors played a prominent role in causing alcohol dependence, but now they believe any person irrespective of environment, genetic background, or personality can have problems with alcohol if he/she drinks heavily for a prolonged period. Stress is an important factor. Many moderate drinkers have been known to increase their consumption of alcohol at times of bereavement, or as a response to marital, occupational, or financial stress. An interesting take on Western medicine's explanation for the underlying cause is Chinese medicine's assertion that substance abuse and addiction are a result of a mental/spiritual imbalance that the ancient medicine refers to as disturbed Shen.

According to Chinese medical theory addiction and overindulgence are merely

symptoms of a deep-rooted spiritual imbalance that occurs when a person's mind and spirit are in disharmony. Traditional Chinese medicine further explains that the conflict between one's psyche and subliminal self can only be resolved when the focus of treatment goes beyond merely treating the physical complications that are inherent to the illnesses associated with the different forms of substance abuse, and focuses on restoring balance by reconnecting the mind, body, and spirit.

In order to accomplish this, traditional Chinese medicine uses herbal medicines that tranquilize the spirit and calm the Shen. In addition to treating the physical illness (patient's chief complaint), detoxifying the organs (the liver and kidneys) that filter impurities from the blood is an important part of the overall treatment. Emphasis is also placed on practicing some form of meditation either standing, sitting or moving (commonly known as Tai Chi Chuan or Chi Kung), which is also an important part of the treatment plan based on its proven ability to nurture the spirit and harmonize the emotions.

### **Let's Look at Some Facts about Alcohol Abuse**

Among the grim statistics that clearly speak to the hazards of too much alcohol consumption is the fact that there are approximately eighty-eight-thousand deaths attributable to excessive alcohol use each year in the United States. This makes excessive alcohol use the third leading lifestyle-related cause of death for the nation. Excessive alcohol use is responsible for two and one half million years of potential life lost annually, or an average of about thirty years of potential life lost for each death. Excessive drinking notably "binge drinking," increases the risk of many harmful health conditions and alcohol related injuries such as:

- Traffic injuries, falls, drowning, burns, and unintentional firearm injuries.
- Violence, including child maltreatment, intimate, and partner violence. About thirty-five percent of victims report that offenders are under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol use is also associated with two out of three incidents of intimate partner violence. Studies have also shown that alcohol is a leading factor in child maltreatment and neglect cases, and is the most frequent substance abused among these parents.
- Risky sexual behavior such as unprotected sex, sex with multiple partners, and increased risk of sexual assault which can result in unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.
- Miscarriage and stillbirth among pregnant women, and a combination of physical and mental birth defects among children that last throughout life.

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Long term excessive alcohol use can lead to the development of chronic diseases, neurological impairments and social problems. These include but are not limited to—

- Neurological problems, including dementia, stroke and neuropathy.
- Cardiovascular problems, including myocardial infarction, cardiomyopathy, atrial fibrillation and hypertension.
- Psychiatric problems, including depression, anxiety, and suicide.
- Social problems, including unemployment, lost productivity, and family problems.
- Cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, colon, and breast. In general, the risk of cancer increases with increasing amounts of alcohol.
- Other gastrointestinal problems, such as pancreatitis and gastritis.
- Liver diseases, including—
  - Alcoholic hepatitis.
  - Cirrhosis, which is among the fifteen leading causes of all deaths in the United States.
  - Among persons with Hepatitis C virus, worsening of liver function and interference with medications used to treat this condition.

The extensive history of human beings and their use of intoxicating spirits make it only fitting that any discussion about getting high or self-induced intoxication should begin with what many experts claim is the oldest most frequently abused addictive substance. Despite some obvious differences in their approach to treatment, Eastern and Western medicine agree that alcoholism is a condition characterized by habitual compulsive long-term consumption of alcohol, and the development of withdrawal symptoms when drinking is suddenly stopped.

There is also a shared belief between the two types of medicine that development of alcohol dependence can be divided into four distinct stages which are described in the guidelines that follow. The four stages can also be used to self-evaluate one's own alcohol consumption.

## ALCOHOL

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### **Stage One:**

Tolerance increases, and the person is able to drink more and more alcohol before experiencing its ill effects.

### **Stage Two:**

The drinker experiences memory lapses relating to events that occur during the drinking episode.

### **Stage Three:**

There is a loss of self-control over the use of alcohol and the drinker can no longer be certain of his/her ability to discontinue drinking whenever he/she wants.

### **Stage Four:**

There are prolonged binges of intoxication, and the drinker begins to suffer observable mental and physical complications.

Normally, there is a correlation between an alcoholic's stage of dependence and the severity of the alcohol-related diseases he/she is likely to suffer. For example, during the early stages of alcohol dependence (stage one or two), the alcoholic is more likely to experience less severe alcohol-related illnesses such as: hangover, pancreatitis, ulcers, and indigestion; however, as addiction progresses to the advanced stages of the disease (stages three and four) the alcoholic becomes more susceptible to life-threatening illnesses such as liver disease and cancer.

*Slaying the Dragon* provides herbal prescriptions used in traditional Chinese medicine for treating major and minor health issues associated with all of the different stages of drinking. Due to variances in symptoms from one person to another, in most cases there are several different formulas for treating a particular illness. Your selection of one formula over another should be based on which formula has the greatest number of therapeutic actions or indications that match the patient's symptoms.



# CHAPTER TWO

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Drugs