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Celebrating Homeopathy as an Ecological Process

If you believe in homeopathy, you eventually become an educator in this wonderful art. In many instances, our audiences are newcomers drawn to alternative health care because of bad experiences with conventional medicine. Despite their initial interest or enthusiasm, they usually need to be nurtured and supported to sustain their understanding, because old habits from years of conventional medical treatment die hard.

A little goes a long way

Recently, George, an eighty-year-old retired milkman living in rural New Jersey, came to me suffering from severe chronic constipation. His wife of fifty years had passed away five years before, about the same time his trouble with constipation had started. His dog had died a few years after that. He missed his old job. Grief was predominant in his life. It was also apparent from George's narration that he tended to be impatient, selfish, and ornery.

George had prided himself on always being "regular." Since his constipation began, he had consulted four gastroenterologists with little improvement. He came to me through a referral from a friend. Wearing a dearly-loved but very well-worn sweater, George appeared disheveled. He exhibited hypo-sensitivity (a high tolerance for medications) and many egocentric traits. These characteristics, along with his grief, bilious temperament, and a general aggravation from bathing in hot water, pointed to the homeopathic remedy *Sulphur*.

I gave George a 4-ounce liquid bottle of *Sulphur* LM 0/1, to be succussed or shaken vigorously before taking a 1-tablespoon dose. I asked him to start by taking just one tablespoon as a test dose, and to call in a few days.

George called to report "wonderful" results—normal bowel movements all described in gleeful detail with many exclamations of "God bless you!" I explained how homeopathy works, emphasizing that we stop taking a remedy when there's improvement, and told him to wait, see what transpired, and call me in one week.

When George called back, I was surprised to hear he was upset, constipated, and sad. "I didn't want to chance it after five years," he told me, "so I whacked the hell out of the bottle and took a dose several times a day. Now I need another bottle with a stronger dose." How to explain to this "more-is-better" fellow that, in homeopathy, the rules are different? I was not comfortable giving George a placebo because I felt that this intelligent man should

giving George a placebo because I felt that this intelligent man should understand homeopathy.

So I asked George to suspend the notion that more was better, explaining that homeopathy works in much the same way as nature itself. George, being a self-proclaimed philosopher of the outdoors, was interested. I used the example of DDT, which initially rid crops of insects and improved harvests. Later, we realized that DDT accumulated in the food chain, caused some species to become extinct, and eventually was found in humans. Simply put, something may appear beneficial in one narrow instance but may be harmful when viewed from a broader perspective or when overused. We (and the earth itself) are more than the sum of our parts.

George made the connection. "I guess I am steeped in cause and effect thinking...need a pill take more pills. I sure as hell wasn't paying attention." So George waited and took no more doses of *Sulphur*. In a week, his constipation subsided and he felt less sad and angry. Over the next six months, he used the *Sulphur* a few times as needed and sent many referrals to my practice.

Going with the flow of nature

Since homeopathy is in tune with the way nature works (i.e., respects the body's power to heal itself), our educational mission is to share from this perspective. That's especially important given current trends seeking to reverse gains made by the ecology movement. (Read "Not So Fast with the DDT, Rachel Carson's warnings still apply," by Reed Karaim in *The American Scholar*, summer, 2005, which describes how corporate and scientific forces are attempting to refute ecological realities through skewed research, somewhat reminiscent of the recent *Lancet* report attacking homeopathy.)

Nature is, in fact, an aesthetic experience, with repetitive patterns and systems that move toward disorder and subsequent new order. We evolve, grow, and learn through these contexts of life by adjusting and balancing our vital force. The art of homeopathy recognizes this: we assess the whole person, creating a picture of how temperament and symptoms are interconnected. Communicating this recognition through ecological metaphors, without separating mind and nature (or through "accepting paradox," as Jane Cicchetti suggests in her article "Unity Within Diversity," in *The American Homeopath*, 2005), produces a shared wisdom for healing possibilities.

For more information: Read old copies of the *Whole Earth Catalogue* and *Co-Evolution Quarterly* (I'm dating myself, but these are still an excellent source); read *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* or *Mind and Nature* by Gregory Bateson; subscribe to the *Utne Reader*, which digests the best of the current alternative press; learn about Systems and Communication Theories; experience an active



holistic metaphor like Yoga, Aikido, or other body movement program; and most of all, read the cases and thoughts of the many homeopaths that embodied all of these concepts.

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