

# Overcoming anxiety and fears

As people react in different ways to the same stress, says *Janet Gray*, homeopathy has so much to offer

One can think of all sorts of occasions in which fear and anxiety manifest themselves and cause difficulties in handling the situation. For example, one may be an entirely competent driver, but put into the context of a driving test, may go to pieces and fail. In such circumstances some people simply freeze, and are unable to think what to do next. Some break out in cold sweats and palpitations, while others have to dash off to the loo. A homeopathic remedy can be tailored to the individual reaction of the person.

Let's look at some remedies in different situations. Take Mike, for instance. He was a 21 year-old motor cross competitor, who was extremely successful on the British circuit. When he went abroad to compete, however, for some reason he found himself "freezing" on the start-line, and doing very badly. He told me that his legs felt like jelly, and his mind just went blank – not knowing what he was meant to be doing. Gelsemium (false jasmine) soon put him right, with one dose the night before, and another one hour before each race. He was soon back to his previous form as British Supercross Champion.

I am frequently consulted

about pre-examination nerves. Aconite is an excellent first-aid remedy – it will calm down the adrenalin levels instantly, but as it is not a deep-acting remedy, it will not result in a lasting cure. It can, however, be repeated as frequently as needed.

If the sufferer is extremely restless, unable to sit still, waking at two in the morning worrying about the forthcoming exam and sometimes feeling sick and shaky, a dose or two of Arsenicum album will soon dispel the nerves.

If, however, like Mike, the anxiety manifests itself as a complete inability to concentrate on the revision, and when confronted with the paper the mind goes blank, and the student is totally unable to recall any facts, the medicine needed is Gelsemium.

Other medicines that may be useful for exam nerves are Argentum nitricum, Lycopodium and Anacardium. Like Gelsemium, the anxiety displayed by Argentum nitricum and Lycopodium is anticipatory. That is to say, the sufferer starts the symptoms when even just thinking about the forthcoming event, unlike Aconite and Arsenicum, which is more immediate.

The sufferer requiring Argentum nitricum will get the feeling that there is a

tremendous hurry to get the work done, and that there will not be enough time for all the revision. They get very hot and bothered, and often suffer from palpitations. The stress brings on a craving for sweet things, but they also have a strong liking for salt, and may binge on sweet and savoury food alike.

The Lycopodium type conceals his nerves better, but at a great cost to his guts. He has great ambition, and is determined to do well, but his own high standards cause their own stress. He may well develop irritable bowel syndrome, dyspepsia or migraine. He also likes sweet foods, but they disagree with his stomach, causing bloating and wind! On the day of the exam he will probably acquit himself well, but is dogged by reversing letters, or failing to think of the right word.

We tend to think of Anacardium for memory disorder and depression, so it can be very useful for teenagers getting in a right state over their exams. They have great difficulty remembering what they have revised and completely lose their confidence. So great is the psychological disturbance due to the stress of possible failure, that they may be driven to suicide.

### *Problems at school*

Another area of stress for which I am frequently consulted, is that of school in general. Younger children may be unhappy at school for various reasons: they may be being bullied, they may have a very strict teacher of whom they are scared, they may have difficulty making friends.

Sarah, aged 10, was brought to see me suffering from tummy aches, which had begun two years previously when a new girl started at school, who “took over” her best friend. She was a sensitive girl who was often anxious and worried

I gave her *Calcarea carbonica*, which not only settled her tummy aches, but also helped her with her self-confidence, and she started making new friends.

Penny, aged nine, hated school, even though she made friends easily, and had two special friends there. I eventually discovered that her problems had started when a disabled child was admitted to the school, and this distressed Penny immensely. She could not bear to see the child in her wheelchair and was so upset that she would cry all night. She often felt sick with her anxiety. She



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about being told off in class. On starting school at the age of five, she had displayed considerable separation anxiety, and even now her mother suspected that sometimes the tummy aches were a ploy to be able to stay home with her. She often had a sweaty head and hands, and loved egg bread, but hated milk. At two or three in the morning she would wake with a bad dream, often of dead men, and would go into her parents’ bedroom for comfort. She was scared of heights and thunder.

also worried about the state of the world, and the health of her parents and loved ones. At night she had to have a light on, and she hated going to stay with her grandparents as they had a “scary house”. She often dreamed of burglars. With this degree of sensitivity and caring, *Phosphorus* was well indicated, and I gave her one dose per week until she settled. After one month, she was attending school happily, and was not so anxious when around the disabled child.

### *Teen troubles*

Teenagers have worries other than exams, because growing up is a stress in itself. John was one such lad, who at the age of 16 started having episodes of fainting. His GP had excluded any serious pathology and had put it down to “nerves”. John told me that he hated school and he hated being a teenager. He was self-conscious of his spots and felt that his girlfriend had gone off him. He was avoiding social situations because of the fear of fainting. Over the past year he had grown rapidly, and his appearance was that of a lanky bean-pole. His mother complained of the terrible smell from his shoes, and although he admitted to being sweaty, he was very chilly. One of his complaints was headaches, which were helped by wrapping his head warmly, but his bobble hats made him feel more self-conscious. At school he lacked confidence and under-achieved. His teachers made the common comment – “could do better”, but somehow he lacked the ability to try.

I gave him *Silica*, one dose weekly, and after a month his skin had cleared and he had had no further fainting episodes.

There are all sorts of other situations that can be helped by homeopathy, such as fear of flying, going for interviews, public speaking and appearing on the stage. For patients suffering from chronic anxiety, such as panic attacks and agoraphobia, the case must be taken in depth by a qualified practitioner in order to achieve effective relief, but in acute situations, such as examination nerves, the general public can reach for the *Aconite* bottle with confidence.



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