



## **Herbalist's View; Anemone for Panic Attacks**

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Since learning about the uses of *Anemone* species from Michael Moore back in 1994, it has become my main remedy for helping treat the symptoms of panic (aka, anxiety) attacks. As many of you know, panic attacks come on suddenly and flood the person with feelings of fear and dread (plus the two names used to describe these 'attacks'). Breathing may become impaired and the heart may race, but the most prevalent symptoms are psychological and often incapacitate the person suffering its effects. The physiology of these events is poorly understood. In Ayurveda it is a sign of 'high Vata' and like other high Vata conditions there is a 'windy' component to it, that is, it comes on suddenly and may end abruptly, though the person is often left shaken and scared, especially from fear of further episodes.

Before I describe the clinical effects of *Anemone*, it is important to understand that, if possible, removing the stressors that bring these attacks on is by itself very helpful. Cars and airplane travel often provoke these incidences, and any way to lessen reliance on these forms of transportation can help greatly. And since panic attacks may be episodic, that is they usually happen in clusters, that removing the exacerbating incidents may help sufferers get thru this period of attacks. As far as halting these over the long haul, it is more a matter of treating the individual constitutionally. These remedies often involve neuro-trophorestoratives such as *Scutellaria*, *Passiflora* and *Verbena*. They can be taken in small amounts over a long period of time to help restore tone to the nervous system

*Anemone*. There are approximately 25 species of *Anemone* growing in the United States, I have used approximately 4 of them for medicine. These include *Anemone patens*, *A. tuberosa*, *A. occidentalis* and *A. multifida*. The taxonomy of *Anemone* is in a bit of disarray, especially between *Anemone* and *Pulsatilla*. The genus *Pulsatilla* is now generally placed into *Anemone*. The useful thing about knowing this botanical bit of information is that many more people recognize the name *Pulsatilla* (it is popular in homeopathy) than *Anemone* (which most people associate with Sea anemone). I have a case of reverse bioregionalism with these plants, having a preference for the species that grow in the Rocky Mountains and the Southwest (I live Upstate NY). There are a number of Eastern species, though I haven't given them a fair shake. I use taste as my main criteria to test for potency. The ones in which is the leaf is strongly acrid (you'll know) are the species I use. The Eastern species are not very acrid tasting, but I hope someone takes the time to give them a good trial, they are not uncommon plants here.

I tincture the whole plant including underground structures (some have tubers) commonly while the plant is in flower. I do this at 1:2 ratio in 80-95% ethanol

depending on moisture content. I have always tinctured them fresh as their acidity is lost soon as they begin to dry (the acrid oil protoanemonin is broken down upon drying to the non-acrid anemonin).

These are potent low-dose plants, a small quantity of tincture will last a while. I give 1 drop initially to see if it has any effect, which it often will if it is the correct herb for the correct person. If it does not shift the symptoms at all, I may switch to another herb (perhaps *Lactuca* or *Valeriana*). If there is a frank or subtle affect on them, I will usually then give 3 drops. If this helps further, I will then suggest somewhere between 3-5 drops every 15 minutes or so until they feel they are thru with the current episode. I generally tell anyone whom it helps to carry it on them at all times, as this seems to bring a sense of relief within itself. A comforting friend in their pocket.

The effects of this plant can be profound. I have seen the tincture (the only form I've used) diminish the anxiety within minutes. It doesn't always work, but is generally worth a try. It is important for the herbalist to distinguish between panic disorder and other stress-type syndromes. I have not it seen it work well for the fear that accompanies public speaking or interviews. I see it work most proficiently when the panic comes on suddenly, often without obvious provocation and the person has a sense of impending terror. These are often cardinal symptoms of panic attacks.

What I have noticed with *Anemone* is that either 1 to 3 drops has some anxiety attack-reducing effect but that giving larger doses seems to not add to the initial effect, so I suggest giving smaller doses but spreading them out over time. Personally, if I take *Anemone* I lose all sense of humor. It is a strange affect, but it is consistent with its use of making subtle nervous system alterations.

One other slightly obscure use for *Anemone* is for people who cannot go to sleep for a long time after taking certain recreational drugs, chief among them being LSD. It is not useful for the effects of drugs, such as amphetamines, whose purpose is to keep people awake. I realize that many people reading this probably do not encounter this situation often, but at the Rainbow Gathering (an outdoor event I work at yearly) we do occasionally treat this. And it works very well. Our goal is not to bring people down when they are high (my convictions run libertarian as pertains to recreational drug use) but to treat people who are not enjoying how they are feeling. In a similar vein it can be used for people having a unpleasant drug-induced experience (bad trip- are you remembering this terminology?).

There are probably many unexplored uses for *Anemone* that people can experiment with. Fortunately its effects occur fairly rapidly and so it is easy to test, or try provings in a classroom situation.

How or why it works is a mystery to anyone I've ever talked to about it. Mysterious as it is, I hope others out there who encounter the above situations give this remarkable beautiful plant a try.