

Homeopathy: Ignatia for Loss, Heartbreak and Pain

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From nervousness, depression and bereavement, to insomnia, moodiness, head-aches and more, it never ceases to amaze me how often *Ignatia*, the remedy touted as “Homeopathic Prozac,” is put to good use.

Ignatia (also known as *Ignatia Amara* or *Iamara*) originates from the tincture of Strychnos Ignatia beans of a small tree native to the Philippines. The tree belongs to the Loganiaceae family, and has long, tapering, smooth branches. The bean was named after St. Ignatius, a Spanish Jesuit responsible for bringing the beans to Europe from the Philippines in the 17th century. The missionaries were introduced to the beans by the locals, who wore them as amulets to prevent disease. Historically, they were used as a treatment for gout, epilepsy, cholera and asthma.

Analyzed chemically, the beans contain a substantial amount of strychnine (used in rat poison) and brucine (a bitter alkaloid similar to strychnine). These compounds are fatal to humans if taken in large doses, and in small doses cause headaches, loss of appetite, cramps, muscle twitching, trembling, frightening dreams, nervous laughter and giddiness.

The homeopathic process of serial dilution and potentization eliminates any of *Ignatia*'s toxic attributes, and allows it to be applied therapeutically for the aforementioned symptoms.

The *Ignatia* archetype is that of an emotional, artistic sort, with a flair for the dramatic. Life is often felt more acutely by *Ignatia* types – emotions are felt more strongly, they may be extremely sensitive to impressions; even their sense of smell is in overdrive. An *Ignatia* state may stem from a feeling of rejection, resulting in deeply rooted pain and trust issues. They may form a wall around their hearts as a means to suppress unpleasant emotions. Due to their sense of betrayal or disappointment, '*Ignatias*' may become vindictive or indignant in order to command the respect they crave. They may come across as bossy and extremely touchy, with a fierce, and easily changeable, temper.

In those patients needing *Ignatia*, there is almost always a traceable source of their internal sorrow. It may be grief due to the death of a family member or pet, the breakup of a relationship, or other traumatic event. In an attempt to 'put the past behind them,' they bottle up their grief until they reach the brink, and then may either erupt, and/or suppress their sadness further and develop pathology.

Some keynote symptoms of *Ignatia* include: sighing, globus hystericus (the sensation of a lump in the throat), giggling or inappropriate laughter. Many of the symptoms – fainting, hiccuping, twitching, spasmodic cough, easy startling – are of an erratic, hysterical nature. *Ignatia* is a remedy of improbability and contradictions: involuntary laughing following bad news, sore throats which are improved on eating solids, an empty feeling in the stomach not improved by eating, and a host of other symptoms which defy anatomical and physiological principles.

As one of homeopathy's polychrest remedies, *Ignatia* can be used to treat a wide variety of complaints. Therapeutically, it can be used for headaches, sore throat, nervousness, insomnia, heart palpitations, gas, indigestion, mood swings, menstrual irregularities, irritable bowel syndrome, painful hemorrhoids, or a dry, tickling cough, to name a few. Below are some further details on the more commonly seen *Ignatia* symptoms.

Acute Grief – *Ignatia* is the first remedy to consider in the case of emotional shock, whether it be the loss of a loved one, the breakup of a friendship or romantic relationship, the loss of a job or any sort of disappointment or trauma. The person needing *Ignatia* may fluctuate between sobbing hysterically, to bottling it in and involuntarily sighing. The purpose of the remedy is to support the grieving process, allowing the person to better cope with their situation.

For deeply rooted grief, the remedy *Natrum Muriaticum* may be considered. The etiology may be similar – romantic disappointment, loss, etc. – however the patient will likely appear more controlled, closed, and refined. *Natrum Muriaticum* often follows in *Ignatia* cases.

Anxiety, Insomnia & Depression – For those unable to assimilate grief or disappointment, a state of anxiety and/or depression may arise. *Ignatia* is indicated in cases of anxiety, insomnia or depression where there is a clear link to an unpleasant emotional event, regardless of how long ago it was. People are often able to pinpoint exactly when their problems began, i.e., directly following a death in the family. Always look for confirmatory *Ignatia* symptoms, such as headaches, sighing or yawning (this is often noticed by a companion, and not by the person themselves), and easy startling and weeping.

Headaches – *Ignatia* can be considered for those suffering from headaches if the emotional component and causation fit. The patient will typically feel as if a nail were being driven through the side of their head. Head pain is often ameliorated by lying on the painful side. Triggers include: tobacco smoke, coffee, or strong smells of any kind. Interestingly, many *Ignatia* patients crave cigarettes to ‘take the edge off.’

Twitching & Spasms – *Ignatia* has a profound impact on the nervous system and can be useful for twitching muscles, jerking of the limbs, easy startling and trembling, providing the emotional symptoms agree.

CASE HISTORIES

Classical Homeopathy respects and relies on each person’s unique way of expressing ‘dis-ease.’ Below are some cases which illustrate each patient’s individuality, while highlighting the similarities that lead me to prescribe *Ignatia*.

Veronica – early 40s, came to see me for generalized anxiety. She experienced many fears – that she would be ridiculed, that she would not be able to keep her job and continue to pay her mortgage, etc. She was exceedingly nervous, which was intensified by fatigue due to insomnia. She described herself as socially awkward and ‘emotional’ (sad, angry and jealous). Throughout the day and night she would gasp for air as if she couldn’t get enough oxygen.

Although she had been experiencing nervousness for five years, she was able to identify that it started after the breakup of a long-term relationship. The symptoms worsened again more recently, following the death of her mother. I prescribed *Ignatia* 30C to be taken as needed (two or three times weekly), which imparted a sense of peace and reduced Veronica’s insomnia.

Karen – 20, came to see me with an assortment of issues: headaches/migraines, backache, amenorrhea and depression. She was so sensitive that even the slightest whiff of a strong odour – perfumes, cleaners, tobacco – would give her a pounding frontal headache. The headaches were aggravated by jarring (i.e. running for the bus), coffee, and smoking (though Karen was a smoker), and occurred a few times a week, lasting for most of the day. Headaches were accompanied by the urge to clear her throat. Migraines were experienced approximately three times a year, triggered especially by perfume and tobacco. During a migraine, she would begin breathing heavily/sighing, as if she were in a panic. Irregular menstrual cycles followed years of hard drug abuse and subsequent depression.

Karen believed that her parents’ separation (when she was 10 years old) was the root of her health problems. She recalls hearing the news and not reacting at all. She did not want her family to worry about her, so she took to crying in private. The root cause, as well as her overly sensitive nature, lead me to prescribe *Ignatia* LM/1, 5 drops daily. Six weeks later, she had not had a migraine since commencing treatment, and her headaches decreased in frequency and intensity by about 75%. Her menstrual cycle started to regulate itself as well. After approximately four months of treatment, Karen’s headaches came back more frequently, and reminded her of the bursting headaches she used to have a long time ago. She was less agitated, and less changeable/dramatic than she had been when I first started to see her. Additionally she started to crave large quantities of ice water. I prescribed *Natrum Muriaticum* LM/1, 5 drops daily, which cleared up the remainder of the symptoms.

Amanda – aged 25, sought help for her panic attacks. Her attacks were accompanied by dizziness and blinking, with her temperature alternating from hot to cold. She experienced headaches in both temples, with a constant feeling of something being driven into her head. The headaches had an erratic pattern in that they could be every day or every few days; they would fade inexplicably then reappear. Amanda’s first panic attack happened one week following the death of a family member, the first loss of that sort she had faced. She said it reminded her of her own mortality, and she began to fear her own death and that of her parents. She described herself as so sensitive that she could not read the news. She feared going crazy, and was visibly agitated, gasping for air while telling me this. Her symptoms had been further exacerbated by disappointments – in herself, her job, and that she had spent so many years in an abusive relationship. She was living in a constant state of regret and nervousness. *Ignatia* LM/1, 5 drops daily, eradicated the headaches within a few days of taking the remedy, and Amanda has gradually become calmer. Treatment is ongoing.

The more stressful everyday life becomes, the more the need for additional coping skills becomes apparent. Consider homeopathy as a natural, non-invasive means to help you and yours in times of need.

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