



# *Is it just a phase*

Unhappy children and teenagers respond well to homeopathic treatment, writes *Keith Souter*

**A**t one time society recognised that moodiness was a normal part of growing up. Children and teenagers would have bad patches, but it was assumed that they would pass through them without any outside help. In recent years this perception has changed and an increasing number of children and adolescents are being treated for depression. Indeed, in the UK in 2003 over 50,000 children were prescribed antidepressants and over 170,000 prescriptions were given in the year to people under the age of eighteen. Currently, it is estimated that up to five per cent of children and up to 20 per cent of adolescents are depressed.

There is concern about this, however, since research has shown that the older

antidepressants have no effect on the under-eighteens. Perhaps more significantly, some research suggests that the newer selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) may be dangerous for young people.

## *Changing society*

Society has changed dramatically over the last 50 years. In the 50s children were brought up in a more disciplined and authoritarian culture, with the view that they would eventually go to work in order to produce prosperity for the country. In the 60s there came a change in society with more emphasis on permissiveness and freedom, so that since that time people have become pleasure-seeking consumers.

With a changing economy has come greater mobility, a breakdown of the extended family, increasing numbers of families where both parents work so less time is spent together. And of course, family break-ups have become more common.

There is an interesting effect from all this change. Increased consumerism has meant that there has been a strong trickle down effect, in which children have been allowed greater access to the adult world. They have computers, internet access, mobile phones. Thus the boundaries between childhood and adulthood have become blurred and

children have become viewed as small adults. Because of this, it may be that moodiness and various behaviours that were once considered normal are now considered abnormal and thereby deemed worthy of treatment.

In conventional medicine, however, depression seems to have become a catch-all diagnosis for unhappiness, sadness and moodiness. Since children tend to be regarded as little adults, one can see how the adult diagnosis has been extended to include children. As a result, it seems that antidepressant prescribing for young people has increased.

## *The role of homeopathy in sadness and moodiness*

In homeopathy we look at the individual's experience of life. It is this which determines the treatment that is given. The emotions are of paramount importance in selecting a remedy and, because of this, emotional states respond very well to the correctly selected remedy.

Homeopaths have been treating unhappy, moody and sad children and youngsters for many decades. In my practice I have found that many remedies help unhappy youngsters.

I find it helpful to look at the pattern of unhappiness in the context of the whole picture that is being presented to me. Very often the individual comes because of



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# they go through?

some other reason, the unhappiness or moodiness giving colour or tone to the picture. The following thumbnail descriptions of a few of these remedies may give some indication of how they may help to ease the burden of unhappiness.

## *Shy and scared*

When a child or teenager seems excessively shy and unhappy there are a number of remedies that come to mind.

Johnnie, a young four year-old was brought to see me by his parents because they were concerned that he seemed unhappy, was easily moved to tears and was shy beyond measure. He would hide when people came to the house and he had a trick of pulling his jumper or tee-shirt over his head, so that strangers couldn't see his face. They were also concerned that he seemed slow to learn things and that he would burst into tears if pressed too much. Apart from that he was troubled with recurrent sore throats which were always associated with large neck glands.

This is very much the picture of Baryta carb. These youngsters are shy, tearful, fearful, slow in many ways and often respond to infections by developing large glands. This remedy in 30c potency every month transformed Johnnie into a much happier young lad and markedly reduced his attacks of tonsillitis.

Helen was a 14 year-old who was also shy and had many fears. She was unhappy

with her life, her appearance and her friends. She told me that all sorts of things made her cry and that she would cry no matter who was present. She admitted to getting peeved with other girls and a bit jealous that they had boyfriends. She was plump, but pretty. Cuddles and reassurance from her mum made her feel better, as did being outdoors. Her mother worried that she did not drink enough water, despite continued urging to do so.

This is a good picture of Pulsatilla. And indeed, a few doses of Pulsatilla at monthly intervals helped her to see the positive aspects in her life.

A quite different picture emerged with Rebecca, another shy teenager who was brought along to see me because of recurrent headaches. She was extremely slim with long, lank hair. She described having "hammering headaches" that came on when she was studying or working on her computer. As we talked, she gradually opened up and it became clear that she also felt sad a lot of the time, especially around her periods. Quite unlike Helen, she was worse when people tried to cheer her up and she hated attempts to give her a cuddle. Indeed, she admitted that she might cry when she was alone, but never in front of anyone. She confessed to having a passion for bacon sandwiches.

This picture, including the desire for salty things indicated that Natrum muriaticum might work well for her, which indeed it did.

A dose every month before mid-cycle alleviated the headaches and cleared up the premenstrual sadness.

## *Stroppy and irritable*

While the first group respond to the world by drawing inwards, this group present a picture that seems directed outwards, to produce a stroppy attitude.

Young Henry was a plump, rosy-cheeked five year-old who was brought to see me by his mother because she just found it so difficult to handle him – almost literally. "He's so stubborn!" she exclaimed despairingly. "Nothing pleases him." And she described how he would have tantrums, where he would want something, yet not want it when it was given. It worried her that he would never let her hug him, for that would send him into another paroxysm of tears and rage. She positively shuddered when she told me about his nose-picking, which he spontaneously demonstrated to me. Henry didn't just pick his nose, he bored into it!

And this is a picture of Cina, which comes from worm seed. It is, incidentally, reputed to be a remedy par excellence for worms in children. For Henry it was a great settling down remedy. And after a few months it even seems to have helped with his nose-picking, which although not gone, is now apparently infrequent.

Mark was a thin, black haired 16 year-old, who came along with his mother. He was sullen, very flat in his



mood and snappy towards his parent. He was concerned about a crop of large warts on both hands. They were unsightly and bled at times. Over-the-counter preparations had not worked and he worried about them. "I haven't got cancer, have I?" he asked earnestly. At this his mother explained that he was forever worrying about his health. Mark swiftly rebuked her, then to me: "I bet you can't do anything!" he said, challengingly. "Nothing works."

Here we have moodiness, snappiness, pessimism and fear over health, all key features of *Nitric acid*. And it proved to be the right remedy for Mark, over a couple of months clearing the warts and helping his outlook and attitude.

### *Weighed down*

Here I mean that the individual seems weighed down with woe.

Sam certainly seemed weighed down with woe beyond his years. He was a small nine year-old who seemed to have a real "poor Sam" attitude. His mother told me that he brooded a lot of the time. Falling out with a friend, not being picked for a team at school, losing a toy – these were all things that he had fretted about in the past, and which caused him to "mope". His mother also told me that he frequently complained about things always happening to him. And at that point Sam concurred, somewhat peevishly. "Well it does! Just like those sore ears I get."

And here is Aurum metallicum, from gold. Woe, negativity, dwelling on disappointments and a tendency to catarrh, ear and throat infections. It certainly helped to introduce a little glitter into Sam's life.

*Calcarea carbonica* is another remedy that may help youngsters who seem sluggish and weighed down with cares. They are often large, plump, chilly folk who seem slow in many ways. They can be clumsy, nervy and unwilling to compete with others, in case they show themselves up.

### *Reactors*

In this sense the individual may well have undergone or experienced some major trauma, be that physical or emotional.

Charlotte was brought along to see me at the age of six because she had become almost inconsolable after the death of her pet rabbit. From the description her mother gave me I could see that she had what I call "the three Ss". She would sit, sob and sigh. Charlotte even confessed that she was worried about having another pet in case it also died. *Ignatia*, one of the great remedies for loss, took away her fear, eased her sadness

and she stopped weeping.

Finally, Adam a 13 year-old came along with his parents. They were concerned because he seemed to have become moody, obsessive and had developed a compulsion to check doors, windows and the home telephone. It became clear that all of his problems had started after he had watched a horror video at a friend's house. It had affected him badly and he had developed obsessive-compulsive behaviour, whereby he thought that if he checked doors, windows and the telephone three times, then everyone would be safe. This reaction to some stark visual stimulus is a key feature of the remedy *Mancinella*, which had an excellent effect on Adam, clearing his moodiness, fear and compulsions over three months.

Homeopathy has much to offer when youngsters feel unhappy or sad. By matching up the remedy to the emotional pattern it is ideal for calming the troubled waters of the mind.



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Photo courtesy of Brenda Buckingham