



# STRESS MANAGEMENT & HOMEOPATHY

## Introduction

We all experience stress in our own unique way. What is stressful to one person may not be to another. For some, public speaking is sheer terror. For others, it seems the only way to fulfillment. Certain people find parenting most rewarding, while others tolerate it at best. I know teachers who thrive in a large class of unruly students, while other teachers find it stressful even at the best of times. For some children, a reprimand is like water off a duck's back, while for others even a slightly raised voice seems traumatic.

The question is not how to avoid stress, but rather how can we respond to it in a way that, rather than depleting us, actually makes us feel better? Instead of a rigid response that involves fear, anger, hypertension, or stomach ulcers, we want objectivity, and flexibility that facilitates creativity. Experienced in a mature and healthy way, stress is viewed as an opportunity in disguise, designed to help us grow.

The homeopathic approach uses our life force (known as *chi* in Chinese Medicine) to stimulate the healing process. It is an energetic rather than a biochemic approach to medicinal intervention. As such, it is gentle yet powerful, activating our body's self-healing ability.

A homeopathic interview resembles any type of talk-therapy. During the interview we encourage that our patient guide us through their experience, collecting information on both their physical and emotional makeup.

The key to success in the homeopathic approach is how accurately we tailor the treatment to the individual rather than just the condition. The more **insight** we gain into the patient's coping style, including how they experience their condition, the way their life is affected by it, how their condition evolved, what stresses were happening in their life at the time of onset, the more accurate our prescription. A substance is then selected out of over 3000 choices, animal, plant, or mineral, that has an affinity to our patient's unique nature.

Homeopathy relies on *Provings* (experiments conducted on healthy volunteers to determine the side-effects of the substance being proven) to determine the therapeutic indications for a homeopathic remedy. *A substance is homeopathic when it can produce in healthy volunteers*



*symptoms similar to those being suffered by a sick person.* Which explains the origins of the word *homeopathy*, from the Greek words *Homeo* for similar, and *Pathy* for suffering or disease.

Homeopathic stress-management involves understanding our stress response in a broader context, namely as a reflection of our general way of coping. What is unique about the way we experience what is stressful to us, and how did we learn to react the way we do?

The following three case examples from my practice are intended to illustrate the body-mind approach that homeopathic therapy represents. Names have been altered to protect patient confidentiality.

### **INSOMNIA AND DISAPPOINTMENT**

Jim is a 52-year-old senior office manager. In the past few months, he has been suffering from sinus infections, with severe pain in the forehead and behind the eyes. The pain is worse in the morning. It wakes him every morning, always at the same time, between 4-5am, when he wakes in a sweat, feeling hot, especially in his feet, which he uncovers to cool off.

His co-worker, who also happened to be a good friend, suddenly quit his management team a few months ago. This took Jim by surprise, and he now feels he needs to do twice the amount of work. As a result, he feels frustrated by and disappointed in his friend.

When asked if he's ever felt this way before, Jim says it reminds him of how he often felt growing up, that he never felt he could really count on any of his friends. On further reflection, he realizes it's an old feeling that he had even in childhood, ever since his father suddenly died. It left him feeling abandoned, sad, but also angry, as if his father, his best friend, had left on purpose.

### **Analysis**

What we need here is a prescription designed to help raise Jim's resistance to:

- The tendency to produce nasal congestion leading to inflammation of the sinuses
- Disappointment and abandonment. Clearly, this is the most central stress in his life, the kind of stress he is most susceptible to.
- Sleep disturbances at 4-5am, and
- Heat, especially heat in the lower extremities, which forces the person to uncover their feet.

This is just what the proving of the salt made from **Magnesium** and **Sulphur** has produced in experiments conducted on healthy volunteers:



- The tendency to wake at 4-5 am, along with a tendency to experience heat in the feet.
- The tendency for uncovering the feet.
- The feeling of being abandoned by those near and dear to them.

### **Results:**

Soon after the prescription, Jim developed a very runny nose, a thick, profuse, yellow discharge that seemed to gush from the depths of his nasal passages. At the same time, he felt an instant relief of the pain behind his eyes, a pain he had been suffering with for nearly two months.

Within two nights of taking the Rx, Jim's sleep had improved, and he began sleeping through the night and waking refreshed. Moreover, his temperature regulated, his sweats stopped, and he no longer needs to stick his feet out from under the covers.

As his sleep improved, so did his energy, which led him to feel less overwhelmed with his workload. Most importantly, he realized that he didn't need to feel responsible for the extra workload. Doing his best was all that was expected of him.

Insight into his nature has helped Jim develop resistance to his issues around friends and abandonment, helping him feel more secure.

### **OUTRAGE; THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE STOMACH**

Michelle is a 27-year-old office secretary who consults me for stomach pains. These have been bothering her off and on for the past two years, but are getting much worse in the past several months. She has consulted her family physician, who advised a whole battery of tests, all of which have proved inconclusive.

The pains are sharp and cramping, as if something is tearing inside, forcing her to bend double, or to press her fists into her gut. At times the pains get so severe, she throws up.

On inquiry as to what is stressful in her life, Michelle associates her problem with a volatile relationship she's having with her boyfriend. While she thinks he likes her, she keeps wondering if he really does, and takes his lack of affection as a personal slight, a sign of disapproval. This in turn makes her feel extremely angry, which leads to scenes of yelling, followed by tears, withdrawal, and then an eventual resolution... until the next confrontation. The two of them have been seeking couple counseling for some time now, yet her pains keep getting worse with each quarrel.



When asked where this sensitivity to anger might come from, Michelle tells me about her upbringing. She comes from a large family. She has 6 older brothers. Not only is she the only girl, she's the youngest as well. Growing up, she got accustomed to being doted on, getting her wishes met. Everyone was so affectionate at home, and she was the apple of everyone's eye.

However, her family disapproved of her new boyfriend, as he was from a different ethnic background. When they told her to stop seeing him or to leave, she felt outraged, and found herself an apartment. That's when her stomach problems started. She misses her family, but continues to feel defensive and angry.

### **Analysis**

Michelle's way of coping with anger is to develop pain in her digestive tract. She and her boyfriend have wisely decided to seek counseling, yet her pain is getting worse. She could resort to painkillers, but is reluctant, due to the side effects.

From the homeopathic perspective, what is needed is to help Michelle develop resistance to her sensitivity to conflict, criticism, and outrage. Moreover, to be homeopathic, the substance chosen must have an affinity for the digestive system. It must be capable of producing these kinds of sharp, tearing pains, which are better with pressure, compelling the person to double-up.

Which is precisely what the plant **Colocynth** (commonly known as bitter cucumber) is known to produce. Some of the side effects of Colocynth are as follows:

- Sensitivity to anger and criticism, with indignation.
- Stomach disorders and abdominal pains caused by anger, and indignation
- Stomach and abdominal pains that are described as violent, cramping, griping, and tearing
- Stomach and abdominal pains relieved by pressure and bending double, compelling them to bend double.
- Vomiting after anger

### **Results**

Shortly after starting on her homeopathic Rx, Michelle began to feel better, not only in GI pains, but in temperament as well. Instead of seeing everything any of her loved ones say to her as a slight, she now weighs what she hears, tries to understand. Her response has become far more graceful, less reactive and judgmental.

She realized she was too dependent on her boyfriend for her emotional needs, and connected with some friendships which had been neglected since starting her relationship. She also began



a dialogue with her family, invited her parents for dinner at her new apartment, and let them know how serious she and her boyfriend felt about each other and how important her family's emotional support was to her.

She and her boyfriend eventually married, and she continues to thrive both physically and emotionally.

### **PISSED OFF – THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE BLADDER**

Jane is a 33 year old woman who sought my help a year ago concerning recurring bladder infections, during which time she suffered from pain and urinary frequency. At its worst, there were sharp excruciating pains in the urethra, like a pinching, accompanied by a dull ache in her back, exhaustion, and chills. She felt constant pressure in her bladder, and at least every ¼ hour she needed to relieve herself, with a need to void even just after voiding.

“It pisses me off. I am constantly on antibiotics, yet the problem keeps getting worse. I can't go anywhere or do anything without first knowing where the bathroom is. It's unnerving; I can't get much accomplished, and there's a lot of anxiety about having an accident, that I won't be able to reach the bathroom in time.”

Her problems began some years ago while working as a caterer for the film industry, what she describes as an over-demanding, exhausting, draining job. During this time, she would often work non-stop for 37-40 hrs, and had difficulty taking care of her own physical needs, not taking any breaks to rest or to go to the bathroom, doing whatever it took to get the job done at her body's expense. Working 40 hours non-stop was nerve-wracking, which lead to difficulties falling asleep, always feeling on edge while wondering whether she could cater to all the demands from her clients. This lead to sleep problems which, which lead to fatigue, which she feels contributes to her tendency toward bladder infections.

When asked to elaborate on “pissed off”, she describes feeling grumpy and joyless, but keeps it inside. “No one knows that I'm not feeling well. When people are rude or selfish or irritated, I may feel like yelling, but that's not nice, it's rude, and I don't want to piss anyone off. “I know I'm too accommodating, but I'm afraid of putting anyone out, and go out of my way to cater to everyone's demands, no matter at what cost. I can't stand conflict. I'm afraid of letting my anger out, that if I did I'd end up crying and feeling embarrassed.

When asked to elaborate, she says it has to do with her upbringing and that despite years of psychotherapy she still struggles with it. “There was a lot of fighting in the family, between my parents who were loud and strong personalities. My way of coping was to accommodate everyone, protecting my brother or my mother when they fought with my father. I just wanted peace at all cost, and that's become my coping style.



### **Analysis: plant, animal, or mineral?**

The psychology of Jane's bladder infections is that when she's "pissed off", her obsolete coping style prevents her from feeling empowered. In order to help her shift, I offered a homeopathic approach that would facilitate a more harmonious relationship with conflict.

As mentioned earlier, we have over 3000 medicines in our homeopathic repertoire. Most of these come from either the plant, the animal, or the mineral kingdoms. Because she was so sensitive, I chose a homeopathic preparation from the plant kingdom (mineral remedies are more about structure and a feeling of deficiency in oneself. Remedies made of an animal substance are more about competition and survival).

*Staphysagria* (delphinium, a lovely flowering plant cultivated in many local gardens) is known to produce

- Sensitivity to rudeness
- Fear of not being liked
- Suppressed anger.
- Bladder problems, including burning, urgency and frequency.

Over the following year, Jane needed to take *Staphysagria* only a few times. She almost immediately noticed an inner strength and calmness, and as her courage increased, so did her ability to deal with conflict in a more empowered way. The bladder infections became less frequent and less painful, and then subsided entirely, and she required no more antibiotics. Her sleep improved, as did her overall energy. Her new found positivity about herself helped her recognize that she was unhappy in her work space and with her life partner. Her ability to stand up for herself helped her find a more appealing work space, and she became clearer in communicating what she wanted from her partner, which dramatically enhanced the quality of her life experience.

### **Conclusion**

There is more to us than meets the eye. How we cope today may be the result of years of conditioning. Homeopathic therapy facilitates healing both through insight and through the gentle manipulation of our life force, by using an ally in nature tailor made to our nature.