

THE HEALER WITHIN

(UNDERSTANDING HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE)

Full Circle Healing

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INTRODUCTION

As a professional naturopathic doctor with over 25 years experience in holistic health care I have been privileged to witness many remarkable healing recoveries in numerous patients suffering from various conditions such as PMS, allergies, headaches, depression, asthma, ADD, menopausal hot flashes, arthritis, chronic pain, insomnia, fatigue, etc. It never ceases to amaze and intrigue me, during teamwork between myself the naturopathic physician and those who seek my help, how an examination of a symptom complex in the context of our life story offers insight into our coping style. Our symptoms have an origin, involving events that often prove significant in our life. The stresses at the time of onset of our condition, and how we reacted to them physically and emotionally offer insight into our self-defense mechanism.

Other articles I have written, such as “*The Homeopathic Approach to Stress*”, “*Headaches*”, “*Children*”, and “*Flues*” are best read after this one on homeopathic philosophy. They are meant to compliment this article, by describing cases from my practice which exemplify some of the principles elucidated below.

THE WISDOM BEHIND THE SYMPTOMS

We may not like the way a symptom feels, whether it be pain, or inflammation, anger or fatigue, yet how we deal with our symptoms can determine whether we are enhanced or depleted by our life experience. In the holistic healing tradition, symptoms are viewed as a reaction, a form of communication our life force produces, a response to a perceived stress. If we are receptive to and deal intelligently with the message, our long-term wellbeing is facilitated. Ignore the message, and we merely postpone what our nature is trying to say and teach us through our symptoms, whether it be a change in diet, sleep, exercise etc, or perhaps a more subtle lesson, such as shifting our attitude toward our self, our life, or our significant others.

FULL CIRCLE HEALING

We are creatures of habit. How did we come to be the way we are? Unconscious coping styles that may have once served us but which are now habitual/knee-jerk reactions to stress sooner or later tend to result in dis-ease.

Whether obesity, insomnia, or chronic pain, symptoms represent an outcome to an earlier wounding, entrenched as long as we maintain whatever obsolete and now unconscious coping strategy we may have once used when the wounding first started. For example, when one patient developed menstrual pain a year earlier, never having suffered this problem before, I asked what had happened in her life at that time. Upon reflection, she realized it had been a stressful time in her life, as a new roommate had moved into her home who turned out to be rude, disruptive, and threatening, making her feel unsafe in her own home. On further reflection she realized it reminded her of her childhood, when her older brother used to bully her each time he wanted something she didn't want. Her reaction then had been a mixture of anger dominated by fear, and she would swallow her anger, in the same way she swallowed it a year ago when the new tenant moved in. Recognizing this repression of anger as a tendency she no longer wants in her life, a homeopathic preparation of *Staphisagria* helped her body heal not only the menstrual pain, but the dysfunctional relationship with anger she had developed since childhood. Her confidence and ability to stand up for herself improved, and she has had pain-free menstrual periods ever since.

OUR BODY, OUR HEALER

Many people still don't know about or believe in our body's self-healing ability, let alone know how to access it. Yet more and more are receptive to the idea, wishing for a medicinal approach that tapped into this inner healing power. Homeopathy

does just that, recognizing our nature as both the source of and the solution to our suffering. As a form of energy medicine, its stimulus is subtle, nurturing our nature. Our search for what might be homeopathic to us involves an inner journey, first defining the nature of our suffering, then determining what in nature is similar to our nature.

This article is meant to inform, covering some of the fundamental aspects of homeopathic philosophy, including

- ✓ *Individualization,*
- ✓ *Hahnemann's "Law of Similars",*
- ✓ *"Suppression" vs. "Cure"*
- ✓ *Holism, the body-mind connection*
- ✓ *Hierarchy in organ systems,*
- ✓ *Provings, how we determine the therapeutic indications for a substance*
- ✓ *"Classical" vs. "Poly"-homeopathy*

MEDICINE AS PILL, OR MEDICINE AS SKILL

Our **life force** is the most powerful medicinal tool available to us. Known as "**Chi**" in Chinese Medicine, and "**Prana**" in Ayurvedic medicine, our **Life Force** is the animating power which created us, manifesting as symptoms when our body communicates an imbalance to us.

Our attitude toward symptoms is a skill often based on cultural conditioning. Typically we are raised to be afraid of symptoms, judging pain as "bad", in which case we may feel anxiety and impatience over a headache or a cough, and use chemical intervention to get rid of the symptoms at all costs. Alternatively, interpreted as a language of our wisdom body, symptoms can lead us to revelations about self which in turn lead us to discover new lifestyle skills and ways of cultivating inner peace. Holistic therapies encourage insight into our true nature and result in mindfulness as we consciously partner with our life force to help us heal ourselves.

"WHAT" CAN WE TREAT vs. "WHO" CAN WE TREAT?

One of the questions I am most often asked in my practice is, "Can homeopathic medicine treat my (for example) allergies? What about depression, arthritis, asthma, fatigue, colds/flu, ear infections, insomnia, migraines, eczema, and so on?" When I answer, "*Homeopathic medicine treats you, the whole person, not just the condition you suffer from!*" my intention is to clarify a common bias in our modern approach to health care. Modern medicine treats diagnostic entities, often overlooking the individual with the condition. Such an approach leaves no room for **individualization**, the cornerstone of holistic medicine. Instead, everyone gets lumped into diagnostic categories, and sent to specialists who treat them the same way as everyone else suffering with that condition.

Diagnosis is essential, serving to make some sense out of the infinite variety of disease manifestations or symptoms we humans and other life forms suffer from. However, when we use it as a means to an end, a vehicle for treatment rather than an organizational tool, individualization gets overlooked

Homeopathy works when we tailor the treatment to the individual and what is unique about them, taking into consideration not only the chief complaint, but all other complaints as well, both present and past. How the person differs from others with the same condition, what is unique about their nature, how they came to have the outlook on life that they have, what was happening in their lives at the time of onset of their condition, how this might fit into their family of origin... all of this and more offers insight into their nature, their life force, and therefore their inner healer, the medicinal force behind all true healing.

SUPPRESSION

In the holistic approach, body and mind are two parts of the same whole. If a treatment is locally "successful" but fails to enhance overall health and vitality, it risks covering up the local symptom while weakening the whole. This can result in displacing a condition from a superficial to a deeper organ. For example, asthma may develop after a child's *eczema* is relieved with cortisone; Depression may follow "successful" treatment of acne with *Acutane*; Cardiovascular disease may develop after arthritis is treated with *statin* drugs. Historically, the ultimate example of suppression occurred in the 1960's with the tragic side-effects of Thalidomide use for treating nausea during pregnancy, resulting in birth defects.

HIERARCHY OF SYMPTOMS, AND THE DIRECTION OF CURE

The concept of suppression assumes that there is a hierarchy of organs and symptoms. Some organs are more critical for the overall well being of the person than others. A scar on the skin is less critical than a scar in your lungs, which is less critical than one in your heart, which in turn may be less critical than one in your brain. If a medicinal treatment suppresses, symptoms cease to manifest in more superficial organs, at the expense of deeper ones. In contrast, a curative treatment leads to relief of symptoms involving deeper organs such as depression or heart, even if symptoms manifest in more superficial organs, such as skin eruptions, or diarrhea, or nasal congestion.

DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

Why is tailoring a treatment to the individual so important? Because it assumes that *behind each person's unique experience of dis-ease is the key to his or her health*. How a person's symptoms first appeared, what was happening in their lives at the time of onset of their dis-ease, how their symptoms affect them physically/emotionally/mentally... all of these details offer insight into a person's **coping style**, their unique method of **self defense**.

WHAT IS HOMEOPATHY ?

The word 'homeopathy' comes from the Greek words "homeo", meaning 'similar', and "pathy", meaning "suffering," or "disease". It was coined two centuries ago by a German physician, Samuel Hahnemann, to describe the Law of Similars, which states that substances which produce symptoms in healthy people cure similar symptoms in the sick.

The following examples may help you understand what Hahnemann meant by the Law Of Similars.

1) Consider what happens to you when you slice an **onion**; burning in the eyes, a runny nose, and sneezing. Someone suffering from **hay fever**, manifesting with burning eyes, a watery nasal discharge, and sneezing, will often experience relief by taking a dose of *Allium cepa*, a homeopathic preparation of red onion.

2) *Ipecac* is used in hospitals as an emetic to induce vomiting in some cases of poisoning. Applied homeopathically, in potentized (highly diluted and energized) form it can help in cases of severe vomiting.

3) A homeopathic preparation of **coffee**, typically used as a stimulant, is one among many homeopathic remedies that may help someone suffering with insomnia. .

4) The use of **Ritalin**, the most popular drug in the treatment against **ADHD** (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) can be viewed as an application of the law of Similars. Ritalin is an amphetamine, an artificial form of Adrenalin, an addictive stimulant! On the streets, it's called "speed". This is the "treatment of choice" for ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) & ADD. Here we are, giving stimulants to our over-stimulated kids, and believe me, though this represents an example of the application of the Law of Similars in conventional medicine, the substance is used in crude form, while homeopathic medications are what I earlier called energy medicine, very gentle and non-toxic.

According to the book "Ritalin-Free Kids", by the year 2000, over 8 million children in the U.S. were medicated with Ritalin to treat ADD!! Talk about a legal way of making addicts out of our children!! A legal crime in my opinion, especially considering that homeopathic medicine can offer a safe and effective cure!!

HAHNEMANN, AND THE BEGINNINGS OF HOMEOPATHY

Hahnemann discovered the principle of nature on which homeopathy is based over 200 years ago, while translating a medical treatise on *Cinchona* (*Peruvian bark*, from which *Quinine* is derived to treat *Malaria*). Hahnemann had difficulty accepting the arguments given to explain the therapeutic efficacy of this plant. He decided to take some Peruvian bark himself, a healthy man who had never before suffered from Malaria. Within hours of ingestion, Hahnemann developed a fever, with chills; sweats, fatigue, and a splitting head ache... symptoms similar to Malaria! His illness lasted a short time, passing within 24 hours. He couldn't help but wonder whether this was coincidental, or whether his symptoms might have something to do with his having taken Peruvian bark experimentally. He repeated the experiment on himself, and had a recurrence of the condition!

For the first time in the history of Western medicine the effects of a medicine administered to a healthy person were taken into consideration as determining the therapeutic indications for a medicinal substance. This proving of *Cinchona* was the essential beginning of the homeopathic approach.

PROVINGS: HOMEOPATHIC RESEARCH

According to the law of Similars on which homeopathy is based, what produces symptoms in healthy volunteers cures similar symptoms in the sick. *Proving*s are experiments conducted by homeopathic physicians on **healthy volunteers** (*always human. No animal experimentation has ever been done in homeopathic history, though plenty of homeopathic treatments have shown great benefit to animals!*). These experiments record the side-effects volunteers experience

physically, emotionally, and mentally.

It may seem counterintuitive, but someone suffering with symptoms similar to the symptoms produced in a proving would need the substance being proved. This becomes less puzzling when you realize the *value of symptoms*, an expression of the life force indicating an imbalance. Homeopathy works by harnessing life force. The same force which produces symptoms restores balance, resulting in healing.

THE VALUE OF SYMPTOMS

Why take something known to produce side-effects similar to your suffering? Wouldn't that just make your condition worse? Viewed as a vital language of our life force, symptoms offer insight into our defense mechanism. Harnessing that force is what makes the homeopathic approach so powerful.

A homeopathic medicine is designed to encourage our defense mechanism, by its very ability to reproduce, in healthy volunteers, symptoms similar to their unique dis-ease. By taking something, which has been proven to mimic our coping style, a homeopathic medicine awakens our dormant inner healing potential. This stimulates our body's resistance/resilience to our inherited or acquired predispositions. This is akin to *vaccination*, where a patient is inoculated with a small amount of a bacteria associated with a condition to enhance resistance to that condition. (However, unlike vaccinations, which are prescribed to everyone indiscriminately, homeopathic prescribing is, as already stated, individualized, recognizing that everyone is unique! Not everyone needs the same thing, as not everyone suffers the "same" condition in exactly the same way.)

"HOLISTIC"; THE MYSTERY WITHIN

Holistic does not simply infer the application of a separate therapy or a different homeopathic remedy for every individual complaint. Nor is it sufficient to define holism as an approach that addresses the mind, body, and spirit of the person. As my colleague *Robin Logan* explains in his book "*The Homeopathic Approach to Eczema*", "In its deepest sense...we recognize the need to heal mind, body, and spirit and pay attention to all the patient's symptoms, but additionally *perceive the inter-relatedness of all aspects of the person and seek to make connections between seemingly disparate signs and symptoms.*" What, for instance, might the patient's food cravings, dreams, sensitivity to temperature extremes, mood and sleep position have in common? These are all expressions of that person's life force, speaking a language most of us are not used to honoring.

MICRODOSES, SUCCUSSION, and POTENTIZATION

In crude form, some of the substances commonly in use by homeopathic physicians are toxic. To minimize harmful side effects, Hahnemann developed a method of preparing homeopathic medicines by **diluting** them. Realizing that therapeutic effectiveness of the medicinal substance was weakened with each dilution, and eliminated beyond a certain dilution, Hahnemann did something else never before tried in the history of medicine. With each series of dilutions, he forcibly shook the dilute, striking it against a hard surface a specific number of times. This he called **succussion**, an essential procedure in enhancing or developing the therapeutic properties of a homeopathic medicine.

Hahnemann noticed that with each series of dilutions and succussions a medicine, instead of having a weaker effect, had a deeper one! While succussion or dilution in and of itself does nothing to enhance the healing properties of a medicine, the combination of the two is crucial in transforming even a neutral substance like salt into a potent ally for corresponding coping style. The process of dilution coupled with succussion is called **potentization**.

PLACEBO, OR ENERGY MEDICINE?

Because homeopathy uses substances that are often diluted beyond molecular doses it has often been dismissed as merely the "placebo effect". A placebo is a dummy medicine, an impostor disguised as the real thing, and often used in double-blind studies. Many people have reported improvement in their condition from using a placebo while thinking it was the real medicine.

To be a placebo, the person using the 'medicine' must believe in its efficacy. ***Why then does homeopathic medicine work on babies, animals, skeptics, or unconscious people?***

Though the mechanism by which homeopathy works is not presently understandable when examined from a biochemical model, it is clear from the clinical results of the last 200 years that there is far more than the power of suggestion at work here. It has been postulated that because homeopathic medicines are diluted to the point where no molecule of the original crude substance remains, it isn't a biochemical model that will explain homeopathy's efficacy. The assumption is that homeopathic medicines act energetically, influencing the body's subtle energies, what Chinese medicine calls "Chi", and Ayurvedic medicine calls "Prana".

On a final note, it should be mentioned that the pharmacology of most drugs is not completely understood, which hasn't ever kept doctors from prescribing them, despite all their harmful side effects!

HOMEOPATHY, NATUROPATHY, HERBALISM

People often mistake homeopathic medicine with herbal medicine, naturopathic medicine, and other methods of natural health care. While it is true that homeopathy relies on a variety of natural substances including plants, it also uses minerals, and animal substances to treat people. The treatment is always according to the Law of Similars, something entirely unique to homeopathic medicine. Most of the time, homeopathy uses potentized substances, another aspect which is unique to homeopathy alone.

Naturopathic medicine is an integrated approach to natural health care, incorporating various natural therapies including homeopathy and many others. Unlike homeopathy, which is a particular approach with a specific method of testing and prescribing unique unto itself, naturopathic medicine is an umbrella profession, offering many choices of natural health care including homeopathic medicine, acupuncture and Chinese herbs, clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, hydrotherapy, holistic lifestyle counseling, and others. Naturopathic education also includes an overview of conventional medical science, including anatomy, physiology, pathology, physical and differential and lab diagnosis, etc., integrating all of the above into an eclectic approach to natural health care.

In total, a naturopathic education requires six years (two years of premed, and four years of naturopathic medical studies, including over 1000 hours of clinical internship)! Only upon completion of board exams is one licensed to practice naturopathic medicine. The only medical knowledge naturopathic doctors have superficial training in is in the use of conventional pharmaceuticals.

Not every naturopathic physician practices the same way. Some are eclectic, akin to general practitioners, practicing various modalities. Others specialize in one or more methods. Most homeopathic physicians are not naturopathic physicians. Some homeopathic practitioners have no other medical training beyond homeopathic medicine. Other homeopaths are also MD's, or pharmacists, or veterinarians, nurse practitioners, counselors, etc. While most naturopathic physicians practice homeopathic medicine to a lesser or greater extent some, like myself, specialize in it. This involves spending years in continuing education, often training with teachers who have greater experience and knowledge than one's own.

HOMEOPATHY and PSYCHOTHERAPY

Our personality offers insight into our coping style. Given the import placed on the mental/ emotional makeup of a person, their attitude or outlook on life, and the family of origin from which much of our behavior is derived, people often ask me the difference between homeopathy and psychotherapy.

It is true that both methods of health care depend on 'talk therapy', narrative being highly regarded, the person's story spoken in their own words, their outlook on life and how this developed in the context of their family of origin.

In homeopathy, body and mind are two parts of the same coin, a manifestation of our life force in action. Physical as well as general symptoms (a person's food cravings, their sleep position, whether they wake at certain times of the night, whether they tend to be a hot or a chilly person, the quality of the pain, etc.) are equally essential in helping us distinguish between one type of nature and another. Moreover, the goal of the homeopathic approach goes beyond helping the person get in touch with their emotions. Homeopathy works like a vaccine tailor-made to the individual, triggering the patient's defense mechanism which enhances resistance to inherited and acquired physical, emotional and mental predispositions.

"CLASSICAL" HOMEOPATHY vs. "COMPLEX" HOMEOPATHY

There are several ways homeopathy has been practiced. I am least informed in the "complex" approach, which uses several different medicines at once in the treatment of a number of symptoms, organ systems, or etiologies. This approach views conditions as diseases, each needing its very own prescription.

The "Classical" method which I practice views all condition a person is experiencing as a manifestation of their unique coping style; a reflection of their life force manifesting. It uses only one medicinal substance at a time, the substance that best suits that person's overall makeup, their "constitution" as it is termed and uses that substance as infrequently as possible. It is based on a sophisticated understanding of the whole person, not only now, but throughout their life, often though not always needing the same medicine today as they did during their childhood.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR HOMEOPATHIC TREATMENT

Many people who seek homeopathic treatment do so as a last resort. Often, their condition is already highly advanced. Most people seeking this approach have very little knowledge about it, and therefore don't know what to expect. Some hear about it from someone who suffered from the "same" condition as theirs and was helped. They therefore come to the homeopathic

physician hoping to get the same results. They often do not understand how much soul-searching is involved in arriving at an accurate understanding of what makes them differ from another person with the same diagnosis, and of what truly ails them.

Remember, your life story, how it impacted you, and all the characteristics that make you unique are important to the homeopathic physician. Effectiveness of homeopathic medicine depends on how well understood you are, including insight into the origins of your dis-ease. What was stressful in your life when you first began to suffer, what you define as stressful, and how you responded to it offers valuable insight into your coping style?

Insight requires team work, including trust in your homeopathic physician and in yourself, because to understand yourself takes the courage to search your soul by examining your life and whatever fears which might be ruling you. If you seek assistance from this or any holistic therapy, please remember that it is this teamwork which makes healing possible. ***Be prepared to talk about yourself!***

Remember that the road that brought you to this point in your life has taken time. Your condition may have taken years to develop. Don't expect instant results, or you might be disappointed. It is suggested that ***for every year you have had a problem, it may take about a month for it to heal!*** Which is to say that with time, given the chance, your body can heal itself!

CONCLUSION

Consciousness is the key to unlocking our inner healer, insight into our true nature and how we came to be the way we are. We all have the ability to heal ourselves! To heal requires tapping into our life force. To understand the genius behind our suffering, first gain insight into what we have been defending ourselves against.

FURTHER READING

National Center for Homeopathy, www.homeopathy.org

A great resource to help keep you up to date on the latest developments in the homeopathic world. If you join the National Center For Homeopathy, you will receive "***Homeopathy Today***", a very informative monthly magazine. While this is a U.S. based organization, it will help you in locating a classical homeopath in Canada.

Simillimum: The magazine of Classical Homeopathy which represents the HANP (Homeopathic Academy of Naturopathic Physicians). Twice a year, excellent articles describing cured cases and homeopathic philosophy. **www.hanp.net**

American Homeopath: The magazine of NASH (the North American Society of Homeopaths). It comes out once a year, and has cutting edge writings on Provings, research, cured cases, materia medica, and homeopathic philosophy. **www.homeopathy.org**

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BOOKS

The Spirit of Homeopathy, by Rajan Sankaran

This is an outstanding (though pricey in Canada) book by a world-renowned contemporary homeopathic physician. Sankaran has packed this book with gems of insight and clinical experience. The book is divided into four parts: a) understanding homeopathic philosophy; b) the value of understanding the mind in disease; c) the value of a well taken case, and how to find the right homeopathic medicine; d) a description of several homeopathic medicines.

Ritalin-Free Kids, by Judyth Reichenberg-Ullman and Robert Ullman. ISBN 0-7615-0719-1.

This book describes the authors' experience in treating ADD with homeopathic medicine, the safe, effective, and lasting alternative.

Organon of the Medical Art, by Samuel Hahnemann. ISBN 1-889613-01-0.

This, the 'Bible' of homeopathic philosophy, while written over 150 years ago, is still the work all homeopathic practitioners refer to when trying to understand the science and art of homeopathic healing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julek Meissner, N.D., is a licensed naturopathic doctor, specializing in classical homeopathy. A graduate of the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon, he has been studying homeopathic medicine for over 25 years. He has published his writings in several homeopathic medical journals, and is frequently invited to speak at homeopathic medical conferences. He is a past clinic supervisor of the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, and has been a guest lecturer at the Ontario College of Homeopathic Medicine. He practices in Ottawa, and can be reached at 613-234-5151