

The Calm after ADHD

Challenging Children: ADHD treatment and homeopathic Hyoscyamus

Troubled, tricky, hyper, horrid, little monsters. We have many, far from endearing ways to describe the difficult child, but when homeopaths choose the description of ‘challenging children’ it is more than just a way of encompassing the behaviour associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), tantrums, fears and night terrors. It implies that children with behaviour problems have positive attributes just waiting to be accessed, rather than seeing the child as a checklist of negative behaviours. This non-judgemental attitude pervades the practice of homeopathy and rubs off on parents. As one parent said, it validates the suspicion that their child was “Only acting that way because they had to, there’s an internal drive, they’re not inherently bad.”

After searching for help without resorting to pharmaceuticals there are countless numbers of families who have successfully treated their challenging children with homeopathy. Their treatment has often been a real journey starting with despair and ending in relief. Their stories all involve more than just the child because there are always other people who are affected: teachers, siblings, neighbours and parents. Jenny is one of those parents and her story offers insight and hope to others.

Jenny wakes every morning with a hazy head and she can’t think clearly. A blanket of sleep deprivation heightens the misery caused by the behaviour of her ADHD child. At night he screams for help and clings to her but in the daytime he has forgotten her soothing words and he hits her. Ordinary errands and everyday tasks are a battle.



She has come to hate her frustrating trips to buy groceries and even more she dreads the voice on the mall loudspeaker. “Blue eyed boy with blonde hair. Found in front of the baker, he is distressed and screaming.” Just as upsetting are the whispered comments, from supposedly caring shoppers. “She should just give him a good smack.” Their words no longer shock her. What happened to the dream of having a sweet faced kid sitting in the supermarket trolley chatting away to grandmas?

Mothering a hyper child is her daily burden. “What if someone kidnapped him while buying their rye bread?” Then the wonder at hearing an inner voice say “But then you’d have the day by yourself,” almost wanting him to be gone.

Stress for mothers of kids with behavioural problems comes in different packages but there are many themes which are common. Jenny’s is easy to identify. Her son: wired in the day, screams in the night. “Mum, the monsters are coming to get me!” Her dog-tired husband: “What do you do all day?” Her mother-in-law: “If I had him for the

weekend I would calm him down,” but then she feeds him junk food that revs him up even more. For Jenny getting through one day at a time is an achievement.

Some of her friends have had similar problems and have found a solution with homeopathic treatment. So, one day, not knowing quite what to expect Jenny takes the plunge. She makes an appointment with a homeopath. It will do no harm and perhaps do the world of good, or so her friends try to convince her. They have explained that homeopathy is a wholistic medicine with an excellent reputation for kids. Jenny is dubious that she'll have enough to say to fill a whole hour but when she gets to the consult, she talks. And she talks. The whole package of problems is opened in clear view: mental, emotional, physical, sleeping, eating and everything about her child right back to the birth from hell. A river of emotions flows out: self-blame, love and despair. The homeopath listens carefully, then asks a lot of questions and nothing seems irrelevant.

Her son is prescribed the remedy *Hyoscyamus* and to everybody's relief they get a well-earned night without any crying and clinging. They are so used to being woken that in the morning they rush to check he's still breathing. Because of the effect of the *Hyoscyamus* their son was able to sleep all night and his restlessness during the day was calmed.

At the follow-up consult Jenny came with her husband and they related even more about how bad things used to be. They could really tell the difference. A chronic dry night-time cough had cleared up, and they now felt comfortable enough to reveal an embarrassing detail. The little boy with his mischievous face used to not only run off at the shops but he would also tear off his shoes and his pants as well as his underpants after escaping. Then he would be so silly and so revved up he would laugh at everything and shake his penis at people who tried to catch him. When they chased after him he would go into a rage and lash out and bite. At home even on relatively OK days he used to be extremely loud, loquacious, irritable and jealous.

After the homeopathy he is calmer in every way and more of his loving nature starts to show.



The latest homeopathic research

The very latest study into *Hyoscyamus* was conducted in Australia by homeopath Penny Barron, in conjunction with the Aurum Project. The study looked at cases where *Hyoscyamus* had been given to children with a diagnosis of ADHD, learning disorder, dyslexia, or developmental disorders and some also had coughs and teeth grinding. The remedy choice was not based purely on the diagnosis but more importantly on their individual behaviour and different personalities, because when a homeopathic case is analysed, problems which may stem from personality traits are taken into account. The study confirmed that those children who will respond well to *Hyoscyamus* commonly have a cluster of problems including night terrors, sly

behaviour, loud talking, tantrums, clinginess, jealousy and aggression. It also found that specific fears of being eaten by monsters or dinosaurs, is an important part of the remedy picture.

The diagnosis of ADHD

As mentioned before the diagnosis of ADHD reads like a checklist of negative behaviours and includes inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. These problems may occur from time to time in all children and the difference for those who are diagnosed is the frequency at which they occur and the level to which they interfere with the child's development. Inattention includes careless mistakes, poor listening, distractibility, and forgetfulness. Hyperactivity shows as fidgeting, excessive running or talking, foot tapping, or restlessness. Impulsivity is characterized by impatience, interrupting, and greater likelihood of accidents. ADHD is diagnosed more often in boys than in girls, but this has changed over the years, with it now being diagnosed in more girls.

Success rate with homeopathy

If negative behaviour stems from an internal drive of jealousy in the child, then it is the jealousy plus the aggro that homeopathy goes to work on. Another child may act out terribly at bedtime because of a very real fear of being alone in the dark in the bedroom. "You don't love me" is another common enough feeling underlying ADHD. Homeopathy will zoom in on the jealousy, fear or forsaken feeling. Homeopathic remedies work on the emotions of the child and go to the root of the problem rather than merely suppressing the symptoms of restlessness and inattention in the way pharmaceuticals do.

The behaviours of ADHD respond well to homeopathy. In the study by Penny Barron many children received vital help just like Jenny's son. 53% of the children had an excellent response in all areas including emotions, rage and physical complaints like coughs, 20% had a moderate improvement while 20% had slight improvement. Overall the number of children having a positive response, even if slight, was 93%.

This Australian research is similar to the work of the authors of *Ritalin Free Kids* who claim a 70% success rate when treating even the most unrelenting cases of troubled kids. Homeopathic success means improvement on physical, mental and emotional levels, so when compared with modern medication, the homeopathic success is incomparably more favourable in the long term. Jenny found her son had improved in all these areas. His cough improved at the same time as his night waking and his daytime behaviour.

This kind of success is also apparent in a Californian study from 1997. The study was conducted on foster children, all with a diagnosis of ADHD, many of whom had been abused in the past. Significant changes occurred for these children and *Hyoscyamus* was among the main remedies used.

In an important study conducted in Switzerland in 2005, it was found that on average, ADHD children gain a 50% improvement after five months of homeopathy. However, children who had been given prior stimulant medication reacted more slowly to

homeopathy even after the stimulant treatment had been stopped. On average they needed six months of treatment to be 50% improved. This refers to 50% of all of their symptoms which implies a higher success rate than stimulants. Stimulant medication is an option requiring daily medication for years, often until adulthood, while homeopathy is an option requiring an initial six months then long lasting improvement with perhaps follow up doses once a year. For some children like Jenny's son there is an immediate initial improvement in certain behaviours with the next few months consolidating the changes.

Hyoscyamus

There are at least thirty frequently used homeopathic remedies for ADHD, with *Hyoscyamus* being one of the most important. The remedies are always chosen individually according to the cluster of problems presenting in the child. Two other remedies which are very similar to *Hyoscyamus* and need to be carefully differentiated are *Belladonna* and *Stramonium*. These remedies are similar because they belong to the same plant family — the Solanaceae. The child needing *Hyoscyamus* has a higher level of exhibitionism and 'flashing' than the other two remedies and is a more independent person than a child requiring *Stramonium*. *Belladonna* might be a more appropriate remedy if the child is overly sensitive to noise and light.

The remedy *Hyoscyamus* is prepared in homeopathic pharmacies from the plant *Hyoscyamus niger*, which is a native of southern Europe. It has delicate, slightly lobed leaves and bell-shaped, pale yellow flowers. The plant has been known as Henbane since ancient Greek times for its medicinal, sedative and pain relieving properties. The Egyptian Ebers Papyrus (c. 1500 BC) records that Henbane was smoked to relieve toothache and when writing in the 1st century AD, Dioscorides recommended henbane for sleep problems and coughs. Henbane reputedly caused a sensation of lightness and visions, as though one was flying, and it was therefore one of the chief components of witches' 'flying ointments.' Like its cousin *Belladonna*, it dilates the pupils when given in crude doses. In modern medicine the plant was used to develop Hyoscine which is used as a pre-operative anaesthetic and as part of travel sickness formulations.



A crude dose of the plant is potentially toxic in overdose and Shakespeare was well aware of the plants reputation. He spent time in the markets picking up useful information from plant sellers and he chose henbane as the poison for Hamlet's father (Act1, Scene V).

Used as a homeopathic remedy it is not possible to poison with it, overdose on it, nor to have toxic effects, or side effects. This is because the remedies are manufactured in a different way to herbal medicines or modern medicines. Homeopathic pharmacies

use only trace amounts of the active ingredient in a specially prepared form. After more than 200 years of homeopathic prescribing, it has been consistently shown and recorded in journals around the world that the trace amounts used in homeopathy are highly effective.

When the henbane plant is turned into the homeopathic remedy called *Hyoscyamus* it is able to treat the same ailments it is also capable of causing if it were given in crude doses. This is because homeopathy works on 'like cures like' and it is the basis on which every homeopathic remedy works. So when history books describe the effects of henbane poisoning causing the person to run about and tear off their clothes while raging and screaming, we can use this information to discover the perfect match for the tantrums of Jenny's son. One example of henbane poisoning from 1899 described in detail "I felt as though without weight, as though I walked on air. I had an insane desire to laugh and shout. There were fits of ungovernable rage, with insane irrational suspicion. Tongue dry and pupils dilated. Extreme restlessness.... did not want to be covered by clothes."

Homeopaths are able to work out some of the symptoms which will be alleviated by a homeopathic dose of *Hyoscyamus*, by examining the history of poisonings. Also the history of the herbal use of the plant, for coughs and toothache gives an understanding about the physical symptoms which the remedy will treat. But, even more important than these two sources of information is one type of homeopathic research called a proving. A proving is conducted to establish the homeopathic indications for use. If we already know that the remedy will help symptoms of rage and restlessness we would like to know what emotions are behind the rage. The proving can help to determine this. It will also help to confirm how much of the recorded traditional uses are based in fact.

Contemporary homeopaths have a detailed profile on *Hyoscyamus* built on 200 years of solid homeopathic research and provings. We understand that the child needing *Hyoscyamus*, who runs away and rages like Jenny's son, is doing so because of an internal drive stemming from an underlying feeling as if at any moment he might be sold from the family. The children are extremely suspicious and think that every caring word directed at another sibling, partner or friend means that everyone else is cared for more than them. They feel as if they have been let down or betrayed by the people who are supposed to care for them the most, and if their parents show attention to anybody else, the jealousy of the child is very real. This is especially apparent when there is a new baby in the family and the already problematic behaviour of the sibling has escalated since that time.



Success with homeopathy

In Australia, the prevalence of ADHD in 6 to 17-year-olds is 11.2% of the population and it is noteworthy that in 2005 the number of children being prescribed stimulants

decreased by 10%, according to a Department of Health report. The number of children being treated by homeopaths has risen markedly in the last ten years as parents seek a safe and effective solution.

Hyoscyamus is a frequent choice out of more than thirty available ADHD remedies. Each of the remedies is chosen according to an individual cluster of symptoms including the behaviour, emotions and physical problems of the whole child.

Even though the safety of the remedies is well known, using them for complaints such as behaviour problems is not for home prescribing and requires careful differentiation by trained professionals for maximum effect. The remedies are prescribed on wholistic principles in a non-judgemental manner and have a 200 year reputation for being safe and effective, with their use for challenging children increasing around the world.

To find a homeopath in your area please phone the Australian Homeopathic Association or www.homeopathyoz.org.au For more information on the Aurum Project, the Australian homeopathic research initiative into childhood behaviour, go to www.aurumproject.org.au

Linlee Jordan is a homeopath and registered nurse with a Masters in Health Science Education. She is author of *Challenging Children: Success with Homeopathy*. (2007)

Harbord Homeopathic Clinic

110/20 Dale st

Brookvale

Sydney NSW 2100 02 99059415.

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