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Passion Flower

Passiflora incarnata

By Steven Horne and Paula Perretty

Holy flower of the vine,
Passion Flower you are thine,
Rise above to star-light Sun,
Showering compassion on everyone.

—*Isha Lerner*

Passion Flower gets its common name from Spanish explorers, who viewed the cross-like shape at the center of the flower as a symbol of the agony or passion of Christ's crucifixion, the "Passion of our Lord." The symbolism is appropriate for a plant that helps to relieve stress and pain.

A fast-growing, perennial, creeping vine that produces exquisite flowers, passion flower is native to the tropical and semi-tropical areas in the southern United States, Mexico, and Central and South America. Primarily known for its tranquilizing effects, this herb was an old remedy in the Yucatan for treating children with insomnia, hysteria and convulsions. The early or the North American Algonquian Indians, made a tea of the leaves for its calming effect on the nerves. Other North American Indian tribes include the use of passion flower for boils, inflammation and earaches.

Introduced into the Western materia medica in the 1840's, passion flower became popular with Eclectic physicians in the later half of the 19th century who valued it for its calming and sedative properties. It is a sympathetic nerve antagonist (it sedates the sympathetic nervous system responsible for the "fight-or-flight" response). It also has sedative and antispasmodic (muscle relaxing) effects, attributed to the harman alkaloids it contains. These alkaloids are considered the "active" constituents of the plant.

Passion flower's ability to relax motor nerves and reduce muscle spasms makes it an effective remedy for anxiety, stress, nervous agitation and insomnia. It is particularly good for mild to moderate anxiety due to worry or excess work. Nervous problems that create gastrointestinal symptoms also tend to respond well to passion flower. A double-blind study found it to be as effective in treating anxiety symptoms as synthetic benzodiaz-

epines without the adverse effects of being habit forming. This makes it a viable alternative to synthetic tranquilizers.

Passion flower has also been used to treat neuralgia, restlessness, depression, convulsions and epilepsy. It is a safe and gentle remedy for children who are easily excited, restless and have problems concentrating in school. There is some experimental support for the use of Passion flower in alcohol withdrawal, asthma, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), chronic pain, drug addiction, Epstein-Barr virus, gastrointestinal discomfort (nervous stomach), high blood pressure, insomnia, menopausal symptoms (hot flashes), nerve pain, and general pain due to tension.

Besides its use as an herbal remedy, passion flower has become well known for its culinary use in commercial drinks. South Americans use passion flower fruits in a variety of ways: from soup to mixed drinks, in fruit punch and desserts, and as an ice cream topping.

Passion flower is available as a single herb. Typical dose is one capsule two to four times daily. More can be taken in times of severe stress, but large doses can cause nausea and vomiting. Passion flower is also an ingredient in many nervine formulas—Stress-J, Nutri-Calm, Nerve Eight, Nerve Control, Herbal Sleep and GABA Plus. In our modern, stress-filled world, it's good to have herbs like passion flower to calm our anxiety, agitation and help us relax and get the sleep we need.

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Relieving Anxiety

A Holistic Approach

by Steven H. Horne, RH (AHG)



A couple of months back I wrote about how staying relaxed can help you have more energy. I mentioned that my father was able to work long hours because he knew how to stay relaxed. Well, in contrast to my father, who tended to be a relaxed person, my mother was a very anxious, nervous person. My mother simply did not know how to relax and was nearly always suffering from some form of anxiety. Because of this, I'm very familiar with the problems associated with anxiety. I've not only worked with many people who suffered from it, one of them being my mother, I've had a few bouts of anxiety myself.

Anxiety is sort of a loose concept, difficult to define precisely, but I'm pretty sure that nearly everyone has felt it at some time or another. It's that feeling of nervousness and worry you get when you're about to do something that's a little scary or when you're uncertain about what the future holds. It is sort of a mixture of worry, fear, nervousness and tension. You feel "on edge" and "unsettled." Anxiety can also be tied in with depression (withdrawing from life) and panic attacks (paralyzing fear).

I'm not striving here for an objective, medical definition. Emotions are a subjective experience, we can feel them more than we can define them, but there are some outward signs that a person suffers from anxiety. My mother's anxiety was so severe that she often wrung her hands or shook them. Even when anxiety isn't that severe, you can still see the person is "shaky" and unsteady. They tend to talk too fast and have an agitated look about them.

Occasionally, having anxiety is normal. There's nothing wrong with you if you feel anxious about something once in a while. However, when anxiety becomes a person's normal state (like it was my mother's), then something needs to be done to help the person to relieve their anxiety and restore their natural state of balance.

When approaching a problem like anxiety, modern psychiatry tends to view it as a chemical imbalance, to be treated with drugs. Maybe in severe cases this might be helpful in the short run, but I don't think it's a long-term solution. Some people view anxiety as a psychological problem (a problem

with the person's thoughts) and therefore something to be dealt with through counseling or psychoanalysis.

I take a middle-of-the-road approach to the problem. Yes, I do think there is a chemical imbalance, but one that is more appropriately dealt with through nutrition than drugs. I also think there is a mental component, which appropriate counseling can help. There is also an emotional component, however, which can be dealt with using flower essences, essential oils or other tools which directly address the emotional state. I've usually been quite successful in helping people with anxiety using a combination of tools. So, I'm going to share my understanding of the problem and my approach to it.

Anxiety and the Adrenal Glands

In my experience, anxiety is intimately linked to the adrenal glands because they are the glands that help the body adapt to stress. When something startles or scares us, the adrenals kick into gear to prepare our body to deal with the crisis. We call this the "fight-or-flight" response. Blood pressure rises, heart rate increases, breathing becomes more shallow and rapid and muscles tense and ready for action. These changes in our body are associated with feeling anxious. We are fidgety and have a hard time sitting still because we are primed for action.

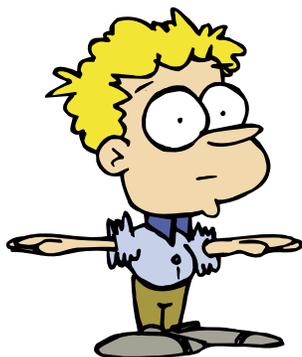
I experience this feeling of anxiousness whenever I'm getting ready to go on stage for a major presentation. In fact, anybody who speaks, sings, acts or otherwise performs in front of groups of people is familiar with the anxious feeling one gets just prior to speaking or performing. However, once I go on stage, this feeling stops because the anxious energy I was feeling is transformed into the activity of giving my talk. In fact, I've noticed that a heightened level of anxiety before a talk will often result in me doing a better job. This is because the adrenal energy has primed me for activity and that extra energy gets channeled into how I perform.

A similar thing happens to people who like to participate in sports, particularly extreme sports. I remember feeling a

lot of anxiety when I went rappelling with my men's group. As you stand on the edge of a cliff, ready to step off the edge, trusting the ropes to hold you, you definitely feel the fear!

As you prepare for an activity like hang gliding, surfing, skiing, rock climbing, etc, there is a feeling of anxiety similar to the one experienced by speakers and performers. However, once the activity is engaged in, the adrenaline rush replaces the anxiety. Again, the anxiety has primed the body for action and I'm certain that athletes also know how to use that anxiety to their advantage.

This knowledge leads me to two conclusions. First, that anxiety is physically linked to the release of adrenal hormones. So, when a person is experiencing chronic anxiety there is an imbalance in adrenal gland function and the balance of stress hormones in the body. Over and over again, I see adrenal problems as a common denominator in anxiety, panic attacks, post-traumatic stress disorder and other related conditions. One always needs to balance the adrenal function with supplements to help these people feel better. Sometimes the nerves also need some nutrition, but not always. Usually, balancing the adrenals is sufficient.



Anxiety and the Fear of Taking Action

However, the adrenal issue is only part of the equation. The other part, my second conclusion, is that the person suffering from anxiety is feeling a fear or nervousness that is priming the body for action, but they are unable to release that anxiety into activity.

Remember, both the performer and the athlete feel anxiety, but when that anxiety is transformed into performance, the anxious feeling not only dissipates, it actually becomes useful. I believe that people with chronic anxiety, like my mother, are experiencing a rush of adrenal hormones without being able to channel that energy into constructive action.

So, my approach to anxiety is a two-fold process. Half of the "cure" is to make sure that the adrenal glands (and sometimes the nerves) are functioning properly. The other half is to find out what "action" the person is inhibiting that is causing the buildup of trapped energy in their body. Then, I have to help them release the inhibition and express that energy in a constructive manner.

Let's look at each of these steps in greater detail.

Balancing Adrenal Function

Adrenal problems are one of the most common issues that come up with my clients. Most people in our society are under a great deal of stress and don't know how to deal with it. However, part of the reason they don't know how to deal with it is because their adrenal glands aren't functioning properly.

I have observed that people with healthy adrenal glands are usually able to deal with stressful events in a calm and deliberate manner. However, most people in our society don't have healthy adrenal glands. Sugar, caffeine and other stimulants all stress the adrenal glands. Chronic inflammation also stresses adrenal function. Poor nutrition, especially a lack of water-soluble vitamins (particularly C and pantothenic acid), deficiencies of minerals like zinc and amino acids like l-tyrosine, and the lack of healthy fats (including low cholesterol), will also result in poorly functioning adrenal glands.

The two supplements I rely on the most for balancing adrenals are Adrenal Support and Nervous Fatigue Formula. People with chronic anxiety and nervousness, and especially people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, almost

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always need Adrenal Support. Sometimes, they need an even stronger adrenal glandular.

People who are mildly anxious, emotionally sensitive, tired and suffering from restless sleep usually benefit from Nervous Fatigue Formula. People who have been on Adrenal Support for a couple of months will often wind up switching to Nervous Fatigue Formula as their adrenals get stronger.

Besides these two stand-bys, I have also used licorice root, pantothenic acid, vitamin C and Nutri-Calm to nourish depleted adrenal glands. Licorice is especially useful for children with anxiety. Pantothenic acid will often “jump start” exhausted adrenals. Nutri-Calm works both on the nerves and the adrenals and is helpful for people who are restless and constantly “on the go.”

Sometimes people just need the adrenals balanced a little—calmed down a bit. For this, I usually use adaptogens. I often find that Eleuthero Root is sufficient, but I’ve also used Suma Combination and occasionally AdaptaMax to calm adrenal function.

Blood Sugar and Anxiety

Closely related to the issue of adrenal function is hypoglycemia. With all the focus in recent years about metabolic syndrome X and the glycemic index, we sometimes forget that hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) is the precursor to type II diabetes. Eating lots of refined sugar and other simple carbohydrates results in a sugar “high” followed by a sugar “low.” Sometimes, when the sugar is low, the adrenals kick in gear to bring the sugar back to normal levels. This will generate anxiety.

So, another important factor in stabilizing the person’s mood is to get them on a good diet with complex carbohydrates. This really helped my mother and it has helped many other people I’ve known who suffer from anxiety and emotional problems.

Nervines and Anxiety

I mentioned that sometimes a good nervine formula is needed. For people who are really “uptight,” I suggest lobelia or kava kava because they are both strong muscle relaxants. If it’s just nervousness, then Stress-J is a good choice. If the person is really “shaky,” then magnesium may be helpful. If depression is a factor, then consider Mood Elevator.

These supplements can make big differences rather quickly. For example, shortly before she passed away, my mother slipped on the stairs and chipped her kneecap. When my mom was discharged from the hospital, I went to stay

with her for a couple of weeks to help her. I knew that her anxiety was going to really “get to me” if I didn’t do something about it, so I gave her lots of licorice root and kava kava. (I didn’t have Adrenal Support at the time.)

Two of my cousins who lived nearby and helped watch after my mom, would come by for a visit periodically. They took me aside and asked me what I was doing that made my mother so *calm*. When I told them, they said, “Please keep doing it, we’ve never seen your mom this calm.” (By the way, both of these cousins buy herbs from me from time to time now.)

While we’re on the subject, I might also mention that I’ve seen nervines like kava kava and lobelia really help with panic attacks. Once, I encountered someone who was in such a state of anxiety that they were experiencing tetany—their muscles were frozen and they couldn’t open their hands. I walked them through the situation by giving them doses of liquid kava and lobelia every few minutes while coaching them to breathe slowly and deeply. I was able to successfully help them out of the attack in about 10 minutes.

Many years ago, I also had an employee suffer a panic attack at work. By coaching them to breathe slowly and deeply and giving them doses of liquid lobelia every couple of minutes, I was able to get them back to normal, again in about 10 minutes. Later, by giving them flower essences and Nervous Fatigue Formula for their adrenals, I was able to help them greatly reduce their overall anxiety.

What I learned about anxiety from working with my mom and others has also been helpful for me from time to time. I’ve gone through some periods of great stress in my life, which created a lot of anxiety. By nourishing my adrenals and using relaxing nervines, I have been able to get through these incidents and restore emotional balance to my life. Of course, working on the second component of anxiety management has also helped. So here are some tips for resolving this second aspect of anxiety.

The Mental and Emotional Component

The adrenal glands are associated with the solar plexus, the body’s center of gravity. In other words, they help a person stay “centered.” A person who is “centered” is in touch with the inside of their being and is able to “choose” how to respond to external pressures and stress. In other words, they are able to choose whether to fight a problem, flee from it, ignore it or otherwise resolve it. In short, they are able to choose an appropriate *action* (not reaction) to the problems of life.

The so-called “fight-or-flight” response is actually much more complicated than just fighting or fleeing. It’s just a metaphor, based on the idea of being attacked by a wild animal. Whether one fights or flees from an attacking wild animal, one is *physically* taking some kind of self-protective action. The key isn’t in actually fighting or running away, it’s in being able to choose an action and take it.

I believe that one of the reasons so many people suffer from anxiety in our society is because we encounter so many stresses where a physical action cannot be taken to relieve the stress. One example is being stuck in a traffic jam when one is late for an important appointment. Physical action is just not possible. One can’t fight the other cars or flee the traffic jam.

Another example would be going to court. I don’t know if you have ever had to be in court for any reason, but if you have, you probably understand what a stressful experience it is and what anxiety it causes. Again, physical action is not an appropriate response in a court. So, it is difficult to discharge the energy created by the stress response into a constructive physical action. Thus, a high state of anxiety is created that stays with you.

My mom used to shake her arms in a certain way and rub her face. As an adult, I noticed that I wanted to perform a similar action during a period of anxiety. For a moment, I thought, “Oh, no, I’m acting like my mother,” but then I decided to tune into my body and figure out what it was my body really wanted to do.

I discovered that I was really angry and what I really wanted was to hit something. This response was inhibited in me, so I was shaking, stuck between action and inhibition. Thus, like the deer in the headlights, my ability to make a choice of physical action was frozen, thus creating chronic anxiety. My arms were shaking because the kinetic energy wanted to go someplace, but was being inhibited.

When I let go of the urge to hit something by beating the living daylight out of a pillow, it allowed me to complete the movement my arms wanted to make. This immediately relieved my anxiety. So, I believe that an important part of relieving anxiety is finding ways to channel the adrenaline rush behind it into some kind of physical activity.

Healthy Ways to Release Anxiety

At one time, people had more physical outlets for their stress. Native people would drum and dance. They were allowed to “whoop and holler”—to create loud vocalization to expel energy. Certain kinds of work also allowed for this same discharge of anxiety. Chopping wood, for instance, makes the same movements that striking out at someone does, so it creates a “fight” kind of discharge. If you’ve never tried it, chopping wood is a great way to release both anger and anxiety.

The fact is, most of us just aren’t physically active enough. The stress we feel has no place to go. So, if you suffer from anxiety, get up and move. Running or even walking will help. If you’re stuck in a traffic jam, make sure the windows are rolled up and scream. It doesn’t hurt to release the tension as long as you aren’t releasing it by attacking or hurting yourself or others. Just remember that making some kind of a choice that involves physical action helps transform the nervous energy of anxiety into the action. Not being able to make a choice of action will cause anxiety to mount.

Coming back to my mother, I’m sure that one of the reasons she was such an anxious person was because she was so afraid of making mistakes. My mother believed that “one mistake can ruin your whole life.” (That’s a direct quote.) No wonder she was anxious. It’s tough to act when you have to worry so much about

whether your action is right or wrong.

In retrospect, I think much of the anxiety in my life came because I was torn between two courses of action, both of which seemed “wrong” to me. I did learn a little secret that helped me get past this and that is that life is never a choice between just two options. “Fight” or “flee” are not the only options.

What I learned to do was pray for help in finding the “third” path—the path that would bring me inner peace. When I find the course of action that makes me feel at peace, I know I’ve found the right path. Following that path takes me out of anxiety mode and channels my energy into something that feels right. It’s a simple thing, but it works.

For more information on dealing with anxiety, check out our new Herbal Hour video—*Unwind: Natural Remedies for Anxiety and Tension*. (See ad page 7).



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Kimberly Balas' Clinician's Corner

Help for Chiropractic Adjustments

Chiropractic Adjustments Not Holding

What can a person do when chiropractic adjustments aren't holding?

Anonymous

Muscles hold bones in place, so when a chiropractic adjustment won't hold you need to look at the muscles holding the bone and the nerves that control them. Chiropractors often manipulate the bones by relaxing the muscles that are pulling the muscles out of place.

Using Magnesium Complex or Kava Kava to help relax the muscle spasms will often help adjustments to be made more easily and to hold longer. You can also massage the extracts of capsicum and lobelia into the muscles on either side of the spine and follow this up with a little Tei Fu oil. This is called an "herbal adjustment" and will make it easier to adjust the spine and help the adjustments hold better.

In Chinese medicine, the kidneys are linked to the bones, so a deficiency of kidney energy makes it difficult for the body to hold proper structural alignment. This makes sense because the kidneys and adrenals control fluid mineral balance which regulates the electrolytes used by muscles to expand and contract. Taking KB-C and drinking more water will often help adjustments hold better.

Inflammation can also be a factor. Nerve Eight is helpful for reducing inflammation and regulating the nerves which control muscles.

Finally, emotions can be a factor. Different vertebrae are linked to different organs and emotional issues. So, emotional stress may also be a factor.

Here is a list of the vertebrae and the areas of the body they relate to. This may also help you figure out why particular vertebrae may be going out of place. If you are having some of these problems, you may also want to consider working on the appropriate part of the back to aid the healing process.

1 Cervical - Linked to blood supply to the head, the pituitary, scalp bones of the face, brain, inner and middle ear, sympathetic nervous system.

Conditions linked to this vertebrae: Headaches,

nervousness, insomnia, head colds, high blood pressure, migraines, mental conditions, nervous breakdowns, amnesia, sleeping sickness, chronic tiredness, dizziness or vertigo.

2 Cervical - Eyes, optic nerves, auditory nerve, sinuses, mastoid bones, tongue, forehead.

Conditions: Sinus, allergies, crossed eyes, deafness, eye issues, earaches, fainting.

3 Cervical - Cheeks, outer ear, face bones, teeth, trifacial nerve.

Conditions: Neuralgia, neuritis, acne or eczema.

4 Cervical - Nose, lips, mouth, Eustachian tube.

Conditions: Hay fever, catarrh, hard of hearing, adenoids.

5 Cervical - Vocal cords, neck glands, pharynx.

Conditions: laryngitis, hoarseness, throat conditions.

6 Cervical - Neck muscles, shoulders, tonsils.

Conditions: Stiff neck, pain in upper arm, tonsillitis, whooping cough, croup.

7 Cervical - Thyroid gland, bursa in the shoulders, elbows.

Conditions: bursitis, colds, thyroid problems, goiter.

1 Thoracic - Arms from the elbows down, including the hands, wrists and fingers, also the esophagus and trachea.

Conditions: Asthma, cough, difficult breathing, shortness of breath, pain in lower arms and hands.

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2 Thoracic - Heart including its valves and covering, also coronary arteries.

Conditions: Functional heart conditions and certain chest pains.

3 Thoracic - Lungs, bronchial tubes, pleura, chest, breast, nipples.

Conditions: Bronchitis, pleurisy, pneumonia, congestion, flu.

4 Thoracic - Gall bladder and common duct.

Conditions: Gall bladder conditions, jaundice, shingles.

5 Thoracic - Liver, solar plexus, blood.

Conditions: Liver conditions, fevers, low blood pressure, anemia, poor circulation, arthritis.

6 Thoracic - Stomach.

Conditions: Stomach troubles including nervous stomach, indigestion, heart burn and dyspepsia.

7 Thoracic - Pancreas, duodenum.

Conditions: Diabetes, ulcers, gastritis.

8 Thoracic - Spleen, diaphragm.

Conditions: Hiccoughs, lowered resistance.

9 Thoracic - Adrenals.

Conditions: Allergies, hives, exhaustion, insulin uptake problems.

10 Thoracic - Kidneys.

Conditions: Kidney troubles, hardening of the arteries, chronic tiredness.

11 Thoracic - Kidneys, ureters.

Conditions: Skin conditions like acne, eczema or boils.

12 Thoracic - Small intestines, fallopian tubes, lymph circulation.

Conditions: Rheumatism, gas pains, certain types of sterility.

1 Lumbar - Colon.

Conditions: Constipation, colitis, diarrhea, ruptures or hernias.

2 Lumbar - Appendix, abdomen, upper leg, cecum.

Conditions: Appendicitis, cramps, difficult breathing, acidosis, varicose veins.

3 Lumbar - Sex organs, ovaries or testicles, uterus,

bladder, knee.

Conditions: bladder issues, menstrual issues like pain or irregular periods, miscarriages, bed wetting, impotency, menopausal symptoms, knee pains.

4 Lumbar - Prostate gland, muscles of the lower back, sciatic nerve.

Conditions: sciatica, lumbago, difficult painful or too frequent urination, backaches.

5 Lumbar - Lower legs, ankles, feet, toes, arches.

Conditions: poor circulation in the legs, swollen ankles, weak ankles and arches, cold feet, weakness in the legs, leg cramping.

Sacrum - Hip bones, buttocks.

Conditions: Sacro-iliac problems, spinal curvatures.

Coccyx - Rectum, anus.

Conditions: Hemorrhoids, itching, pain at the end of the spine in sitting.

Unwind! Natural Remedies for Anxiety and Tension



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