

Editorial July 2009

Homoeopathic Management of Childhood Depression

Depression is one of the most common psychological/psychiatric disorders. It affects a person's overall energy, mood, expressions of emotion and behavior. Depression is commonly referred to as a Mood Disorder.

An estimated 1 out of 10 children have difficulty escaping the symptoms of depression for long periods of time. The rate of depression is markedly lower (1%) in children ages 1 to 6 years old. The rate is higher in older children ages 9 to 12 years (12%).

Symptoms and Behaviors Associated with Depression in Children

Crying, feeling sad, helpless or hopeless

Feeling discouraged or worthless

Loss of interest or pleasure in others or most activities

Fatigue and loss of energy nearly every day

Bad temper, irritable, easily annoyed

Fearful, tense, anxious

Repeated rejection by other children

Drop in school performance

Inability to sit still, fidgeting or pacing

Repeated emotional outbursts, shouting or complaining

Doesn't talk to other children

Repeated physical complaints without medical cause (headaches, stomach aches, aching arm or legs)

Significant increase or decrease in appetite (not due to appropriate dieting)

- change in sleep habits

Serious And Critical Symptoms

Suicidal thoughts, feelings or self-harming behavior

Abuse or prolonged use of alcohol or other drugs

Symptoms of depression combined with strange or unusual behavior

Dysthymia. A less severe form of major depression in which symptoms are less evident and may appear chronic and last more than 2 years.

Separation anxiety disorder. Depressive symptoms that are clearly associated with a child's separation from those to whom he or she is attached.

Adjustment disorder with depressed mood. Depressive symptoms that emerge as a reaction to an identifiable psychosocial stressor. The reaction is viewed as maladaptive and the symptoms are considered in excess of what is usually expected.

Homoeopathic management

Like any other case constitutional homoeopathic treatment is the key to treat childhood depressive disorders. I do not have very big experience in treating childhood depression but I remember some of my cures that I have achieved.

One such case I remember is of a 12 years old girl whose mother complained to me that the child uses lot of abusive language, has lot of anger, performance in the school is very poor, self confidence is

weak, she is very confused whenever she makes an attempt to concentrate on her studies or anything, she immediately develops a confusion in the head on mental exertion.

Her anger comes in phases, sometimes she is very angry and within few hours she is so affectionate to the people around that you cannot imagine that she is the same girl.

When she was 7 years old she had a strong fear of ghosts and spirit after she saw some television serial. This fear of ghost was worse in the night. She is always grumbling and discontented that her parents are partial to her other brothers and sisters. She was very lazy she never helped her mother in daily household work. In school she was extremely restless and will not allow other children to work.

She complained of migraine and with the migraine she used to weep and shriek loudly, it was accompanied by nausea and worse cold air, fasting and after any emotional excitement. She also complained of nasal obstruction which was usually one sided.

Her sleep was disturbed. When she goes to bed it takes about 3 to 4 hours to go into sleep. She sleeps on sides and many times she has frightening dreams of snakes.

She had a past history of eczema on her forearms which was suppressed by local ointments.

She had a strong craving for pork and bacon and she can eat as much of the quantity available. She frequently asks her mother to make pork curry rice or fried bacon.

Her father was chronic alcoholic and as a child she had witnessed many abuses against her mother by the father. They came from very affluent family but there were no family togetherness. The father was living his own life and the mother was also living her own life. There

was not much care, love, affection and bonding between the parents and the children.

With these symptoms I gave remedy *Ranunculus bulbosus* 200 to the child. The most important symptoms in the whole case were the anger, the abusing nature of the child, the affectionate nature that was alternating with anger, and a very strong craving for pork and bacon.

Ranunculus bulbosus is very useful remedy in my practice for different kind of behavioral problems in children. It comes from *Ranunculaceae* family, anger disorder, depressive disorder and hyperactive disorders have been successfully treated by using this medicine.

Her family history of alcoholism and ailments from witnessing the violence between the parents becomes a very important indication to select the remedy.

Another case I remember is of 8 years old child who was referred to me by the psychotherapist who was attached to a very famous school in south Bombay. The child had a strong aversion to go to school, the child as soon as the mother will say that get ready for the school the child develops severe anxiety, in fact the night prior to the school the child starts developing lot of anxiety accompanied by fear of going to school. In the school the child had a problem in concentration, the child had very few friends, the child had a very strong fear of being alone and had a very poor self confidence, and the child will not take anything new because the child had a strong fear of failure.

The fear became so severe that the child started getting panic attacks the moment the mother mentions the name of the school. The child was not interested in playing any games, looking at television, reading newspapers or story books and I asked the mother how all these things started.

The mother said that it all started after the death of her grandmother to whom she was extremely attached and after 4 months they slowly saw that the child is developing an aversion to go to school and study. I could not understand the relationship between the death of grandmother and the child refusing to go to the school but I also found out that the child was trying to neglect himself, the child was becoming more lazy and trying to cut herself socially and the child was perpetually sad and depressed.

At the physical level the child suffers from recurrent otitis media and the hearing was also mildly impaired. The child gets aphthae in the mouth especially on eating spicy food. There was tendency to develop painless diarrhoea after drinking milk. Mother observed that the child was extremely restless during the sleep. The child desires sweets and coffee. The psychotherapist from the school also informed me that her father when he was young also suffered from depressive illness for a very long period and the father had a tendency towards depression.

Keeping all these symptoms in my mind I gave Kali-ars to the child for a period of about 2 to 3 months with gradual diminishing all her fears and anxiety the child started going to school and within one and a half years the child's performance in the school improved by more than 80 percent.

Kali-ars is a very useful remedy for me in treating anxiety, panic disorders and depressive orders. The symptoms of Kali-ars resembles like Gelsemium, Argentum and Phosphorus. One of the very important observation that I have made in Kali-ars children that they are little suspicious and superstitious and they always feel whether their friend or people around them are trustworthy or not.