

Peace from Panic Attacks &



Performance Anxiety

Anxiety affects the body & mind: Homeopathy heals both

by ILDIKO RAN, CCH

PEOPLE OFTEN ASK ME, “WHAT DO YOU SPECIALIZE IN?” LIKE MOST HOMEOPATHS, I treat anybody regardless of their age, ailment, or even conventional medical label like “curable” or “incurable.” Recently, however, I noticed a common trait among most of my clients: anxiety. Sometimes it is their chief complaint or an obvious aspect of their personality, and other times it is a seemingly insignificant detail in the corner of their consciousness. Like it or not, it seems I specialize in anxiety!

Through the years, I have learned to explore my clients’ anxiety purposefully and with the utmost care. As my clients and I examine the intricate details of their anxiety, their inner world opens to us. More often than not, this process leads to the homeopathic remedy that will help their overall health and well-being—as well as resolve their anxiety. Even those who come for help with other kinds of problems often notice that the first symptoms to go are the ones related to anxiety. The reason for this might be the very nature of homeopathy: it encompasses both the body and mind.

Symptoms of anxiety can show up in any part of us. Physically, we may manifest palpitations, stomach cramps, and insomnia. Emotionally, we may be fearful, apprehensive, and full of worry. Mentally, we may fixate on certain ideas, such as a lurking sense that something terrible is going to happen or that we have done something wrong.

Stress reduction techniques, lifestyle changes, counseling, and behavior modifi-

cation can help alleviate such symptoms (psychiatrists also typically recommend anti-anxiety medications). But in my experience, a well-prescribed homeopathic remedy can have such a deep and long-lasting effect on a person’s overall health that the anxiety melts away into calmness and peace—whether or not these other therapies are used. As an added benefit, people often find that psychotherapy, chiropractic, and other complementary therapies act more effectively after homeopathic treatment; improvements in diet, exercise, and lifestyle become much easier to attain as well.

Here are two examples of life-long anxiety sufferers who found great freedom from their suffering, thanks to homeopathic treatment.

Noelle: Performance anxiety & stubborn sinusitis

A woman I’ll call Noelle came to see me for help with sinus infections that recurred monthly all winter. Each time she got an

infection, she ended up having to take antibiotics. She was in her early 30s, neatly dressed, and soft spoken—so soft-spoken, in fact, that during the interview I had to stop writing so the scribbling of my pen would not drown out her voice. Noelle had been prone to colds and a mildew allergy for as long as she could remember, and she also got sinus headaches. As we continued exploring her symptoms, she mentioned having extreme performance anxiety since elementary school.

“I have a tendency to be depressed,” Noelle told me. “I was a good girl, went to school every day, helped my mom, did my homework...but as a background feeling I always had this lurking depression. My grandmother used to say that they needed to buy me new shoes every week to cheer me up. I was shy and quiet. I remember in fourth grade I was standing at the blackboard and I heard my friend whispering, ‘What are you doing?’ Apparently I was rolling my uniform up to my underwear without being aware of it. When I had my

graduate school interview, my mother went in for me. I just couldn't do it."

To understand Noelle's particular expression of anxiety, I asked her to describe what exactly she experienced. "I feel numb, faint, almost unconscious, and my hands shake. When I speak in front of people my voice gets weaker, my breathing is shallow, and I'm shaky. My job is such that I have to give a presentation every week in front of my colleagues. They all know about my anxiety but I still have this shakiness."


Weakness doesn't stop her

In order to choose a homeopathic remedy, it helps to know what makes each symptom better or worse. So I asked Noelle to tell me about any times in her life when she was able to overcome this feeling of anxiety. "When it was important for me, I stood up for myself. In college, I once went to the head of the laboratory and asked him to move me to another department. I was shaking, my heart was pounding, but I went for it. I remember sitting in his office, my head swaying side to side involuntarily. You see, I do the work, I speak in front of people, I go for it. But it causes this uncontrollable anxiety."

Noelle returned to the topic of her depression: "I used to get so depressed that I had to stay home from school for a week at a time. I just could not get out of bed; I was exhausted and could sleep fourteen hours in one stretch." These periods of exhaustion still plagued her. "Normally my house is really tidy and neat, but sometimes I am so weak I cannot clean up. I see the mess, but I cannot pick it up. It comes in waves. Sometimes I fall asleep at the dinner table. My headaches are also accompanied by weakness."

When I asked about her general physical symptoms, Noelle reported some striking ones. She was very chilly. "Especially my feet get cold—a cold sweat that makes me have to change my socks and shoes. I sleep under two blankets and wear socks to bed."

Noelle noted that even with her periodic illnesses, depression, and fatigue, she usually carried on with her life. "Although I have periods of severe weakness and sinus infections, I maintain my job, I am working



When I speak in front of people, I feel numb, faint, almost unconscious, and my hands shake.

towards my second PhD, and I make a point to be a caring mother and wife. When needed, I stay up all night studying; other times my body cannot handle it."

Perfect fit for the whole

The combination of Noelle's particular emotional and physical complaints led me to the homeopathic remedy *Silica*. *Silica* is often helpful in sinusitis, but more importantly, it fit Noelle as a whole. Her neat appearance, her stage fright and performance anxiety all the way back to childhood, her perfectionism, and her shyness, including her low tone of voice, all pointed to *Silica*. Physical symptoms of cold, sweaty feet and overall chilliness are also characteristic of people who need this remedy. Noelle's extreme exhaustion with all her physical complaints called to mind *Silica's* well-known ability to address lack of stamina. Homeopath Roger Morrison describes *Silica* in his *Desktop Guide to Keynotes and Confirmatory Symptoms*: "The patient is often refined, delicate, sensitive and yielding. ...The self-confidence ...is often very poor. ...The patient may complain of some mental dullness and a feeling of inefficiency. ...Physically *Silica* patients suffer from low stamina quite commonly. The defensive resistance is low which allows for frequent infections, especially of the upper respiratory tract, the sinuses, or the ears."

A curious quality in Noelle's personality was her ability to stand up for herself when it was important to her. Even though she was shy and anxious, she chose to work in a profession where regular group presenta-

tions were a requirement. On the other hand, her life was sprinkled with periods of lack of resilience when her body gave in to sinusitis, headaches, and exhaustion. *Silica* addresses this core dichotomy of maintaining integrity (sometimes even manifesting as "stubbornness"!) while also having an innate fragility. The presence of this dichotomy was the decisive factor when I chose her remedy.

Energy up, infections down

When Noelle took *Silica* 200c, she was already experiencing her usual monthly cold-like symptoms—stuffy nose, congestion, and weakness—which typically turned into a sinus infection for which she took antibiotics. Nevertheless, the morning after taking *Silica*, she woke with no congestion.

When I saw her three weeks later, she told me her husband had noticed that she was more energetic—even though she was still juggling two jobs, graduate school, and her family. The quality of her sleep had improved, and she did not need to sleep extra long hours as before. She was exercising more and had stopped her habitual meal skipping. All in all, she reported feeling really well, especially relative to the high level of stress in her life. At work, she was transferred to a new group, and despite her expectation of having more anxiety talking in front of strangers, she noted that her weekly presentations were going better than before.

"What about the sinuses?" I asked at the end of the interview. We hadn't even talked about the main reason she had

come in the first place! “Oh, they’re *fine*,” she said with an air of absentmindedness. “That congestion I had just disappeared.” This is one of the miracles of homeopathy: people can be so free from their previous complaints that they almost don’t remember ever having them. Although it was still very early to tell how she would do in the long run, I took this as a good sign that *Silica* was already helping Noelle to move naturally and gracefully out of the vicious cycle of recurrent colds, sinus infections, sinus headaches, and antibiotics.

Strength, resilience, confidence

Over the next six months or so, Noelle’s



7 Stress & Anxiety Soothers

- ◆ **Breathe:** Inhale slowly to a count of 5, exhale to a count of 6. Do this a few minutes, 3 times a day.
- ◆ **Write:** Release anxious feelings, uncover patterns, identify unfounded fears via regular journaling.
- ◆ **Cut caffeine:** This is especially important if you’re sensitive to stimulants.
- ◆ **Exercise:** Pick your favorite & do it daily if possible, but anything will help!
- ◆ **De-stress:** Meditate. Learn self-hypnosis. Or try technology like entrainment CDs, Heartmath, biofeedback software, etc.
- ◆ **Take a media break:** It can be like going on vacation!
- ◆ **Supplement:** B vitamins, magnesium, and fish oil or flax oil can help to keep you on an even keel. Also consider Rescue Remedy® & other Bach Flower Remedies®.

energy level continued to improve, and she grew stronger and more resistant to colds. On occasion when a cold threatened, a few repetitions of *Silica* 30c or 200c would help her get over it quickly and keep her from succumbing to a sinus infection as in the past. She no longer suffered from bouts of extreme fatigue. As for her performance anxiety, while she still had to make a conscious effort to relax, the shakiness was gone and she was much more able to concentrate on her work and forget about the audience.

It has been seven years since I first saw Noelle, and she has continued to feel very well. Noelle sought out homeopathy primarily for her sinus problems. Once she understood the holistic nature of the treatment, however, she welcomed the healing on both emotional and physical levels.

Kevin: Panic attacks, inner struggles

“Kevin,” a 50-year-old interior designer, was seeking a more natural approach to anxiety than his prescription anti-anxiety medication. He decided to try homeopathy after witnessing his daughter’s positive treatment results.


Kevin started our meeting by saying he could not imagine how others handled life, which he experienced as constantly stressful: “How do other people keep the lid on? I’ve been anxious ever since childhood.” His anxiety had various expressions: stomach cramps, constipation, eczema, insomnia, nervous nosebleeds, and nightmares. “Sometimes I get so anxious I even throw up. In stressful situations, the skin on my hands breaks open and the cracks ooze with blood.” Kevin had an inherited blood disorder that made the bleeding worse. “I got the eczema under control with steroids, but then I developed panic attacks.” They occurred when he was on the highway, driving home from work. “I had to stop in the breakdown lane and gather myself. I felt like all the vehicles were drawing closer to me, and the inside of my car was tightening. I became dizzy and nauseous, my mouth got dry, and I had difficulty swallowing.” When Kevin came home anxious, he wanted his wife to be there because her presence was comforting.

Choking fear, violent thoughts

As often happens, the sensation Kevin had with his panic attacks was similar in quality to others in his life; it was a pattern of constricting sensations. “I have a strong fear of choking in general. When swallowing certain things, I feel my throat is constricted and it scares me.” This fear of choking and feeling of throat constriction came on sometimes in restaurants, where the presence of many people around him could become so overwhelming that he would have to leave for a few minutes to calm down. Kevin enjoyed meeting people and could be charismatic and engaging, but at a certain point “it’s too much stimulation, my senses get overloaded,” he said, and his anxiety would set off the familiar cascade of physical symptoms.

Kevin’s further description of his panic attacks took us to an even deeper level. “The anxiety grabs me. I have been taking various anxiety medications, but I cannot control my thoughts, cannot shut my brain off. This really scares me! Some particularly dark thoughts creep in and I cannot stop them—thoughts of harming myself or my loved ones. [Note: Kevin was already under the care of a psychiatrist.] These thoughts become stronger than my will and take control of me. I am a loving guy, a family man, I do not see why I have these violent images. In other situations when it is called for strategically, I can be mean—I know how to manipulate people when it’s called for. Otherwise I am a nurturing, caring person.”

In a homeopathic interview, clients may describe their inner view of reality, often a rather irrational pattern, which has its own innate logic but does not have much to do with the person’s conscious ideas or thought processes. This irrational pattern can shape their whole being unconsciously and manifest in symptoms on all levels. Kevin was aware that most of his physical complaints were rooted in stress and anxiety. But he didn’t know why the frightening images and disturbing thoughts were torturing him, and he was helpless to get rid of them. This is where the appropriate homeopathic remedy can be so valuable, in healing the deeper level that can’t be accessed rationally.



**The shakiness was gone
and she was much more
able to concentrate ...**

A split within the self

According to homeopath Rajan Sankaran, an antagonistic split within the self causing profound inner struggle is characteristic of people who need snake remedies (i.e., homeopathic remedies prepared from highly diluted snake venom); clearly, Kevin's sweet, good-natured side was at odds with his "poisonous," violent side. Kevin's throat issues (fear of choking and feelings of throat tightening), along with the sensations of compression and constriction that he reported in several areas of his life (e.g., feeling that the inside of his car was tightening during panic attacks) were also classic indications for a snake remedy. Kevin's blood disorder and bleeding symptoms, along with his ability to be mean and manipulative when needed, also pointed to a snake remedy.

From there, I narrowed it down to the *Crotalidae* family of snake remedies because of Kevin's desire for company, his family man nature, and his general anxiety (vs. anxiety provoked by certain triggers, which would have pointed more to the *Viperidae* family of snake remedies). Finally, Kevin's intense skin problems (weeping, itchy eruptions) and extreme mental anguish led me to choose the remedy *Crotalus cascavella* (Brazilian rattlesnake). As Morrison says in his *Desktop Guide to Keynotes and Confirmatory Symptoms*: "We can distinguish *Crotalus cascavella* from the other venoms by some of the mental symptoms and by the skin disorders."

On the road to freedom

I gave Kevin one dose of *Crotalus cascavella* 200c. At his first follow-up appoint-

ment one month later, he told me that a few days after taking the remedy he became weepy in situations where earlier he would have suppressed his emotions. I interpreted this as a positive sign of the beginnings of emotional freedom. His hands were dry, but he had no eczema. This was a significant improvement as he had done some painting, which usually triggered his oozing eczema.

When I next saw Kevin two months later, he told me his psychiatrist was pleased with his improvements and had agreed to wean him off conventional anti-anxiety medication. To support Kevin through this major transition, I suggested he take *Crotalus cascavella* 200c daily in water, which he did for the next month or so, until he was completely off the anti-anxiety medications.

Whenever Kevin had tried to discontinue his conventional medication in the past, he had lost equilibrium, but this time he continued to be stable emotionally. "There are still events in my life that cause anxiety, but while I used to feel like a victim or blame other people, now I tend to work things out." Although the psychiatrist was skeptical of homeopathy, he affirmed that Kevin indeed was doing well without the medication and did not have the usual withdrawal effects. Kevin stopped taking *Crotalus cascavella* shortly after stopping the conventional drugs since he didn't seem to need it anymore.

Six months after his first dose of *Crotalus cascavella* and three months after stopping his conventional medication completely, Kevin reported, "Incredibly, I have not had a panic attack since starting homeopathic treatment. I have had some

violent thoughts but they do not stick as they used to. Before, I would obsess about something and it would not let me go. Recently, a colleague became quite offensive with me. I blew up at him, but when I went home I forgot about it. In the past, it would've kept me up all night."

I saw Kevin occasionally at his daughter's visits for the next year, and he continued to do well. His severe anxiety symptoms did not return, and he was much better able to manage the mild symptoms that remained. His GI tract (stomach cramps, vomiting) was still sensitive but not to the degree it was. He'd had no eczema flare-ups since the remedy. And most important for Kevin, he was greatly relieved from the panic attacks, insomnia, nightmares, and disturbing thoughts that had plagued him for so long.

From anxiety to harmony

These two cases show the broad spectrum of homeopathic inquiry and the profound harmonizing effects the well-chosen remedy can achieve. Both Noelle and Kevin found relief from their physical symptoms as well as from their anxiety. In Kevin's case, the physical symptoms were clearly related to his anxiety, while for Noelle the correlation was more like a parallel—her sinus infections were not caused by her anxiety as such, but they were both relieved by the homeopathic remedy that fit her best as a whole. As a result of homeopathic treatment both Noelle and Kevin could explore their potential more freely and live more fulfilling lives.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ildiko Ran, CCH, PDHom, lives and works in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to being an established homeopath, she is currently training to be a psychotherapist. Ildiko believes that homeopathy and psychotherapy can inform and illuminate each other resulting in more rewarding treatment outcomes. Author of *Sensations: The Healing Power of Homeopathy*, Ildiko enjoys the intimacy of her private practice, while she also teaches and supervises novice homeopaths. When not at her desk, her five happy, healthy children keep her busy. She can be reached through her website www.innerexperience.com