## Forgetfulness and Poor Concentration

Forgetfulness and poor concentration are considered signs of Shén (神) and Yì (意) disturbance — involving the Heart and Spleen, and often also the Kidneys. These symptoms reflect a weakening of the mental and cognitive faculties, which in TCM are deeply rooted in Qi, Blood, and Essence (Jing). These symptoms occur when the Shén (the spirit of the Heart) and Yì (the intellect of the Spleen) are not properly nourished, anchored, or supported. They can arise from deficiency of Blood, Qi, or Essence, or from obstruction by Dampness or Phlegm. Depending on the underlying pattern, the presentation may differ:

* **Forgetfulness:** trouble recalling information, especially short-term or recent memory
* **Poor concentration**: mental fatigue, distractibility, difficulty maintaining focus or finishing tasks.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pattern | Pathophysiology | Cause | Symptoms | Tongue | Pulse | Formula |
| Heart Blood Deficiency | The Heart houses the Shén, and Blood anchors it. Without sufficient Blood, the Shén becomes scattered. | Overthinking, chronic illness, Spleen deficiency | Forgetfulness, insomnia, anxiety, poor memory, palpitations, pale face | Pale, thin | Thin, weak | *Gui Pi Tang* |
| Spleen Qi Deficiency | The Spleen governs thought (*Yì*) and produces Blood. If Spleen Qi is weak, it fails to nourish the Heart and mind. | Poor diet, overwork, worry, overthinking | Difficulty concentrating, fatigue, digestive weakness, poor memory | Pale, swollen, teeth marks | Weak | *Gui Pi Tang*, *Liu Jun Zi Tang* |
| Kidney Essence Deficiency | The Kidneys store the Jing (Essence), which nourishes the Brain (Sea of Marrow). When Essence is weak, mental clarity and memory decline. | Aging, chronic illness, sexual overexertion, congenital weakness | Forgetfulness, poor long-term memory, tinnitus, dizziness, sore lower back | Pale or red with little coat | Deep, thin, weak | *Zuo Gui Wan*, *Liu Wei Di Huang Wan* |
| Phlegm Obstructing the Orifices | Phlegm obstructs the clear Yang from reaching the head → dull thinking, clouded mind. | Spleen deficiency producing Damp, poor diet, emotional stagnation | Mental fog, poor concentration, heaviness in head, dizziness, chest oppression | Swollen, greasy coat | Slippery | *Wen Dan Tang*, *Ban Xia Bai Zhu Tian Ma Tang* |
| Liver Qi Stagnation or Liver Fire | Emotional stress and frustration block the free flow of Qi, causing mental rigidity or scattered focus. | Repressed emotions, chronic stress | Distractibility, mood swings, poor focus, headache, irritability | Red sides or normal | Wiry | *Xiao Yao San* |

In TCM, forgetfulness and poor concentration reflect a disturbance of the Shén (Heart), Yì (Spleen), or Essence (Kidney). The main causes include Heart Blood deficiency, Spleen Qi deficiency, Kidney Essence deficiency, Phlegm obstructing the mind or Liver Qi stagnation from emotional stress. Treatment focuses on nourishing the Heart, Spleen, and Kidney, resolving Phlegm if present, and calming the Shen to restore mental clarity.