

The Lycopodium Tug-of-War

With a glance at the Materia Medica of the Mind, one can see that this remedy appears to be under quite a lot of pressure. Caught in the middle of the Calcarea – Lycopodium – Sulphur triad, Lycopodium will be at tug-of-war between Calcarea and Sulphur, torn between the need for stability and protection on the one hand, and the need for self-image, self-confidence, and recognition on the other – to be recognized as an achiever, as someone important or worthy (Sankaran). It is interesting to note that Lycopodium (also called Vegetable Sulphur) likes and may even crave oysters, but gets sick upon eating them as they “seem poison” (Kent). This is synonymous with its aggravation regarding anything that concerns lack of power or lack of confidence (such as Calcarea). This remedy is described as being in “constant struggle” and in “constant tension between strengths and weaknesses, image and reality” (Coulter). It is nearly poetic that Lycopodium may present with one foot cold and the other warm, normal or even hot, further emphasizing that this remedy represents a skirmish between the traits and symptoms of Calcarea (chilly and cold) and Sulphur (hot and fiery). Lycopodium is “intellectual with self-distrust” (Tyler), whereas Sulphur is intellectual with overt trust of self, and Calcarea suffers with the intellect; Lycopodium has a keen intellect (Sulphur) but weak muscular power (Calcarea). Although Lycopodium is quite capable, there is a fear of failure and a lack of confidence to the degree that this type will fret and worry over completing a task (such as a public speech), only to pull through it without a problem (but never gain the confidence for the next time!).

Lycopodium may not readily demonstrate its lack of confidence since by adulthood it has generally covered this over with a type of puffed-up bravado or false presence of authority or supremacy; the type is described as arrogant, inclined to “tall talk”, and has a decided love of power (this suggests that Lycopodium is at first lacking in confidence and is more cowardly, and then develops into “love of power”). It is not surprising to find that Lycopodium types will be

equally “puffed up” with flatulence, suffering from a great amount of gas and “weakness of digestion” (Phatak) and is known as “one of the most flatulent” remedies – truly a remedy that is ‘full of wind.’ In fact, it is asserted that ninety-five percent of Lycopodium types will have gastrointestinal disturbances. Lycopodium will tend to criticize, dominate, and even verbally abuse in order to elevate himself over others and may even seek out and surround himself with persons of lesser will in order to make himself ‘bigger’ or ‘taller’ – yet he will be subdued and cowardly when in the company of those with greater authority or status. This is not unlike the tiny plant that was once a great tree, only now is dwarfed by nearly all the plants around it, yet still “standing tall” over more diminutive flora. If Lycopodium marries, it will likely be to someone far more mild and yielding, or perhaps even chronically ill or weak in order that his will always prevail (Sankaran). Lycopodium is described as “Nice outside, tyrant at home” (Morrison).

Lycopodium dreads being alone, yet does not do well in company – one would find this type perfectly happy at home in a room by himself with people in the next room over (Tyler). He is averse to company, conversation, being in a crowd, or is anxious in these circumstances, suggesting that the rubric “Company, desire for, aggravated when alone” is really less about desiring company and much more about not wanting to be alone, or having a dread or fear of being alone. The symptoms of ‘cowardice’ and being ‘easily frightened’ support this idea, as does the rubric “desire to be carried” (which indicates a kind of need for support in the case of Lycopodium). In fact, just as the yellow powder of this remedy was once used to prevent pills from sticking together, Lycopodium wants nothing stuck to it – it wants to be dependent but wants no one to depend on him; it wants company, but does not want to interact; it fears and shuns responsibility and does not want to make a commitment in relationship (“flies from his children”). Just as the yellow powder flashes brightly when thrown into a fire, the type will often explode into rage and fury under pressure or when “faced with fire” (this type is inclined to be contradictory, yet hates being contradicted; “cannot bear to be corrected or found fault with or opposed”) and may “erupt into brilliant talk or blazing wrath” (Gibson).

Like the plant, Lycopodium types have the ability to adapt to many different environments without becoming affected by them (Coulter) and is described as having a “persevering manner”. This type refuses to engage – unable to admit being wrong or in defeat, it will simply walk away from a struggle without comment and can be depicted by others as obstinate or “pig-headed.” The type may also be very difficult to recognize (Tyler) and those needing the remedy may not demonstrate any of the symptoms of provings (Morrison), and in fact the main guidance to the remedy is said to be a “physical mediocrity associated with mental alertness and emotional diffidence” (Gibson) coupled with liver complaints and flatulence. Lycopodium has affects of all three miasms and being at a crossroads of sorts between the Animal Kingdom (Calcarea) and the Mineral Kingdom (Sulphur), this little member of the Plant Kingdom is inert and unassuming unless in potent form and remains inert “until the spores are crushed” (Boericke).

The ailments of the Lycopodium type will come on slowly and gradually, over a length of time. There may be jaundice, chronic hepatitis, and other ailments of the liver (the remedy is symbolically “yellow” in cowardice and will tend to “yellow” physical ailments (liver and urinary tract) as well as “yellow” mental ailments, such as claustrophobia, agoraphobia, and other expressions of great fear or anxiety (nightmares, ghosts, death, people, etc). He may have a yellowish or pale face with gray or blue under the eyes, and might present with yellow or brown spots on the skin (liver spots).

If it is not enough that Lycopodium is under these extreme struggles during the day, there seems no rest at night as indicated by the many rubrics dealing with waking, being in bed, mornings (is “ugly” on waking), and night, and there seems to be great potential for sleep-talking and sleep-walking. One finds in the repertory a presence of restlessness and nervousness, with anxiety (Kent):

- *Loathing of life, on waking; in the morning.*
- Unconsciousness while talking; somnambulism; bed, aversion to.

- Unconscious, periodical; while standing.
- **Restlessness, nervousness;** *in the morning;* in the evening, in bed. **At night;** after midnight; *driving out of bed; tossing about in bed.*
- **Fear on waking from a dream;** *fear while walking; Confusion of mind on walking, on waking;* frightened easily on waking; Weary of life in the morning in bed; Quarrelsome, disputes with absent persons on waking.
- **Anxiety,** *in the morning, on waking, in the afternoon, in the forenoon, in the evening, in bed, at night, on waking, before midnight, in bed, with fear, about salvation, on going to sleep, during sleep, while walking in open air.*

Sleep will tend towards dreams, nightmares, and a sense of being suffocated or suppressed, or somehow held back. Lycopodium wakes from sleep “cross, ugly, and depressed.”

Lycopodium can be quite grateful and moved to tears under circumstances of being thanked or appreciated and can be quite sensitive (which can be countered with haughty insolence and a contemptuous attitude.). This type is also imaginative, and once finally committed will remain committed out of a sense of duty or responsibility; Lycopodium may also be “noticeably conscientious and orderly” as well as intellectually active (and finds relief in action) and could demonstrate quite a fondness for sugar and sweets (Gibson).

Some of the mentals exhibited (again, these may be deeply hidden and difficult to see in a patient):

Cowardice; Frightened Easily; *Confidence, want of self – opposed by defiance, love of power, presumptuous; Haughty; Insolent.*

Cheerfulness; Liveliness, mirth, hilarity; playful; laughing; thoughtful – opposed by repulsive mood, rage, fury; Suspicious, *Contemptuous; Censorious, critical; avarice.*

Cheerful, gay, happy – opposed by abusive, **anger, irascibility: with silent grief, from contradiction;** *violent, vehement.*

Sympathetic – opposed by malicious.

Irresolution – opposed by dictatorial.

It is little wonder with the stress and tension of trying to dominate (love of power) as opposed to being dominated (cowardice) and such aggravated sleep, Lycopodium may eventually decline to having difficulty with concentration and focus (also contrasted by clarity and the ability to be productive.). There may be mistakes in writing, omitting of words or letters, difficulty with names. There is a “fear of the future” and a “fear of being able to reach his destination,” again emphasizing Lycopodium’s lack of confidence and anxiety as an impact on his desires to achieve or be recognized.

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