

Beyond *Tarentula hispanica*: Brown Recluse Spider For A Child With Oppositional-Defiant Disorder

Judyth Reichenberg-Ullman, ND, LCSW, DHANP & Robert Ullman, ND, DHANP

Published in the Townsend Letter for Doctors and Patients, October 2005. Reprinted with permission

Abstract: A case of a child with oppositional-defiant disorder, manifesting several traits of spider remedies, but only partially responding to *Tarentula hispanica*, is presented. Ultimately the patient responded profoundly to *Loxosceles reclusa*. The specific indications for the remedy, beyond those characteristics shared by many spider remedies, were: reclusiveness and dyslexia.

Keywords: spider remedies; *Loxosceles reclusa*; oppositional-defiant disorder, a case.

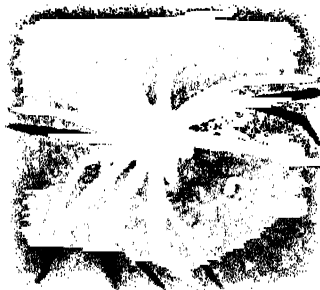
An Overview of the Homeopathic Spider Medicines

One of the main criteria that we use to select a medicine for a patient is the kingdom: animal, plant, or mineral. The category of nosodes (medicines made from the products of disease, such as *Tuberculinum*, is considered to be a separate category). Of equal importance is the distinction of which miasm is active in the case (how the patient is affected by his disease, or the level of desperation in the case). We differentiate between: acute, typhoid, malaria, ringworm, syphilis, tubercular, cancer, leprosy, and syphilis. Prior to the past five years or so, homeopaths prescribed *Tarentula hispanica*, the most well-known of the homeopathic medicines made from spiders, in a rather generalized way. In other words, this medicine was given, successfully or not, in many cases that needed a different spider medicine whose characteristics were not fully elucidated or understood. Thankfully, due to new provings, further study of material medica, and an overall intention to find a much more specific match for each patient, homeopathic prescribing is more accurate and sophisticated.

The general characteristics of individuals needing spider medicines are as follows:

- sensitivity to vibrations, noise, music

- busy-ness
- cunning, connivance, and deceit
- isolation
- movement, jumping, climbing, hiding, dancing
- activity of the hands
- jealousy, revenge
- hurriedness as if time were passing quickly
- teasing, trickery, flattery
- feeling of being small, powerless, weak
- often a fear of or fascination for spiders
- issues of being trapped or caught
- fear of death
- attractiveness, heightened sexuality
- issues of female dominance



There are a growing number of medicines made from arachnids in the homeopathic pharmacopoeia. They include: *Androctonus* and *Buthus australis* (scorpion), *Aranea diadema* (papal-cross spider), *Aranea ixobola* (cross spider), *Aranea scinenencia* (grey spider), *Atrax robusta* (trap-door spider), *Latrodectus hasseltii* (redback spider), *Latrodectus katipo* (New Zealand spider), *Latrodectus mactans* (black

widow), *Loxosceles reclusa* (brown recluse), *Mygale* (black Cuban spider), *Tarentula cubensis* (Cuban

spider), *Tarentula hispanica* (tarantula), *Tegenaria domestica* (common house spider), *Tela aranea* (spider web), *Theridion* (orange spider).

In general, spider medicines are considered to be part of the tubercular miasm. Typical characteristics are a hectic level of activity, often to the point of hyperactivity; a feeling that time is running out so that one must burn the candle at both ends; a sensation of being suffocated; a desire for change, travel, and anything new and exciting; a predisposition to respiratory complaints.

Trey

This child's mom first consulted us almost three years ago. All of the consultations have occurred by phone consultation from Texas. We tried four other medicines before arriving at the correct prescription of *Loxosceles reclusa* (brown recluse spider) ten months into our care. This was our first case of a patient with medicine. Over the past two years, Trey has needed repetitions of the *Loxosceles* on an average of every six weeks. He has not needed any other medicine since, with the exception of one dose of *Belladonna* 30C acutely one month after the first dose of the *Loxosceles*. In retrospect, we wonder if he might have benefited just as much from another dose of the constitutional medicine. At the beginning of treatment, we tried several other remedies, including *Tarentula hispanica*, with little success.

Since we have found many of the rambunctious, wild, defiant children in our practice to benefit from spider medicines, we thought this case would be useful to present a lesser-known member of the family.

Trey was five years old when his mom first called us. An adopted child, his adoptive parents were able to meet the birth mom. They described her as "manipulative," which is relevant to Trey's subsequently needing a medicine from the spider family, since this is a common characteristic. The child, like his biological mother, was smart, "could learn anything and was very adept at reading people." She was extremely concerned about her appearance, also a very spider-like feature. Trey followed suit. "He's very concerned about how he looks and has been since an infant. He is fascinated by watching himself in the mirror and admiring his clothing. At two, he'd say what was and wasn't a cool outfit."

The youngster was a major risk taker, with apparently little regard for his safety. The child demonstrated a "calculating nature," always trying to figure out what he could get away with without reprimand. He "loved to climb objects which were high enough that, if he fell, he would crack his head open." The agile child scaled walls, fifteen-foot rock ledges, and

zoomed his bike down the family's steep driveway as fast as he possibly could. He was not long for training wheels.

At two, Trey jumped off the brink of a high slide instead of sliding down. The boy had always been a jumper and was enthralled with rope climbing. In fact, he had a passion for installing knotted strings and ropes across the backyard and swinging across eight-foot gaps by his hands like Tarzan.

Trey's mom described him further as impulsive and calculating, and always five steps ahead. The day before the first appointment, the youngster decided he wanted to stay home from school the next day. Pretending to have a fever, he put on his pajamas and got ready to watch a movie. Trey was not fond of school and saw no reason to attend. He had a rough time taking "no" for an answer and conforming to other's demands.

The child was quite anxious and had a habit of chewing his fingernails and toenails to the quick. The nibbling extended to his clothing, especially collars and shirt sleeves. He had actually eaten through a collar the previous year. An extremely active youngster, Trey loved to sing, was a natural when it came to catching on to tunes, and vowed to become a rock star when he grew up. The boy loved to learn dance moves from videos, especially to rhythmic music, to which he would snap his fingers and bob his head to the beat. His sense of timing was extraordinary. Despite his super-high activity level, Trey had a tough time falling asleep, experienced nightmares, and previously suffered from night terrors.

Trey had a hot temper and often flew into rages, threatening to kill his mom or to take a knife and cut the family dog into pieces. Or to "get a gun and shoot you and your brains will be all over the floor and it will be a gooey mess."

The boy hit, grabbed, and threw chairs, books, and whatever he could get his hands on. He even threatened to throw a knife and had opened the kitchen knife drawer a couple of times recently to seize his weapon. The boy's fascination with knives was frightening to his mother. Once, during an argument, Trey had cut his dad's hand slightly when he had raised it defensively.

Our conversation with Trey was quite animated. He shared with us how his mom had lots of lipstick and how she liked flowers, dressing up, and dancing. This is just the way a child needing a medicine from the animal kingdom might talk. He went on to explain that it upset him when his parents punished him for not listening. "I protect myself with armor with a sword and with real knives. Like knives that cut potatoes. I jump up on things and it kind of scares my parents. Or I hide, get a perfect aim, then

throw the knife out of where I'm hiding. I point it right at them and throw. I take the biggest and sharpest knife we've got. I like that they can hurt people." At this point Trey tired of knife talk.

When asked what kinds of things scared him, Trey replied, "When I sleep over at someone's house, then it's dark and I'm afraid of monsters with sharp, pointy teeth. At home I'm scared of whatever's under the bed, like goblins with long horns and scratches all over their eyes. They're so big and I'm so small. They're BIG!" Trey's mom added that he used to be quite afraid of wasps and bees.

At that point, Trey broke into an Elvis impersonation of "Heartbreak Hotel," then he entertained us with a song and dance from a Disney movie - all across the phone wires!

When we inquired about dream content, Trey recounted the frightening animals in his dreams, including crocodiles, hyenas, werewolves, lions, and sharks.

The mom provided more information towards the end of the first consultation. "We have to hold him down at times. I think he feels, 'Kill or be killed.' He's always sided with the antagonist in any story or movie. He always wants to be the bad guy and asks us to kill him. When he turns rageful, he's literally out of control. His face even looks different. And he won't be alone for anything."

The child had recently begun seeing a psychiatrist. She had prescribed Depakene, which made the youngster terribly aggressive. He next tried a course of lithium.

Trey had few physical complaints. His mom described nickel-size red splotches on his buttocks after taking a bath, and a wart on his knee for the past year and a half.

The First Ten Months of Homeopathic Treatment

We first gave Trey *Stramonium* (Thorn apple). For a number of months, his mother reported a considerable improvement from several repetitions of a 1M potency. However, the progress plateaued and a dose of *Stramonium* 10M produced no further improvement. At this point he was forty percent improved overall, fell asleep more easily; knives were no longer an issue, and he was still the entertaining rock star of the future fantasy. Trey exercised a bit more caution, no longer barreling down the driveway at full speed.

Trey's Reponse to *Tarentula Hispanica* Over Four Months

His parents' and the babysitter's description of Trey following the *Tarentula* 1M was, "He's just calmer. Not running around like a screaming banchee, which is

fabulous. A better attention span. He's at least fifty percent better."

Over the subsequent two months, Trey's threats were fewer, he appeared more relaxed, and his mom judged the *Tarentula* to be "by far the best remedy so far."

It is at this point that we could have stopped searching for a better medicine, but we know that a fifty percent improvement simply is not good enough. In children with behavioral and learning problems, and with most other conditions, homeopathy can produce a much more positive response. We knew we must be somewhat close to the correct medicine if there had been an improvement; so we delved further into the case.

Prescribing Brown Recluse

Ten months into the case, Trey's mom was sure that *Tarentula hispanica* was the best we could do with homeopathy, but we weren't convinced. The downside was that he had twelve new warts on his knee after taking the first dose of *Tarentula*. Trey had continued to make periodic threats to his teacher, insisted that he didn't want to go to school, and his mom described him as somewhat "reclusive." We asked her to elaborate, immediately looking up the Brown Recluse in our material medica and noting in the proving of this medicine, "Do not wish to be seen at school... Don't want to interact with anyone. . . Decide to just stay home today." This goes against what we have observed typically with the outgoing, lively children who need *Tarentula*. Trey's mom continued, "He just likes to stay at home. He doesn't want to go to school or out in public much. He tells us he doesn't like going to the first-grade classroom because it's too loud. It really bothers him when we turn on the mixer in the house." This again, reminded us of a spider medicine. "Like I said, he's kind of reclusive."

We asked about slyness, knowing this to be a prominent quality of spidery kids. "He's very sneaky. A couple of weeks ago we were playing cards. He wanted to take the cards to school. I told him 'no' twice. I got a note from his teacher yesterday that said they were sending the cards back because they belonged at home. He's consistently sneaky about doing what he wants to do, like hiding candy and stuff when knows he's not supposed to have it. Trey tells us, 'I wanna surprise you,' which means that he's up to something." Again, spider-like. He knows he can't use his Play Station@ in the morning before school. I caught him doing it and he wouldn't stop. There went his privileges for a week. It made him so mad that he pelted me with walnuts. (In the Brown Recluse proving, there was an increased tendency to watch television, which may or may not be rele-

vant to this incident.) Trey had also been diagnosed with dyslexia.

It was at this point that we decided to prescribe Brown Recluse. When we informed Trey's mom, she commented that these spiders were common in Texas where the family lived. We prescribed one dose of *Loxosceles reclusa* 200C.

Brown Recluse Proving

The proving of this medicine was supervised by Lou Klein, RS Hom. Some relevant excerpts are the following:

- Decided to just stay home today. "I don't really want to deal with people on any level."
- Does not wish to be seen at school or see.
- Doesn't want to interact with anyone.
- Dyslexia while taking a case today. "I knew the words I wanted to write, but I'd be writing the wrong letters."
- Felt like being rude and outspoken.

Response to Brown Recluse

This was the point in the case, one month after the first dose of the *Loxosceles reclusa*, when Trey's mom called urgently to say he had a fever of 104°F; was sleeping all the time, was suffering from dry, chapped lips and canker sores, had a moderately red face, and had vomited once in the morning. She had given him *Oscillococcinum* with no great improvement. We prescribed *Belladonna* 30C. Although she called two days later to say she had given him three doses of the *Belladonna* and he recovered promptly after sleeping for thirty-plus hours, in hindsight we would have given another dose of the *Loxosceles reclusa* 200C.

At his one-month follow-up visit, Trey's mom reported. "We love Brown Recluse. I can't tell you how wonderful, patient, polite, loving, and wonderful he is. There were changes from the *Tarentula*, but it's like not all the pieces of the puzzle were there. He was still battling his violent reaction. Hitting and threatening to kill us. Then we gave him the Brown recluse. It's like that rage isn't even there. We're getting notes every day about much he loves us. How much he loves our dog. A lot of the fearfulness is gone. They'd been trying to get him to go down to the first-grade classroom for short periods of time. He'd go unwillingly and only with a teacher. In the last three weeks, he goes without any teacher at all. No problem."

"Trey is developing more friendships. It seems like every week it's getting a little easier. He's only been on the remedy for a month. There's just been a huge change. Even when he had the fever, he was so kind

and patient. He told me, 'Mom, I'm so sorry to make you get up.' It's an amazing, amazing change. His father feels the same way. It's more than we could have hoped for. As angry as he was before, now he's loving and caring to the same degree. I can't tell you how thrilled we are. Such an angel.

Before he could not sit and do anything.

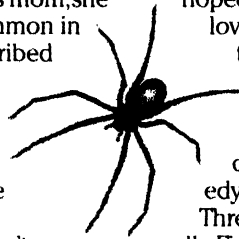
Now he sits with his little hands crossed together. He even shares his things and doesn't give it a second thought. This remedy has totally changed Trey's personality!"

Three months later Trey continued to do very well. Five-and-a-half months after beginning the Brown Recluse, Trey had taken three doses of a 200C potency. His mom described him as "helpful, loving, and kind." He was holding their hands rather than using swords and fighting. The youngster was able to relate much better to peers and, overall, was much more cooperative and loving. His mother estimated an eighty to ninety percent change since changing to Brown recluse. He hadn't picked up any knives, was receiving great marks in school, could sleep through the night, and even bought flowers for his grandmother with his own money. "I can't even tell you how incredible it is. We've only known you for fifteen months. I can totally tell you I'm your biggest fan."

Trey has continued to do beautifully from that visit until the present. We have had phone consultations every three months and have repeated the remedy as needed. For the past year, Trey has taken *Loxosceles* 10M. In late April, his mom gave him a dose of the 10M and there was no significant response. Since the youngster had improved so dramatically over the year and a half since beginning the new medicine, we decided to actually go down in potency to a 200C, since his state was so much less intense.

We last spoke to Trey's mom one week ago. He is now eight-and-a-half years old and about to enter third grade. His mom was happy to tell us, "The 200C was just what he needed. He has tons of friends, is sleeping well, and his anger is pretty much in check. Such a joy to be around. He's probably ninety percent better. I can't say enough good things. He's centered, calm, in control." We agreed that we needed only fifteen-minute brief appointments every three to four months.

About the Authors: Judyth Reichenberg-Ullman and Robert Ullman are licensed naturopathic physicians board certified in homeopathy. Their books include "Ritalin-Free Kids," "Rage-Free Kids," "Prozac Free," "Homeopathic Self-Care: The Quick and Easy Guide for the Whole Family," "Whole Woman Homeopathy: The Patient's Guide to Homeopathic Medicine," and "Mystics, Masters, Saints and Sages-Stories of Enlightenment."



They teach and lecture internationally and practice at The Northwest Center for Homeopathic Medicine, in Edmonds, WA and Langley, WA. Their latest book, coauthored with Ian Luepker, ND, DHANP cand., is "A Drug-Free Approach to Asperger Syndrome and Autism: Homeopathic Medicine for Exceptional Kids" (May, 2005).

ATH