

homeopathy

TODAY

YOUR GUIDE TO HEALTH THROUGH HOMEOPATHY

SPECIAL DIGITAL EDITION
CAREGIVING NOVEMBER 2023

WHAT TO DO WHEN
YOU'VE OVERDONE

CARING FOR
THE CAREGIVER

FINAL GIFTS
Homeopathic care
at the End of Life

MATTERS OF
THE HEART

Treating and
preventing
hypertension

The Burnout Epidemic
Stressful Times Impact Health
Help yourself bounce back

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CAREGIVING Article Collection



1 **FINAL GIFTS: HOMEOPATHIC CARE AT THE END OF LIFE**
By Loretta Butehorn, PhD, CCH
Winter 2015

2 **WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'VE OVERDONE**
By Miranda Castro, FSHom, CCH, RSHom(NA)
Spring 2018

3 **CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER**
By Lauri Grossman, DC, CCH, RSHom(NA)
Winter 2019



4 **MATTERS OF THE HEART - TREATING AND PREVENTING HYPERTENSION**
By Amy Rothenberg, ND
Winter 2019

5 **THE BURNOUT EPIDEMIC STRESSFUL TIMES IMPACT HEALTH - HELP YOURSELF BOUNCE BACK**
By Amy Rothenberg ND, DHANP
Fall 2021



Final Gifts: Homeopathic

Nearly 30 years ago, a local hospice approached me asking whether I, a psychologist (but not yet a homeopath), would be interested in facilitating a support group for the staff. When I met with the 20 or so nurses, social workers, chaplains, and home health aides, I entered a world that few in our modern American culture have the privilege of experiencing—one in which people are not afraid of death. These hospice workers were not frightened to attend a dying person, talk with the per-

son and family members about what might be expected, spend the last hours and minutes with the dying person, gently pronounce the death, and finally sit with the grieving family.

Since that first meeting, I have had the extraordinary experience of facilitating support groups for a number of different hospices, and I currently work with three in Massachusetts. Skilled in their field, hospice workers develop relationships with patients and their families and often witness multiple deaths in any given

Easing suffering & offering com

by LORETTA BUTEHORN, PhD, CCH

Care at the End of Life

week. This intense work can and does take an energetic toll on staff members. Support groups help staff members grieve these losses and deal with the demands of a profession that few in their own circle of friends and family fully comprehend.

When I became a homeopath more than two decades ago, two beautiful realities merged: working in this life-affirming field of homeopathy and offering its benefits to the terminally ill, the dying, their families, and the professionals who walk with them

during this final phase of life. In the following pages, you will find some background on the hospice movement, how hospice can benefit patients and families, and the role that homeopathy and other integrative health practices can play in this stage of life.

Awareness of need

In the late 1960s, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, MD, a Swiss-born psychiatrist, was working with terminally ill patients at the University of Chicago Medical School. This was a time in history when U.S. health

fort to the dying ... and the living

It is life's last great and unknown adventure, which we embark upon alone.

professionals thought it best not to mention to a patient that their condition was terminal or that they were dying. Kubler-Ross, however, took a different path. Rather than giving platitudes or false reassurances to dying patients, she actually listened when they expressed their thoughts, feelings, and concerns; she answered their questions and talked honestly with them.

Kubler-Ross realized that we all know we will die, but most of us consider it a distant event and choose not to think or talk about it. The joke or truism that circulates in hospice circles goes like this: "If you attend a social gathering and someone asks, 'what do you do for work?' and you disclose that you are a hospice nurse, social worker, home health aide, chaplain, or other support person, the response is either, 'oh, you are a saint, I could never do that'—or the person turns on their heels and walks away."

Either of these reactions is an indication of the phenomena Kubler-Ross identified in her hospital work. In many modern cultures, death is feared, avoided, and never discussed. Medical doctors are reluctant to "give up" on a patient or put a timeframe on a person's life. And people don't know what to say or how to act when someone is "terminal." Family members often remark, "I don't want to upset them or make them cry," or "I don't want to cry and make things worse." Yet, what does the person who knows their end of life is approaching actually want and need to face this reality? What might be most useful is to ask the patient directly, "What do you need right now, and how I can be of assistance?"

In listening to hundreds of patients, Kubler-Ross realized that when people are dying, they very often suspect or know that their body is getting ready to release its last breath of life—and this is a shock. As ego-driven beings, it is startling to encounter the end! Is it pos-

sible that we will no longer be? Despite a variety of spiritual paradigms of what happens next—heaven, reincarnation, merging with the cosmos, becoming an energy source in nature, or simply leaving behind the good we have done—none of us really knows what happens. It is life's last great and unknown adventure, which we embark upon alone. So it is often a terrifying and startling realization that we are at the doorway of that adventure.

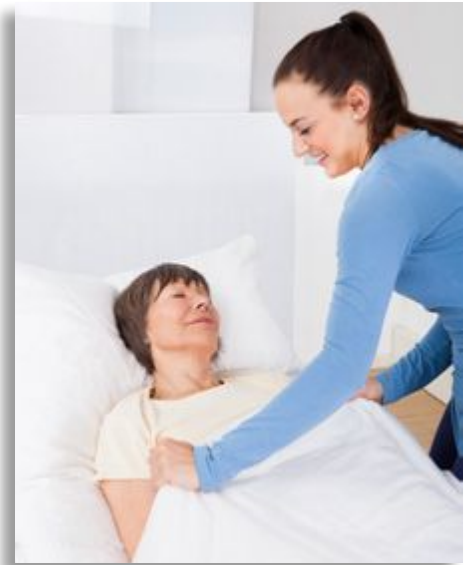
A groundbreaking model

Out of Kubler-Ross' experiences, a better understanding of the psychological processes attending this phase of life began to emerge. In her groundbreaking 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*, she presented a framework for interpreting the stages a person undergoes as they grapple with the end of life, which she referred to as "the stages of grief"—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. (Today, these stages are also widely acknowledged as steps one typically goes through when grappling with any overwhelming loss at any stage of life.) How long a person experiences each stage is very individual, and the person often vacillates between stages and between emotional reactions and cognitive realizations.

Kubler-Ross' model is helpful in assisting staff, family, and friends who attend a terminally ill or dying person. When we know what stage the person is experiencing, we are better able to establish rapport and provide support. We can also identify homeopathic and other integrative health approaches that might be useful at that specific stage, in order to help ease the journey.

Birth of hospice movement

Prior to Kubler-Ross' writings, Dame Cicely Saunders, an English nurse, social worker, and ethicist, pioneered an understanding of pain as a physical, emotional, social, and spiritual experience. She believed that when a disease has moved to its final stages, patients need to be made comfortable in a non-hospital setting so they can die peacefully surrounded by their loved ones. She introduced the concept of palliative care for these patients—



to alleviate suffering rather than cure the disease causing that suffering—and founded St. Christopher's, the first hospice home, in 1967. Hospice workers aim to make the physical, psychological, and spiritual journey as comfortable as possible for the patient.

A remarkable ally

Over the years, I have given numerous presentations on integrating homeopathy into end-of-life care, and little by little, I've seen it become more commonly used. At first it was mostly families who embraced it. But over time, palliative care professionals have become more open to complementary approaches, too, because when someone enters hospice, they have ended seeking conventional medical cures and instead are seeking comfort to allow them to traverse this final path of life.* Homeopathy continues to be a remarkable ally on this final journey.

As the body begins to decline, various physical symptoms can create suffering, pain, and exhaustion, and there are homeopathic remedies that can palliate such symptoms. The psychological state attending both the physical suffering and the emotional upheaval can be a storm of its own. And what better ally can the human being have than homeopathic remedies, which support the person's vital force as it ends its work through and with this individual?

A gift to loved ones

This kind of palliative homeopathy is more akin to prescribing for first-aid and

**Homeopathy continues to
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on this final journey.**

acute ailments, which many of our readers are facile in, rather than a more classically-oriented constitutional approach. It is something that each of us can offer to our family and friends. As the esteemed classical homeopath James Tyler Kent (1849-1916) described it: “When we have given up all hope, then we pay more attention to the most painful parts ... the local symptoms ... and attempt to do patch work ... patch him up a little and make him feel more like life, and he will go on to the end with more comfort.”**

As with all homeopathic treatment, we still individualize our prescription to the person and their complaint as much as possible, taking into account the specific symptoms, the modalities (what makes the person or their symptoms better or worse), and something of their personality and uniqueness.

The dosing and potency can be adjusted to meet the energetic needs of the person—perhaps 6c or 12c for the physical complaints, 30c or LM-potencies for the emotional or spiritual unrest. Often, as the person nears the immediate end of life, higher potencies are given to allow the person to slip away peacefully (e.g., 200c, 1M, 10M).

A short repertory of typical symptoms seen during the final stages of life and the homeopathic remedies that may ease these symptoms can be found on page 35. The stories of two people who benefited from homeopathic treatment during their transition are summarized below.

Matriarch’s morphine-free passing

Sandra, age 84, had been a cheerful and beloved parent and grandmother to her family brood. As she succumbed to the end stages of pancreatic cancer (complete loss of appetite, some jaundice, weakness, and fatigue) she was “enjoying her dying process” as her daughter put it, speaking to each of her children and grandchildren

Hospice workers aim to make the physical, psychological, and spiritual journey as comfortable as possible for the patient.

Hospice Care Offers Comforts of Home

Here's what you need to know

Hospice care is open to anyone who decides to stop medical treatment aimed at curing their terminal illness and who obtains a doctor’s referral stating their expected lifespan is six months or less. Patients are then able to stay in their homes with regular support from a hospice team—nurses, social workers, home health aides, and chaplains—and get 24/7 visits to manage pain, alleviate suffering, and receive psycho-spiritual counseling. The hospice provides many other services and equipment items to assure the patient’s comfort including hospital beds, oxygen, medications, wheelchairs, and personal care assistance. Medicare, Medicaid, and most private health insurers cover hospice care; people in hospitals and nursing facilities may also elect to receive specialized hospice care.

How to choose?

Hospice workers will tell you that we tend to wait too long before choosing hospice; for example, many patients (or their family members) don’t enroll in hospice until they are in crisis in the ICU in their final days or hours. If they had elected hospice earlier in their illness, however, they probably could have avoided the hospital altogether and spent their final months in a more peaceful home environment. Physicians who are reluctant to talk openly about a patient’s prognosis or to stop treatments, regardless of the patient’s quality of life, can contribute to this dilemma. So, it behooves us all to become familiar with our options *in advance* of a crisis.

But how does one choose a hospice? Here are five points to consider:

- 1. Word of Mouth.** Talking with friends or trusted caregivers is always best! Get a recommendation—ask about pros and cons experienced with a particular hospice.
- 2. Profit vs. Non-profit.** Determine if a nonprofit hospice is adequately funded and able to provide the services you need. Decide if a for-profit hospice seems more concerned about their bottom line and keeping costs down. Typically, nonprofit hospices put service ahead of concern for cost—but every hospice is different.

- 3. Experience & Reputation.** How long has the hospice been in existence? What is the average number of years of experience of staff? How do family, friends, and other professionals view them? Ask if you can speak to a staff member or volunteer.
- 4. Services & Frequency.** What services do they offer and with what frequency? This is especially important if you need a home health aide to help with personal care (bathing, changing bedding, repositioning, dressing, and feeding). How soon do they respond to calls for help? Typically, a nurse will visit weekly or twice a week to assure the comfort of the patient. As the dying process accelerates, more frequent visits should be planned.
- 5. Your Rights.** The services of the hospice should meet your particular situation. If they do not, remember that you can always change to another hospice.

Find out more

Check these sources for additional information:

- The non-profit National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization offers a list of member providers and a downloadable worksheet, “Choosing a Quality Hospice for You or Your Loved One.” www.nhpco.org
- Your state’s department of health or social services will have a list of licensed hospice care providers.

What better ally can the human being have than homeopathic remedies, which support the person's vital force as it ends its work through and with this individual?

privately, sharing stories and hopes for them. As she became weaker and weaker, she would lapse into periods of great agitation—thrashing about in bed and moaning, seemingly in distress and pain. The hospice doctor suggested starting morphine in small doses; this is typically given as needed to ease a dying person's agitation, and the person gradually loses consciousness and eventually dies.

Most of Sandra's agitation and distress occurred when sleeping or just coming out of sleep, but in her moments of clarity, she made it clear that she wanted to stay conscious as much as possible—and “not use anything” to dull her awareness. So instead of giving morphine, we gave her small doses of homeopathic *Arsenicum* 12c in water as needed, which allowed her to sleep restfully and not exhibit the thrashing and restlessness that so upset her family. *Arsenicum* was chosen rather than *Aconite*, because Sandra described no fear and was actually unaware of her agitation during sleep. (See repertorization chart below left.) *Arsenicum* is a remedy often cited in the homeopathic literature as one that is helpful in easing the agitation of a dying person.

After several days, it seemed that Sandra was not responding as well to *Arsenicum* 12c, so we increased the strength to *Arsenicum* 30c and eventually *Arsenicum* 200c—each administered as a sip or moistening of her lips. Sandra would move in and out of a restful sleep, and when awake, she would recognize her family. After several days of sleeping most of the time, restfully, she opened her eyes and smiled at her gathered family. “Thank you God, for a wonderful life,” she said, then closed her eyes and simply stopped breathing.

Young man's fears relieved

Jerry was a 21-year-old whose body had been ravaged by severe multiple sclerosis

with complications. As he reached the end of his struggle, he would sleep most of the time, awaken briefly, and then fall back to sleep almost coma-like. As his periods of sleep and non-responsiveness became longer, the hospice nurse told his family the end was very near.

Then, unlike his previous pattern, Jerry became agitated and fearful—screaming in his sleep; this typically occurred between 3 and 4 a.m. When he awoke he was sweating, and he looked with fear at people at his bedside and tried to hit them. When more fully awake, Jerry wept, saying he was afraid of being alone.

Jerry received homeopathic *Kali carbonicum* 30c in water, as needed, because it corresponded with his symptoms of fear, a coma-like state, and his attempts to strike at others. (See repertorization chart below center.) But the key to choosing this remedy was the time of day when he seemed more fitful, as people needing *Kali carbonicum* tend to feel much worse between 3 and 5 a.m.

Jerry continued taking *Kali carb* as needed for relief from his fears and agitation. He died peacefully in his sleep several days later, with his family gathered around him.

A gift to caregivers

It is physically exhausting as well as emotionally and energetically stressful to watch a loved one leave. Thankfully, there are wonderful homeopathic remedies to help caregivers and family members in these situations. Typically a 30c or 200c of an indicated remedy in water and succussed (i.e., stirred or shaken) and sipped, as needed, can be extremely helpful.

There are also remedies to aid those who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Research shows that for many people, a period of 16 months encompasses the grieving process. The sharp highs and lows of the early weeks and months give

way, over time, to still painful but less severe highs and lows of grief. Finally, the loss becomes a part of one's life history, and the grief is more bittersweet than gut-wrenching. Bereavement counselors are typically available to assist grieving families throughout the year following the death of the person in hospice care.

It is not unusual for a family member to tell us: “I should call Joe and tell him about... oh no, Joe has died.” This denial, even momentary, and the re-realization make the jagged edges of grief very palpable. That gradually gives way to the memories of Joe, the memories being a comfort rather than a brutal reminder that life has changed.

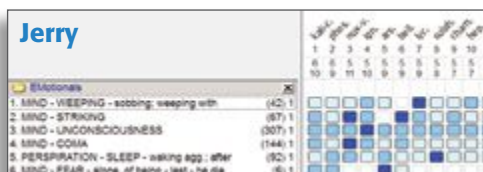
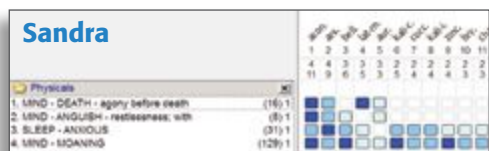
What follows are the stories of three people whose caring and love for others during life's final stages took an energetic toll on them—and how they benefited from homeopathic treatment.

A mother's guilt & grief

Helen, a 79-year-old woman with three adult children, was alienated from her drug-addicted son Joe. When she heard he was looking unwell, however, she reached out to him and offered help. About two weeks later, he died of an overdose. She was very sad but also knew she had done everything she could to get Joe help.

Three months later, Helen's youngest son David developed a brain tumor and died fairly quickly. When I saw Helen, she had lost two sons in four months. She was wracked with *both* grief and guilt after David's death. She kept thinking, “If I had only insisted he try another treatment...”

Helen's symptoms of grief, self-reproach, persistent thoughts, and feelings of helplessness pointed to the remedy *Ignatia*, and one dose of *Ignatia* 200c in water, once a week, was her prescription. (See repertorization chart below right.) *Ignatia* rather than *Natrum muriaticum*



Compassionate Care & Comfort

Homeopathic remedies to ease the way at life's end

by LORETTA BUTEHORN, PhD, CCH

was chosen, as Helen was having an acute reaction, and *Ignatia* is well-known as being helpful in the early, acute stages of grief. Also, she was very able to articulate her thoughts and emotions, which is typically less common for those needing *Natrum muriaticum*, who tend towards being more silent and brooding in their grief.

After three doses of *Ignatia* 200c, Helen experienced relief from the overwhelming guilt as well as a moderation of her grief. She then continued her grieving process without constantly blaming herself for David's death. After the *Ignatia*, she was able to accept both deaths and move towards trying to do something for others in memory of her sons.

Hospice nurse stays in bed

It was Mary's first year as a hospice nurse, and she was assigned to work with terminally ill children. Diving right in, she gave it her all, trying to make her young patients' remaining days as happy as possible. Being new in the hospice field, she had not yet developed the skills of setting limits on herself and doing only what she could, not everything she could think of.

Mary finally called her supervisor one morning saying: "I can't face another day. I can't get up. All I want to do is lie in bed, turn my face to the wall and make it all go away. ... This is way more emotionally draining than I ever expected. It's not fair that these kids haven't had their life yet! It makes me angry." She had no appetite and was not eating. All she could ingest was fruit juice. "Everything else feels too heavy," she said.

After taking *Phosphoric acid* 200c (in water, 1 teaspoon, 3 times over the course of the day), Mary felt her mental anguish and exhaustion lift. She was able to return to work the next day. She began to realize the need to pace herself in her work and only do what she could do, while also making time in her life to meditate and to try to understand that these were the unique journeys of these children's lives.

Phosphoric acid is frequently indicated for caregivers such as Mary who care deeply and give so much of themselves

Below is a mini-repertory of symptoms and remedies that can be very useful for both patient and caregiver in the final stages of life.

Care for the Caregiver

Panic reactions and overwhelming fear: *Aconite*

Feeling overwhelmed: *Lycopodium*

Exhaustion from sitting with and/or caring for the terminally ill, referred to as "night watching": *Cocculus indicus*

Acute grieving, especially with sleeplessness and self-blame: *Ignatia*

Exhaustion, especially emotional exhaustion: *Phosphoric acid*

During Stages of Grief (for caregiver or patient)

Denial, Shock: *Aconite*, Rescue Remedy®

Bargaining: *Ignatia*

Anger: *Arsenicum*, *Nux vomica*

Acceptance: No remedy needed. When this occurs at end of life, it is a sign that a person is experiencing peaceful resolve and is preparing to die.

End of Life Symptoms

Our focus is on symptom palliation. Below are some frequently used remedies in this stage of life, but there are other possibilities. To find the best remedy, analyze the complaint as you would any acute condition; identify and prescribe upon the most striking symptoms and modalities of the person (what makes the person or their symptoms feel better or worse).

Agitation: *Arsenicum* starting with 12c, then 30c, and increasing in frequency and potency as needed in last hours of life. *Stramonium* if person is fearful and confused, pushing people away, not recognizing family and seemingly afraid of well-loved family members, especially in a dim room or at night or awaking from sleep.

Breathing difficulties: *Arsenicum* if anxious and unable to get a good breath. *Antimonium tart* if much mucus and rattling.

Constipation, especially as a side effect of painkillers: *Nux vomica*.

Diarrhea: *Arsenicum*, *Sulphur*.

Diarrhea alternating with constipation: *Alumina*, *Antimonium crudum*, *Nux vomica*, *Phosphorus*.

Seeing dead relatives: This is a fairly common occurrence that is usually comforting to the patient, so no remedy is needed. Typically the patient simply recognizes and speaks to the vision, and the experience is not upsetting but

"matter of fact." (Surrounding family members, however, may need *Aconite* for their fears over this.) If a patient experiences agitation from their hallucinatory experiences, a remedy based on the emotion they are experiencing would be useful. For example: if a patient fears the vision (very unusual)—*Aconite*; if a patient apologizes to the vision for a past deed—*Ignatia*; if a patient weeps uncontrollably when seeing the vision—*Pulsatilla*. One patient expressed agitation and irritation at the vision, saying "Sit down, I am not ready yet," in very impatient tones. *Nux vomica* was helpful to this person.

Pain: Remedy choice will depend on the type of pain—sharp, *Ledum*; throbbing, *Belladonna* or *Pulsatilla*; nerve pain, *Hypericum*; bone pain with depression *Aurum*; cramping of muscles or abdomen typically soothed by warmth, *Magnesium phos*.

Restlessness: *Arsenicum*, *Stramonium*.

Using the remedies

Put 2-3 pellets of a remedy (12c or 30c potency) in an 8-oz glass of water and stir. Administer one teaspoon every 15 minutes until relief; stir before each dose (maximum of 3 teaspoons—if still no relief, this remedy will not be useful, so consider another).

If the person responds positively to the remedy but the improvements do not last, increase dosage to 30c. Unless the person is actively dying (typically 12-24 hours till death), do not give a remedy in a potency higher than 30c as a person's vital force at the end of life is not strong. If the person is actively dying, however, gradually increasing the potency beyond 30c assists in the transition.

Try cell salts

Using Schuessler's 12 "cell salt" remedies in 6X or 12X potency can be another excellent approach to addressing the physical complaints at end of life. Possible uses include: *Kali phos* for anxiety; *Natrum mur*, *Natrum phos*, or *Silica* for constipation; *Natrum mur* for dry cracked lips; *Mag phos* for cramps, hiccoughs; and *Kali mur* for mouth ulcers and thrush.

For more on the general use of cell salts, see *Homeopathy Today* archives at homeopathycenter.org and search for: Miranda Castro's "Cell Salts: Gentle Little Souls" in July/August 2008, and Tanya Renner's "Nurture Your Inner Athlete with Homeopathic Cell Salts" in Summer 2015.

Normalizing death as a part of life is much needed in our culture.

that they exhaust their own emotional resources, leading to complete prostration. Mary's desire only for fruit juices was an important confirmatory symptom pointing to this remedy. (See repertorization chart below left.)

Round-the-clock caregiver

Jim was a 42-year-old father of three girls, ages 6, 4, and 2, when his wife, Dorothy, developed brain cancer. After months of seeking all types of care for Dorothy, they received news from her doctors that her condition was terminal.

They called on extended family to help with the children and household, while Jim took a leave of absence from work and was at Dorothy's bedside day and night. It was an exhausting five months.

After the funeral, Jim called the hospice saying, "I feel sick ... nauseous, dizzy, headache ... I'm afraid I'm getting sick like my wife. And I'm worried for my kids." He was easily irritated, was very eas-

ily offended, was profoundly sad, and had headaches, nausea, and motion sickness. The social worker explained that there was a phenomenon of caretaking when the caretaker becomes emotionally exhausted and then physically ill and angry after a prolonged period of round-the-clock caring for another, with the consequent loss of sleep; these are called ill effects from "night-watching."

Cocculus indicus is a homeopathic remedy with a reputation for counteracting the after-effects of night-watching. Its indications include dizziness, motion sickness, deep sadness, slow comprehension and a benumbed mind, an inability to bear contradiction, headache, and anxiety for the health of others. (See repertorization chart below right.)

After taking *Cocculus* 200c in water, 3 doses over 2 days, Jim's feeling of "sickness," headaches, and dizziness improved noticeably. His mood and energy soon stabilized, and he was then able to move

A repertorization chart for a patient named Mary. The chart lists various symptoms on the left and corresponding remedies on the right. The symptoms listed are: 1. PROSTRATION, 2. ANGER, 3. DIZZINESS, 4. APPETITE, 5. Nausea, 6. Headache, 7. Anxiety. The remedies listed include: Cocculus, Nuxvomica, Ignatia, and others. The chart shows the intersection of symptoms and remedies with colored dots.

A repertorization chart for a patient named Jim. The chart lists various symptoms on the left and corresponding remedies on the right. The symptoms listed are: 1. Nausea, 2. Dizziness, 3. Headache, 4. Anxiety. The remedies listed include: Cocculus, Nuxvomica, Ignatia, and others. The chart shows the intersection of symptoms and remedies with colored dots.

What Matters Most in the End

by ABBY BEALE, CCH, RSHom(NA)

This past summer was a very stressful one for me, as the main person in charge of my aging parents' finances and welfare. My mother is legally blind owing to glaucoma, and my step-dad has dementia. They were in their home of 30 years in New York City; I was two hours away in Connecticut. Their calls for help were increasing, as were my trips to the city. I knew something had to be done.

The task was overwhelming, but eventually I moved them into a lovely, two-bedroom, assisted-living apartment 20 minutes from me. I had little of my own life at this time. (A few doses of *Natrum muriaticum* helped me handle the stress and grief I felt through this pro-

cess.) So it's a relief to have them finally settled in. They are safe, well-nourished, intelligently medicated, and entertained. I can take them to doctor's appointments, manage their finances, and even have time for a casual meal out.

In the midst of my summer of turmoil, a friend recommended a book, *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters Most in the End*, by Atul Gawande (2014). I read it on my train rides to and from NYC and felt it was divinely sent as a reassuring hand in what I was going through. It also gave me an entirely new perspective on aging.

Gawande is a surgeon and a professor at Harvard Medical School. Through

eye-opening research and gripping stories of his own patients and family members, he reveals the inescapable realities of aging and death. He reminds us that people in their last years of life used to be taken care of by their families, whereas now, many go from independent-living to assisted-living to nursing facilities.

Gawande describes the shortcomings of some of these institutions, which can be preoccupied with safety and the convenience of the staff rather than with what the residents value most—their autonomy. At the other extreme are some enlightened nursing homes that have pets and plants, which residents help to look

forward and take on the huge task of grieving and helping his three daughters say goodbye to their mother.

Final thoughts

The more we are able to acknowledge death as part of the life cycle and talk with our family members and friends about feelings, hopes, and concerns before we are facing a final illness, the easier it actually is to deal with a final illness. Normalizing death as a part of life is much needed in our culture.

In her biography of French philosopher and essayist Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), *How to Live: Or a Life of Montaigne in One Question and Twenty Attempts at an Answer*, author Sarah Bakewell notes that as a young man, Montaigne was obsessed with a fear of death. He lived in a time of plague, cholera, and warfare and had lost many family members and friends to these scourges. After falling from a horse, Montaigne sustained a life-threatening injury and was unconscious for days; his family agonized at his bedside while he roiled with thrashing and moaning. Upon his recovery and when told of his angst, he replied to his family that his experience was one of peace and tranquility, not the

distress they had witnessed. Thereafter, he reported having completely lost his fear and obsession about death, writing: "If you don't know how to die, don't worry; Nature will tell you what to do on the spot, fully and adequately. She will do this job perfectly for you..."

Perhaps homeopathy, which can so well assist us in our journey through life, is intimately connected with the "Nature" that Montaigne speaks of ... the Vital Force, which supports our living and ultimately our dying.

FOOTNOTES

* From James T. Kent's lecture on the remedy, *Senega*, in *Lectures on Homeopathic Materia Medica*.

** Reiki, massage, acupuncture, prayer, and support groups are among many approaches being integrated into hospice care. Find out more by searching via "CAM on Pubmed®"—a service that limits a medical literature search to the subset of "complementary and alternative medicine." Typing in "death and dying" will yield more than 900 citations for homeopathy and other complementary approaches. Find "CAM on Pubmed®" at: <https://nccih.nih.gov/research/camonpubmed>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Loretta Butehorn, PhD, CCH, RSHom(NA), is a member of the NCH Board of Directors and Facilitator for the Homeopathic Action Alliance. She is a licensed psychologist and a director of The Sidewalk Clinic, a homeopathy street clinic for mental health and substance-impaired individuals.

She can be contacted at lbutehornnch@gmail.com.

More Resources

- Informative articles on treating terminally ill people can be found in past issues of *Homeopathy Today*, available to NCH members in the HT archives at homeopathycenter.org. See November/December 2007 "Compassionate Care at the End of Life: Homeopathy and Hospice Can Help" by Lia Bello, FNP. See also July/August 2005 for numerous articles.
- For palliating physical symptoms, acute care guides can be useful such as these excellent works: Asa Hershoff's *Homeopathic Remedies*; Richard Pitt's *Natural Medicine Guide for Travel and Home* (which also includes other complementary approaches for various symptoms).
- For terminally ill cancer patients, these books can be of great help: Laura Fenton's, *A Family Guide, Coping with Chemotherapy Using Homeopathy*; Catherine Coulter's and A.U. Ramakrishnan's, *A Homeopathic Approach to Cancer*; Jean-Lionel Bago's *Cancer and Homeopathy, How to Alleviate the Side Effects of Chemotherapy, Radiation, Surgery, and Hormone Therapy*.

... Coming to terms with mortality

after; these residents feel needed and end up being happier and healthier.

Gawande also argues that in our determination to help people live longer, we have forgotten what makes life worth living. Doctors do not talk honestly to dying patients and their families about how unsuccessful extreme end-of-life measures are likely to be. Gawande contrasts extreme measures with the more humane palliative care available in hospices, where patients sometimes live longer than they would have with more aggressive medical treatment.

As I was reading, I kept hoping I would see a reference to homeopathy for helping in the end stages of life, but alas, it wasn't

mentioned. Since Gawande is of Indian descent and homeopathy is popular in India, I thought he might have been influenced by it. I emailed him about this but, as yet, haven't had a reply.

Nevertheless, I want to share his thought-provoking ideas because we will all die one day, many of us will be involved in the homeopathic treatment of dying clients, and many of us will have to make crucial end-of-life decisions about our loved ones. It's reassuring to hear Gawande's stories and to learn from them, so that my decisions can be smarter and more soul-fulfilling for myself, my parents, and my family. I highly recommend this bestselling book,

Being Mortal, to anyone who cares about their own mortality and that of their loved ones.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Abby Beale, CCH, RSHom(NA), is the 2016 Joint American Homeopathic Conference Chair and board member for the National Center for Homeopathy. She believes homeopathy is the most intelligent medicine on the planet and personally presented an introductory

workshop called "Is Homeopathy for You?" to ten libraries in Connecticut this year.

What to Do When

You've



Overdone It

Get some bed rest, sunshine,
and cell salts, for starters!

by MIRANDA CASTRO, FSHom, CCH, RSHom(NA)

I left home when I was 18 years old and went out into the world with my clothes and ... a full set of “Schuessler’s 12 Tissue Salts” as they are known in the UK. These homeopathically-prepared, low-potency remedies—usually called “cell salts” in the US—were not a parting gift from my parents, although they had used them from time to time throughout my childhood. They preferred not to use anything when we were ill, having chosen a doctor who was an old-fashioned nature-cure practitioner who prescribed fasting and hydrotherapy when we got sick—and, of course, bed rest. But I am digressing already and will come back to that later.

Schuessler’s cell salts

I purchased these remedies myself and pored over Chapman and Perry’s *Biochemic Handbook: How to Get Well and Keep Fit with Biochemic Tissue Salts*, both fascinated and intrigued. Schuessler was a German physician who, while acquainted with homeopathy, became intrigued by the idea of cellular construction that was the “cutting edge” of physical pathology in Europe at the time (late 1800s). Schuessler studied the chemical make-up of human tissue and found that there were several salts common to all living cells.

Schuessler’s theory revolves around the belief that the tissues or cells of the body can be broken down chemically into 12 inorganic mineral salts. (See list on page 18.) He believed that disturbances in the levels of these salts caused

**Schuessler’s method
could be regarded
as the homeopathic
equivalent of mineral
supplementation.**

Whatever happened to the (now old-fashioned) family doctor who prescribed bed rest for their exhausted patients?

SCHUESSLER'S 12 Cell Salts

Schuessler's 12 mineral salt remedies are:

Calcarea fluorica (calcium fluoride)
Calcarea phosphorica (calcium phosphate)
Calcarea sulphurica (calcium sulphate)
Ferrum phosphoricum (phosphate of iron)
Kali muriaticum (potassium chloride)
Kali phosphoricum (potassium phosphate)
Kali sulphuricum (potassium sulphate)
Magnesium phosphoricum (magnesium phosphate)
Natrum muriaticum (sodium chloride)
Natrum phosphoricum (sodium phosphate)
Natrum sulphuricum (sodium sulphate)
Silica (silica)

disease, so health could be restored by giving very small doses of the salt that was lacking. He used homeopathic pharmaceutical methods to prepare each salt to a 6X potency, which means it still contains minute amounts of the salt at a molecular level. Schuessler's method could be regarded as the homeopathic equivalent of mineral supplementation.

So Schuessler did not use classical homeopathic methods (based on provings and the law of similars) to select a cell salt remedy. But later on, homeopaths Boericke and Dewey incorporated symptoms elicited from the homeopathic provings of Allen and Hering into their book *The Twelve Tissue Remedies of Schuessler*. This increased the cell salts' potential by making remedy selection a more homeopathic process and widened their use among homeopaths. Clinical experiences of homeopaths using Schuessler's cell salts over ensuing years have added to the body of knowledge about them.

Kali phosphoricum

I became increasingly fond of these gentle little salts as I got to know and use them, and, like any group of friends, I had my favorites. These have stayed with me and I use them still. One of my faves still is *Kali phosphoricum*—a lovely remedy for simple physical tiredness or for “nervous exhaustion,” as homeopaths like to say, which is more of a mental fatigue where thinking and concentrating is a struggle.

Kali phosphoricum is for those who feel tired after a heavy work or study period. It is lovely for the simple insomnia that follows a period of excitement, intense work, mental strain, or emotional stress, when a person feels worn out but cannot sleep. It is also useful in the convalescent stage of an acute illness (especially after the flu) where there is muscular weakness accompanying the nervous exhaustion.

People who need this remedy feel better for—and desperately need—warmth and rest, and a healthy diet to build themselves up again.

They feel “on edge” and “worn out” after a period of overwork or any kind of stressful situation—at home, at school or at work. They can feel emotionally tired out also and even feel mildly depressed. They become sensitive to light and noise and are easily startled.

Their physical exhaustion is accompanied by sweating from even the gentlest of exercise. They are sensitive to cold air and cold in general, and their physical complaints are worse for cold. Their arms and legs can feel heavy and cold. Along with fatigue, the typical physical symptoms that call for *Kali phosphoricum* are anemia, backache, spongy, receding gums, smelly breath, headaches, indigestion, and insomnia. These symptoms may be hard to pin down ... people feel tired, they can't sleep, they feel a bit depressed. There are no really strong symptoms. In these cases it is the etiology (the incident or activity that triggered the symptoms) that helps to confirm this remedy.

Bring back bed rest

Which brings me to one of my favorite topics! Whatever happened to the (now old-fashioned) family doctor who prescribed bed rest for their exhausted patients? I am saddened by the crazy desire of people to work, literally, until they drop. And especially doctors and homeopaths who work absurd hours to the detriment of their own mental and physical health—and neglect their families in the process.

When our reserves are all spent and we are indebted to our own depleted energy banks, we have to work harder to recover our vitality. It is simply not enough to pay back by sleeping an extra half hour a day. More drastic measures are needed, that take each person and their circumstances into account. A day here and there will work for someone who is blessed with a high vitality and who pays attention to the warning signs of possible depletion. A longer period of time is needed for

someone who has been over-extending themselves for many months or even years. Studies have shown that while we rest and sleep, the cells of our body work harder to repair themselves and perform other essential healing functions.

Meeting our basic needs for rest, sleep, food, and exercise is a cornerstone to good health. If we tend to ignore our basic needs, then it is just a question of time before we get depleted—exhausted and run down.

For those of you who don't know me well, I am a self-confessed workaholic. I love to work and sometimes struggle with taking time off to let those scales tip back in the other direction. I have certain signs and symptoms that tell me I am taking risks with my health ... feeling tired most of the time is one of them. When this occurs, I take to my bed with soothing drinks and music, a book that makes me laugh out loud, and I stay there. Usually for a day. And I read and I sleep and I eat nutritious little snacks. And if the sun is very shiny and if after half a day of resting I feel great, then I go out for a long and thoughtless walk, or I potter about in the garden immersing my hands in the earth. If I don't rest and recharge, I get sick. It is as simple as one plus one equals two. If I do rest up, then I wake the next morning feeling better in myself and with my energy bank replenished.

For severely exhausted patients, I recommend bed rest and four hourly “feeds” (during waking hours!) to keep blood sugar levels from plummeting, and no caffeine or alcohol—until that person starts to wake feeling rested. I ask my patients to be creative about what else they need to replenish themselves: for example, a nice long soak in a daily bath (for those who find this relaxing), funny movies, fresh air, trashy novels, tea with a good friend, and so on. We figure out how the kids can be taken care of and who can do the shopping and cooking for working mothers with small children.

It is so often a community affair. When I lived in a small town in the North West of England (population 20,000), I could call on the neighbors and friends

and relatives of sick patients to help out when necessary. Reciprocal arrangements abounded and people who had lived there all their lives looked out for each other. I do not wish to make this life seem unreasonably rosy; it can be annoying to know that your every public move (and some private ones too) has been noted by someone! But cultivating local friends and connections—whether our community is small or large—can certainly reap rewards for our present and future well-being.

Calcarea phosphorica

Kali phosphoricum isn't the only remedy for nervous exhaustion after a heavy period of work. Another important cell salt for those who are run down is *Calcarea phosphorica*. This is a wonderful tonic for people who have become mentally and physically exhausted after a period of mental work (like studying for exams). Or for those in the convalescent phase of an illness—especially if there has been a significant fluid loss from sweating, bleeding, vomiting, or diarrhea, etc. Or for infants, children, and young adults who are tired after a growth spurt. I recommend parents keep track of their children's height on a kitchen door-jamb—it is simple then to spot the kids who are tired out by growth spurts and to be proactive about helping them.

Instead of mild depression, people who need *Calc phos* become discontented and negative—complaining and grumbling about many things and not knowing what they want. Those who are mentally worn out from too much studying become dull and sluggish and find it hard to concentrate. They are peevish and have no “go” in them. They look pale and thin or just generally flabby. Those needing this remedy are generally sensitive to the cold and to drafts, which can cause a stiff neck. Their arms and legs feel heavy and weak.

It is simply not enough to pay back by sleeping an extra half hour a day. More drastic measures are needed...



Typical physical complaints include: anemia, headaches, stomach aches with loud belching, growing pains in children (in the muscles or bones more than the joints), cramps in the calves, insomnia up until midnight and great difficulty getting up in the morning, and nosebleeds on blowing the nose. I have found it to be almost a specific for simple tension in the neck and trapezius muscles (the triangles between the points of the shoulder and the neck) from exhaustion or after physical stress and strain.

Cell salt dosing

Cell salts are the lowest of potencies (gentle little souls), typically coming in 3X, 6X, or 12X potencies, and can be repeated fairly frequently if needed. They can be taken 2 to 4 times a day—less often if symptoms are mild and more often if symptoms are bothersome or serious. I suggest backing off as and when there are noticeable improvements and stopping on significant improvement. They can then be started up again if the same symptoms return.

If you can't choose between two salts, then you can alternate them, for example, taking the first cell salt in the morning and mid afternoon, and the second one in the afternoon and at bedtime.

More healing solutions for exhaustion

Beyond the cell salt remedies, there are many homeopathic remedies that can help a person suffering with exhaustion. Here are some reminders for a few everyday exhaustion remedies, followed by a

And if the sun is very shiny ... then I go out for a long and thoughtless walk.

Learn More

For more about Schuessler's cell salts, see these resources:

- "Gentle Little Souls: Everyday Uses for the Humble Tissue Salt," by Miranda Castro, *Homeopathy Today*, Jan/Feb 2008
www.mirandacastro.com/articles/documents/CellSaltsJan-Feb2008HT.pdf
- *Gentle Little Souls: the 12 Fabulous Cell Salts DVD*, by Miranda Castro
www.mirandacastro.com/shop/
- *The Biochemic Handbook: How to get well and keep fit with biochemic tissue salts* by J.B. Chapman and E.L. Perry
- *The Twelve Tissue Remedies of Schuessler* by W. Boericke and W. Dewey
- "Nurture Your Inner Athlete with Homeopathic Cell Salts" by Tanya Renner, CCH, RSHom(NA), *Homeopathy Today*, Summer 2015
www.homeopathycenter.org/homeopathy-today-magazine

couple of cases showing how they can be used.

Cocculus: This remedy is useful in situations of sleep loss along with worry, such as after nursing a sick person, or perhaps from travel, loss of a loved one, or other mental strain. Anxiety and vertigo are characteristic, and the person's anxiety centers on the health of those close to them. There is complete, almost paralytic exhaustion—they tremble with tiredness, are dizzy, and feel worse from fresh air or physical exertion. They want to lie quietly in bed and sleep, but this is difficult because the habit of sleeping is lost, which creates a vicious circle of exhaustion. They feel that time passes too quickly, especially at night when they try to sleep but can't because they're worrying. This is a wonderful remedy for jet lag or travel sickness, accompanied by numbness, nausea, or headache.

Nitric acid: This can help when emotional stress or loss of sleep from broken nights results in irritability. Particularly sensitive to conflict, people needing this remedy are quick to anger, exploding in outbursts of rage. Afterwards, they tremble but remain resentful and vindictive. They are anxious about their health, often believing they are seriously ill and getting cross when doctors reassure them. Under stress they may throw themselves into their work, which leads to irritability, mental exhaustion, and the opposite extreme of not wanting to work at all. In this stage, they become oversensitive to noise, forgetful, and worse from exertion. They are chilly, sensitive to pain, and prone to splinter-like pains and cracks in the skin.

Nux vomica: These are intense, enthusiastic people who embrace life—especially work—and then become exhausted from overdoing everything. Their mental efficiency is affected and they can't concentrate or remember things. So they drink vast quantities of caffeinated drinks to work, and they use alcohol or drugs to sleep. Then their nervous system becomes oversensitive to any extra stimulation like bright lights, noise, and smells. They become irritable, anxious,

and argumentative. These chilly people feel better from warmth. They suffer insomnia with worries about work, have many digestive disturbances from overdoing food and drink, and feel worse in the morning. Anyone can fall into a *Nux vomica* state given the right combination of stresses, such as a heavy workload, a few too many late nights, and too much alcohol.

Phosphoric acid: This remedy benefits those who are weak and tired from mental strain, such as studying too much, or from emotional trauma. They sink into an apathetic state, not wanting to talk, to think, or to answer questions because they cannot concentrate. They may be able to summon up energy to do physical things, but there is a great stillness mentally and emotionally. The remedy can also benefit those who are exhausted after an illness with significant fluid loss, such as diarrhea, vomiting, or bleeding. They look pale and sickly with dark rings under their eyes, and they sweat a lot. They want to eat refreshing food and beverages, such as fruit, vegetables, and fizzy drinks. They are worse from cold and better after a good sleep.

Sepia: When well, people needing this remedy are energetic, productive, hard workers. Once overstressed, they are prone to dreadful emotional troughs, becoming sluggish, irritable, weepy, and depressed. This remedy can help those struggling without enough support, such as single parents, especially women, who become worn down by worries and/or many children with not enough time between the births for their bodies to recover. They sag mentally and physically; they grind to a halt, sitting silently, feeling empty, and enjoying nothing—indifferent to things that formerly gave them enjoyment, including partners, children, and work. If they *do* manage to drag themselves out of their torpor to do something physically strenuous and fast-moving, they feel much better. They can be surprisingly sharp-tongued in response to the needs of others, erupting in angry outbursts or sarcasm. They are very chilly but sweat easily and profusely.

Backaches, headaches, and menstrual pains are common. Their face tends to be yellow and pale, with dark rings under the eyes. This remedy is often useful for problems related to women's hormones, from puberty through menopause.

Zincum metallicum: This remedy is useful for those who are exhausted from overwork and mental strain, with loss of sleep. They become depressed, irritable, sensitive to noise, confused, and generally worn out. They don't want to talk much (because conversation is too noisy), but they may go on and on whining about their complaints. Their nervous system is worn down, causing them to tremble, twitch, and jerk. They suffer from restless legs, especially in bed; their legs will carry on twitching even during sleep. They feel worse at night, worse from drinking wine, and worse after eating.

An overwhelmed mother

I called on Susan to find her looking pretty exhausted. She was cooking her three older kids their evening meal with the three-month-old baby on her hip. She said she hadn't sat down all day except to breast-feed—either the baby wanted carrying or she was running around after the other children. And then she'd had to shop and cook and vacuum and attend to the fire. And the nights had been terrible because it seemed as if the baby was teething already. Her husband was on shift work, which had been a strain for the whole family. Susan had started back to work six weeks ago, which meant she was spending her evenings at the computer once the children were in bed. It was suddenly all too much. "But this is what I wanted, so I have to put up with it. I mustn't complain," she said.

She coughed as she "whizzed" around the kitchen. Her face was pale with deep, dark circles under her eyes. She snapped at the kids when they asked her for anything. She said her back hurt all the time with having to carry the baby (large at birth, and continuing to gain at a high rate), and she also had a touch of cystitis (bladder infection).

I asked whether she was getting enough

We figure out how the kids can be taken care of and who can do the shopping and cooking for working mothers with small children.

rest. She snapped that she couldn't, she had too much to do, and anyway, she was all right when she was rushing around, as long as she didn't stop.

I could see that Susan badly needed a dose of *Sepia* (see earlier remedy description) and a good rest, otherwise she was going to suffer from more than a little cough and a touch of cystitis. So I simply offered her a remedy for her physical symptoms. She said she didn't want one and that she was fine.

A few days later, Susan rang asking for help because she felt herself to be going down with flu—she was aching all over and feeling miserable. I gave her *Sepia* 30c to take every two hours, and by the next day she felt much better in all ways. She talked about how she had barely done anything for herself since the baby had been born, about how all the different demands of babies and children and partner and house and work were getting to her. She resolved to remedy that pretty quickly, by having some early nights to balance out the stress of broken sleep and taking better care of her own needs on a daily basis.

It's not uncommon for women with small children to feel overwhelmed with the workload, especially if they have to go back to work fairly soon after the

birth and even more so if they are single parenting. Over the following year while breast-feeding, Susan needed an occasional repeat dose of *Sepia* to help her through this emotionally and physically stressful time in her life.

An exhausted caretaker

Jan had to give up her job as a nursery school teacher (which she loved) five years ago in order to look after her elderly mother who had a stroke and was increasingly dependent, although looking like she might live for quite a few years to come. Jan was finding it difficult to sleep at night, was suffering from headaches and heartburn, felt tense, exhausted, and on edge for what seemed like most of the time, and completely lost her get up and go. She knew she was run down and needed to do something about it.

Jan's mother was a difficult patient, demanding and irritable and resentful that she had lost her independence and had to ask for help with almost everything. Jan found herself seething with anger when her mother ordered her about, and Jan had trouble keeping her temper under control at times. Her mother had been calling out in the night for help for



Reciprocal arrangements abounded and people who had lived there all their lives looked out for each other.

...I don't think it is wise to encourage those who are worn out to take a remedy and carry on, so that the homeopathic solution is, essentially, propping them up.

weeks now, at least twice a night, wanting a drink or thinking it was morning and wanting her breakfast at 3:00 a.m. Jan was relying on many cups of coffee to get through the day and increasing amounts of wine at night to unwind. She felt on edge, irritable, and hypersensitive. She realized that her mother's constant, imperative demands were making her feel abused and humiliated.

Jan browsed through her homeopathy books and found *Nitric acid* as a possible remedy. It matched her anger, resentment, and broken sleep, but on further reading, she wasn't sure it was a good overall fit. After thumbing through her books some more, she found *Nux vomica*, and when she read the description, she smiled with relief. It covered her feelings of anger and humiliation, insomnia, 3:00 a.m. waking, reliance on stimulants, oversensitivity, and indigestion.

She started with a low potency (6c), taking it three times a day. By the end of a week, she felt a small but definite improvement in her energy and outlook, as well as her indigestion. At the end of two weeks, she continued to feel better—less angry and on edge, and more clear-headed. At around this time, she began looking into getting some assistance from family members and hired help, in order to share some of the weight of fulltime caregiving. Eventually, Jan stopped taking *Nux vomica* on a regular basis because she felt so much better. She then repeated it only “as needed,” whenever she felt the stress of her situation building again and affecting her health.

Remedy dosing

If you are prescribing for yourself or a loved one, it is wise to stick to lower potency homeopathic remedies, such as 6c, 12c, or 30c. Take or give the remedy based on the urgency of the symptoms—

more often if symptoms are severe, less often if less severe. Take the remedy less often (increase the gaps between doses) once you notice improvement, and stop on marked improvement. In cases of simple exhaustion from a known cause when symptoms are relatively mild, I often recommend taking the chosen remedy in a 6X or 6C potency, one dose, three times daily, for up to ten days. If no response is noted, try a different remedy or seek professional help.

Use common sense

In spite of the fact that we have these wonderful cell salts and homeopathic remedies, I don't think it is wise to encourage those who are worn out to take a remedy and carry on, so that the homeopathic solution is, essentially, propping them up. We need to take into account the whole person in their work life, their family life, and their social situations. And we especially want to help them meet their basic human needs for the simpler but essential things in life—like fresh air and sunshine, rest and sleep, exercise and nutritious food.

A well-chosen homeopathic remedy plus attending to basic needs will have a profound healing effect on the immune system and the vital force. So whenever you find yourself in a pattern of “overdoing it,” give yourself permission to stop, “undo it,” and take a break that is meaningful and healing for you and your precious vital force.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Miranda Castro, FSHom, CCH, RSHom(NA) is a world-renowned British homeopath who has been living in the US since 1994 and in Florida since 2002. She is author of the bestseller *The Complete Homeopathy Handbook* as well as *Homeopathy for Pregnancy, Birth and Your*

Baby's First Years and *A Homeopathic Guide to Stress*. She created Miranda Castro's COMPASS paperless office software for homeopaths. Her remarkable healing creams have been soothing injured or arthritic joints and scars for 29 years. Find them and a treasure trove of homeopathic resources at www.mirandacastro.com.



Homeopathy's
role in supporting
those who care
for others

Caring for THE CAREGIVER

by LAURI GROSSMAN, DC, CCH, RSHom(NA)

As the population of the United States ages and the number of adults with disabilities grows, more Americans are becoming caregivers to those they love. Caregivers provide support in an infinite number of ways, but most of their time is spent on activities like shopping, preparing food, housekeeping, doing laundry, providing transportation, and giving medication. Other tasks include feeding, dressing, walking, bathing, and assisting at the toilet. A significant amount of time is also spent researching care services or information on disease, coordinating physician visits, and managing financial matters.⁷



According to the Alzheimer's Association, as many as 30% to 40% of Alzheimer's caregivers experience depression or burnout, and 35% say their own health suffers.

What is most striking is that even though 88% of caregivers find it rewarding to help a family member, more than half (57%) of our nation's caregivers report that they do not have a choice about performing these tasks (because no one else can do it, insurance will not pay for a professional caregiver, or they feel pressured by another family member) and that it is stressful.

What's more, the toll on caregivers rises as the period of time an individual needs assistance lengthens. Financial stress and emotional challenges can seem insurmountable, especially when caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. According to the Alzheimer's Association, as many as 30% to 40% of Alzheimer's caregivers experience depression or burnout, and 35% say their own health suffers.

Future trends in caregiving

Despite these grim statistics, caregiving is evolving, and homeopathy can play a role in that. For starters, the RAISE Family Caregivers Act, signed into law in January 2018, "requires the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop, maintain, and update an integrated national strategy to support family caregivers." Thought leaders are emerging in the field, people like Ken Dychtwald,

founder of Age Wave, a research and consulting firm; John Haaga, director of the Division of Behavioral and Social Research at the National Institute on Aging; and Laura Sands, editor in chief of *Innovation in Aging*, a journal of the Gerontological Society of America.

In a post on the Seniorlink blog, these experts foresee significant positive trends:

- Apps and online tools to assist caregivers will proliferate.
- "Smart home" sensors will support caregivers and older adults who want to age in place.
- Universal design, which makes homes user-friendly as we age, will become the norm.
- "Care pathways" mapped on genetics, life and health preferences, and meta-data analyses of whole populations vis-à-vis health interventions and outcomes will improve.
- Robots, self-driving cars, and other forms of artificial intelligence will lessen the load on human caregivers.
- Interdependence, in the form of retirement cohousing, the Village movement, intergenerational communities, and other ways to age together, will become more common, helping to reduce isolation and loneliness, especially for "elder orphans."

Remedies to support caregivers

While we look forward to such positive changes and innovations becoming more commonplace and affordable, increasing numbers of people are turning to homeopathy to help strengthen those who bear the weight of family caregiving. Not surprisingly, many of the most common homeopathic remedies are to be considered.

Arsenicum album

This remedy is useful in situations where the major breadwinner of the family has become ill, and the caregiver is concerned for how they will make ends meet. It can help individuals who must deplete their savings to care for another and who then worry about their own financial security.

These people often become restless and lose sleep from anxiety, pacing about until they finally fall asleep from exhaustion. Physical ailments often arise, especially those of the gastrointestinal and respiratory tracts.

Judith: From anxiety to peace. A 68-year-old patient of mine, Judith, was caring for her husband when she described her predicament to me. "He was the one who took care of things. He earned a good living, managed all our finances, and paid all the bills. Now I just don't know what I'm going to do." Her anxieties were relentless. She continually called her husband's medical team for updates and his financial advisor for reports. She struggled to get through each day, calling friends for support and relatives for advice. She was always chilly, and as time went on, her stomach became increasingly sensitive to the things she ate. The worst culprit was ice cream. After just a few small bites, she'd race to the bathroom with diarrhea. It was only after a prescription of *Arsenicum album* that she could let go of her worries and find peace in the time she had with her husband. It also improved her digestive troubles, so much so that she treated herself to a small dish of Ben and Jerry's ice cream each evening.

Cocculus

Whenever a person's focus of worry is the well-being of a loved one and is accompanied by the caregiver's loss of sleep, one must consider the remedy *Cocculus*. Physical symptoms related to the nervous system often ensue, with headaches, dizziness, and weakness being the most common.

Carina: Dizzy and desperate for sleep.

A vibrant 38-year-old patient of mine, Carina, called me early one morning. "My entire world is spinning, and I am so nauseous. When I make the slightest attempt to get out of bed, I have to lie down again right away." I asked her if anything out of the ordinary was happening in her life. "My sister-in-law has been in the hospital, and I've been by her side all day. I'm living out

of a bag and haven't taken a break in days. The room is noisy with machines that beep all night. I was desperate for sleep and tried taking Xanax, but it hasn't helped."

In addition to imploring Carina to take a break and to go home and catch up on her rest, I recommended she take a dose of *Cocculus* 30c immediately and then four times daily until she noticed improvement. After the first dose, Carina felt worse. I urged her to be patient, to rest as much as she could, and to update me in a couple hours. By then, Carina was back to her original baseline and eager to give the *Cocculus* another try. Two hours later, her report was more positive. Although still dizzy, she was a bit better and could sit up long enough to brush her teeth. The improvement continued throughout the day, and she was back to normal in another day or so.

Interestingly, the symptoms returned briefly, many years later, when Carina was traveling on a bus climbing through a hilly section of India. The stop-and-go motion of the vehicle triggered nausea and dizziness. Fortunately, Carina had access to a clinic in India and knew to ask for her old standby, *Cocculus*, which also happens to be one of the most commonly indicated remedies for cases of motion sickness or seasickness. Since then, getting sleep is a priority for Carina, and traveling with *Cocculus* is just as high on her list.

One word of caution. Oftentimes, we try to simplify homeopathy by memorizing only a few key symptoms associated with each remedy. For example, health-food store displays of homeopathic medicines typically list just one or two indications per remedy. For *Cocculus*, that indication would be motion sickness. But it is essential, when selecting a homeopathic prescription for a friend or loved one, to consider the whole case and inquire about the onset of the symptoms and any other factors that might contribute to the complaints. Only then can you learn the otherwise hidden clues that, once revealed, will lead to the remedy that will provide relief.



Ruth: Hearing loss and an aha moment. My experience with Ruth, a sweet 75-year-old woman, will help to illustrate why it's important to consider the whole case before prescribing a remedy. More than 20 years ago, Ruth called my office (using a caption phone) to see if I treated deafness. I replied that I had worked with some people who had hearing loss, but most were children, and none had total hearing loss. Still, I told her that I'd be happy to work with her to see if I could provide some relief.

As Ruth told me about her hearing loss, I noted nothing very unusual about her story. She didn't remember being exposed to any loud noise, and she didn't recall any physical insult to her head. She simply said that many years ago, she noticed that she wasn't hearing conversations clearly and was sitting silent when her family gathered on weekends, unable to participate in the joyful discussions she used to have with her children and grandchildren. Her son, who accompanied her to the office, let me know that because of her hearing loss, Ruth was contacting friends less frequently and becoming more depressed.

I repertorized Ruth's case, focusing on her hearing loss, but none of the resulting remedies satisfied me; *Graphites*, *Meze-reum*, and *Silica* just didn't match the whole person sitting before me. So, I told Ruth that I needed more time to come up with a remedy and asked her to call me if she could think of anything else that was going on in her life around the time of the onset of her deafness.

Later that evening, Ruth's son called: "I have a feeling that my mom's deafness may have started around the time my sister had cancer." When I asked him to tell me more about that time, he continued, "My sister passed away after struggling with breast cancer many years ago. She spent her last months at my parents' home. The whole family helped, but I remember that Mom stayed up through the night to keep Caroline company. She just didn't want her ever to be alone." This was the "aha moment" of discovery in Ruth's case: It was the worry for her daughter and the lack of sleep that led me to prescribe *Cocculus*.

The homeopathic treatment worked slowly, but after two years, Ruth experienced a 60% improvement in hearing tests. Her audiologist was delightfully surprised and called to tell me that she was going to recommend *Cocculus* to all her patients. Needless to say, I had to teach her about homeopathic case-taking and treating the whole person, mind and body together, with a remedy tailored to each individual.

Natrum muriaticum

Often, we find caretakers who are highly sensitive, responsible, and perfectionistic. They take the job of assisting a loved one seriously and tend to all aspects of care with precision, without any desire for support. In fact, these people can take the offer of support as a criticism of the perfect job they are trying to accomplish. At night, they can lie in bed for hours, unable to sleep because their mind is filled



Resources for CAREGIVERS

Find the links to these great resources at Seniorlink (be sure to scroll to very bottom of the page): <https://www.seniorlink.com/blog/stateofcaregiving>

- AARP—Housing Options and Home Care
- AARP—Caregiving, Benefits, and Insurance
- AARP—Legal and Financial Caregiving
- AARP—Home-Based Palliative Care
- Family Caregiver Alliance—Legislation: The Impact of Healthcare Reform on Family Caregivers
- HHS.gov—Resources Near You
- Eldercare Directory—State Resources
- CMS.gov—What Caregiver Support Is Available in My Area?
- Family Care Navigator—State-by-State Help for Family Caregivers
- Mayo Clinic—Caregiver Stress: Tips for Taking Care of Yourself
- HelpGuide.org—Caregiver Stress and Burnout
- AgingCare.com—Strategies for Coping with Caregiver Stress

with thoughts of the difficulties of daily care (which they would never share with anyone). When I have seen patients who are hesitant to discuss their caregiving experience, the difficulties and losses involved, then *Natrum muriaticum* is the first remedy that comes to mind. They may have any number of physical complaints, but headaches, cold sores, and hay fever are common.

Diane: Devoted daughter with migraines. My patient, Diane, illustrates this perfectly. When she entered my office, she was neatly attired with a plain hairstyle and a simple dress. She had a history of migraines and gave only a few additional details. I was patient in giving her time to speak, but there wasn't much else she wanted to offer. She did say that she was an only child and that she grew up in a home "without a lot of drama." She was a good student, liked school, and got good grades. No one ever had to tell her to do her homework. Being responsible came naturally. I asked about challenges in life, and she said she couldn't think of any. I asked about other physical issues, and she didn't have many. After an hour of sitting with me, she stated, "My life has been pretty straightforward. No big issues and not a lot of illness." I replied, "Life doesn't always have big issues, and not everyone has great illness. I just want to know you better. I want to learn what it feels like to be Diane."

So she told me in a very straightforward way how she takes care of her mother, who has lived with her for nine years. She didn't make it seem like a big burden, just something that any devoted daughter would do. She managed all her mom's care and, despite her mother needing 24-7 assistance, had help on only rare occasion. So, there was the heart of my *Natrum muriaticum* case: a patient who was innately responsible and

reliable, taking on the entirety of caretaking without assistance or complaint but coming down with debilitating migraines.

Needless to say, part of my treatment plan was to advise Diane to expand her support network. This was difficult for her at first, but with more people around to share caretaking responsibilities, and with two doses of *Natrum muriaticum* 1M, Diane and her migraines improved dramatically. She remained in my practice for many years and had to repeat the remedy only a few times since the initial prescription. Over all those years, her life grew more colorful as she began participating in many more activities for enjoyment than she had when she was younger. And her mom was very happy that she did!

Nux vomica

When caretaking results in anger and irritability in the caregiver, then *Nux vomica* can help set things right. These people cannot help but carry on about the faults of doctors and the problems with the medical system. They are impatient and desperately need breaks by going for brisk walks or visits to the gym in order to burn off some of their anger-producing stress. They tend to be impatient, competitive, and ambitious, with their main focus on work and achievement. Their physical complaints often center in the gastrointestinal tract, with spasms and cramping. They tend to be chilly and to crave spicy foods, stimulants, and alcohol.

Marsha: Busy executive with stomach problems. Years ago, I treated Marsha, a corporate executive with a peptic ulcer. The first thing she said on entering the office was that my building should get rid of the doorman because he was so slow. She then told me she could only stay for a short while because she had to get to her office for a meeting. She was in a rush and wanted

She managed all her mom's care and, despite her mother needing 24-7 assistance, had help on only rare occasion.

Time and again, I have seen homeopathy return strength and perspective to caregivers who were at their wits' end.

me to do my work as quickly as I could. It didn't matter that I had told her upfront that the visit would take 90 minutes. What was important was that she had a lot to do, and she expected me to get a move on it!

Marsha gave me the highlights of her history: "I've had heartburn for years. But I was able to live with it. Then two or three years ago, I developed all sorts of stomach stuff. I'd wake up with cramps in the morning, or I'd be in pain if I drank a lot of coffee at work. And now it's over the top—I can barely do my work." I asked about general symptoms and learned that Marsha was usually chilly. She had a great love of spicy foods and alcohol and often experienced constipation. Eventually, I asked what was going on in her life two or three years ago that might have contributed to the worsening of her symptoms. She began to put on her coat, telling me she didn't have time to go into it. I asked, "Do you really want to get rid of the ulcer? Can you just give me five minutes?" She agreed and sat down.

Then Marsha described what it was like for her to care for her developmentally disabled daughter, racing her about from one holistic practitioner to another, each of whom had some trait that distressed Marsha. She told me what it was like to track down the therapies that would give her daughter the greatest boost forward. She described it as a competition that she was determined to win. And that view, one of striving through challenges without letting up, was the confirmation of the need for *Nux vomica*.

After several doses of *Nux vomica* in a 200c and then a 1M dilution, Marsha's agitation lessened, her stomach complaints eventually healed, and most importantly, her time with her daughter became more rewarding. Although Marsha continues to look for the best therapists for her little girl, she is no longer in a mad race to get her to the top. She is there by her daughter's side, encouraging her forward with love and pride and appreciating the journey they share together.

Remedies for the whole person

As these cases illustrate, *Arsenicum album*, *Cocculus*, *Natrum muriaticum*, and *Nux vomica* have provided deep, long-lasting benefit to caregivers in my practice, but there are certainly other remedies to consider. *Pulsatilla* can offer strength to gentle caretakers who need lots of comfort, who ask their friends to stop by often or to meet for a social visit whenever they feel low. *Aurum metallicum* can lift the spirits of serious individuals when their valiant attempts to help a loved one make little difference, and so they become deeply depressed.

Of course, physical ailments and general symptoms and tendencies are characteristic of each remedy mentioned, and these can be found in the classic homeopathic references. So, it is important to look at the whole person and find a homeopathic prescription that matches both the emotional core of the caretaker's experience as well as their associated physical symptoms. When seeking to affect someone's emotional state, it is best to use only one homeopathic medicine at a time.

Infrequent doses of high dilutions (200c and 1M potencies) are used by practitioners when they want the remedy to act on the psyche. However, people who are new to homeopathy are better served by beginning with a lower potency (two or three pellets of 30c, once or twice each day). Administer the remedy until you see improvement. However, if you see no change after a week, then stop and try another remedy or seek the guidance of a trained practitioner before going to a higher dose.

Strengthening caregivers and the world

Time and again, I have seen homeopathy return strength and perspective to caregivers who were at their wits' end. The improvements on both the physical and emotional levels have been remarkable. Still, we as a nation have a long way to go before the expected trends of the future become commonplace. Until that day, caretakers need resources to ease their

caregiving journey. The "Resources for Caregivers" list on page 22 should help.

When an effective homeopathic prescription is coupled with useful support services, change really happens. Caring for the caregiver improves the health of the whole family system. As Jean, a caregiver patient of mine, once reported after homeopathic treatment, "I can keep the stress in perspective now. I finally appreciate the chance I have to be with my mom, to hold her hand, and to offer her comfort." This ease trickled down to Jean's children and out to her brother, sister, and community relationships. Caring for caregivers can help us to care for the world.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lauri Grossman, DC, CCH, RSHom(NA), serves as president-elect of the Board of Directors for the National Center for Homeopathy and chair of the Joint American Homeopathic Conference Committee. She practices in New York City and has taught at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Hospital for Special Surgery, Lenox Hill Hospital, and NYU. She is a frequent presenter at Gilda's Club, working with people living with cancer to overcome the side effects of cancer treatments. Some of her most rewarding work has been with Homeopaths Without Borders in Trinidad and Haiti, and with medical doctors working to establish homeopathy in Afghanistan.



Matters

Treating and preventing hypertension

by AMY ROTHENBERG, ND

A few months after my 12th birthday, I awoke suddenly in the wee hours to ambulance lights whirling across my bedroom wall. I heard banging in the hallway outside my door and loud unfamiliar voices. I got up to learn my father had died. Like many fathers living in the middle part of the 20th century, he was a heavy smoker who had a stressful sedentary job and a large family to support. Given his elevated blood pressure, high cholesterol, and excess weight, the massive heart attack that killed him was no surprise—at least in hindsight.

We have come a long way in our knowledge of heart health. Research is unequivocal about the positive impact on our hearts when we adopt certain lifestyle habits. Yet heart disease remains the number one killer for both men and women in the United States. More than 600,000 people die of it each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). That's one in every four deaths in this country.

Plaque buildup and lifestyle

Coronary artery disease is the most common type of heart disease. When plaque builds up in arteries, blood flow to the heart is reduced, which can lead to a heart attack. Nowadays, patients who are lucky enough to make it to a hospital during a heart attack can often be saved with emergency procedures, such as the insertion of stents into coronary arteries or surgical bypasses of coronary arteries. Even better,

of course, would be if patients would adopt lifestyle changes to increase their chances of averting these major surgeries in the first place!

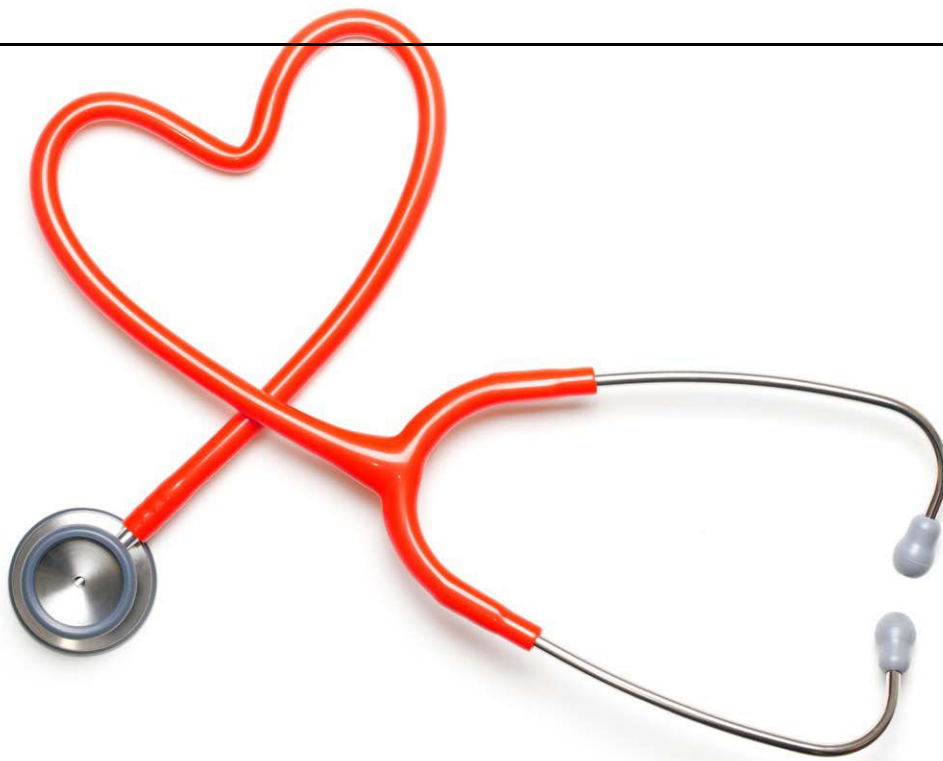
Healthy lifestyle habits and natural medicine can help prevent and, if needed, treat heart disease in most cases. In this article, I will share the story of a patient who struggled with and eventually overcame hypertension (high blood pressure), one of the most important risk factors to correct to help prevent heart disease. Other risk factors to address in heart disease prevention include smoking, not exercising enough, eating a poor diet, having high cholesterol levels, and having diabetes.

Stressed-out single mom doing it all

Carrie first came to me as a 50-something social worker and single mom, with a high-stress job and many commitments at home. She ran herself ragged trying to do everything for everyone, from working in an understaffed social service agency to serving as a caretaker for her aging mother. Her teen children were both doing well, but it took a tremendous amount of her time and effort to run a busy household. Her blood pressure had been creeping up steadily since her 30s and now was at a point that her primary care doctor wanted her to take medication.

She came to me because she did not want to take drugs that she knew would probably lower her blood pressure but not necessarily move her toward better

of the *Heart*



health. Standard drug treatment for high blood pressure is most often beta-blockers, ACE inhibitors, calcium channel blockers, and diuretics, either singularly or in combination. Although vast numbers of people take these drugs and tolerate them fairly well, unwelcome side effects are not uncommon.

Carrie appeared to be in good health otherwise, as is often the case for people with hypertension. Unless blood pressure is very high, which can lead to symptoms like headache or bloody nose, most people have very few to no symptoms to report. For the homeopathic prescriber, that's okay, because we can point a remedy to the whole person, based on a review of bodily systems, physical general symptoms, and temperament. The right homeopathic remedy can help with lowering blood pressure but also with supporting the self-agency needed by the patient to make important and effective lifestyle modifications, which are just as important when treating a person with hypertension.

High pressure

Most adults in the developed world have had their blood pressure levels taken at a routine doctor visit. Blood pressure is related to the quantity of blood that your heart pumps and the degree of resistance to the blood flow in your arteries. The greater amount of blood your heart pumps

out, and the narrower your arteries are, the higher your blood pressure will be. Over time, high blood pressure causes damage to your blood vessels and heart, increasing your risk of stroke and heart attack.

According to current medical standards, normal resting blood pressure is below 120/80 mmHg. If blood pressure is from 120/80 mmHg to 139/89 mmHg, it is classified as prehypertension or "at risk." At 140/90 mmHg or higher, it is considered high. (Note that the American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology lowered these benchmarks in 2017, bringing many more people into the category of having hypertension or prehypertension.) According to the CDC, 75 million people in the United States have high blood pressure—that's one in three adults. High blood pressure is estimated to cost \$48.6 billion each year in medications, healthcare visits, and missed work.

Hypertension is classified into two types: primary (essential) and secondary. Primary hypertension has no known cause and is most common—it tends to come on gradually over years, and many adults will have some degree of this kind of hypertension if they live long enough. Secondary hypertension can be attributed to an underlying condition, such as sleep apnea, thyroid problems, kidney issues, certain medications, or any number of other conditions. This type of hyperten-

sion tends to come on more suddenly and have higher blood pressure levels than primary hypertension. The main risk factors for hypertension include advancing age, being of African descent, having a family history of high blood pressure, maintaining a sedentary lifestyle, smoking, being overweight, and ingesting too much salt or too little potassium in the diet.

Happily packing on the pounds

Carrie was five feet, four inches tall and weighed 190 pounds, putting her body mass index at 32.6, in the obese range. She'd never had much luck trying to lose weight. "It seems that every few years or so, I pack on another 5 or 10 pounds," she told me. Although she enjoyed exercise, it was tough to fit it into her busy schedule. She also reported that her diet was uneven. She knew how to eat well but often found herself grabbing fast food and eating in the car because she was in a rush and off to the next obligation on her list.

I loved treating Carrie! She was fun, funny, and upbeat, with a sparkle in her eye. She rolled those bright eyes often as she complained colorfully about a coworker or family member. She laughed heartily at herself and her situation. "It's totally untenable to do everything that I've been trying to do," she said. "I'll probably be dead by 60!"

Even though Carrie was overweight and had hypertension, her health history and blood tests showed her to be otherwise healthy. Her cholesterol numbers and inflammatory markers were all in the normal range, as was her blood glucose level. Carrie did not have metabolic syndrome—the combination of hypertension, high blood sugar, high triglycerides but low HDL (good) cholesterol, and excess belly fat that puts a person at greater risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.¹ She slept well and did not have sleep apnea.

Carrie was rarely sick, but when she did get ill, it usually came on strong; she ran fevers easily for an adult, meaning that whenever she developed a cold or sore throat, she could spike a fever, break a sweat, and feel better over the course of one night. She also got the occasional bladder infection and would run a fever, but by drinking plenty of water and

unsweetened cranberry juice, she would get over it quickly and without antibiotics.

Carrie was still menstruating monthly and did not feel she was perimenopausal. She would get intense cramps the day before her period and would power through them, knowing they would not last long.

Carrie's digestion was good, with no tendency for loose stools or constipation. She had no problems with her musculo-skeletal system. She was ruddy complexioned, with a bit of rosacea on her nose and cheeks, but it didn't really bother her, and she reported no other skin issues.

Carrie threw her ex-husband out when he would not stop drinking. She said she "could not suffer fools." She missed companionship but not the roller coaster of dealing with his addiction. She missed sex, something she enjoyed, but said, "I'll wait until the right person comes my way."

Carrie was tidy and organized and kept to her work and family schedules. She did not tend to get anxious or depressed, but she could be a little irritable and impatient when she needed to get things done and people were not cooperating with the plan.

A small handful of remedies

In my experience, adults who are constitutionally robust, energetic, and able to easily connect with others, as Carrie was, will most often need one of a small handful of homeopathic remedies. In this category, especially when the chief complaint is hypertension, I generally think of the remedies *Lachesis*, *Medorrhinum*, *Sulphur*, and *Belladonna*.


Carrie lacked the aggressiveness and jealousy often seen in people who need *Lachesis*. And she had none of the typical *Lachesis* physical symptoms—such as sleeping into an aggravation or a predominance of left-sided complaints—that I would expect to see when prescribing that remedy, so I left that one on the shelf.


Although Carrie was outgoing and friendly, she did not have the wilder side of passionate extremes in relationships, sexual conduct, drug and alcohol use, or aggression that we often see in people who benefit from *Medorrhinum*. She also had zero complaints in the female conditions that we often use to confirm a


5 Keys to HEART HEALTH


A natural medicine approach to treat and prevent heart disease


Although heart disease is the leading killer of both men and women in the United States, most heart disease is preventable and treatable if caught early enough. In helping patients with heart disease, naturopathic doctors often focus on these five areas:

 **Cool down inflammation.** Studies show that one cause of heart disease is chronic inflammation, which can be present throughout the body. This inflammation aggravates plaque buildup, or atherosclerosis, which narrows arteries and increases the risk for blockage (potentially leading to heart attack or stroke). Poor diet, a sedentary lifestyle, excess abdominal fat, high stress, autoimmune dysfunction, and food allergies are the typical factors contributing to inflammation, so I work with my patients to address these, thereby reducing inflammation and the risk of disease.

 **Target laboratory investigations.** In addition to typical laboratory tests, I may include tests for oxidized LDL (the primary type of cholesterol found in plaque), inflammatory markers, autoimmune markers, lipoprotein particle analysis, a full glucose panel, and a comprehensive neurotransmitter profile. These additional tests help inform personalized and precise treatment using diet, nutritional, and botanical supplements. Examples of cardio-protective supplements I might prescribe, depending on individual results, include Coenzyme Q10, hawthorn berry extract, alpha-lipoic acid, glucosamine, omega-3 fish oil, curcumin, selenium, or magnesium.

 **Address and optimize digestion.** The gastrointestinal tract is a common source of inflammation in the body. Gut flora are living microorganisms that provide a wall of protection between the digestive tract and the bloodstream. When the flora in the digestive system is not in balance, the risk for localized inflammation increases. This can lead to alterations in intestinal permeability (leaky gut), which can contribute to heart disease. Drawing on my training in diet and clinical nutrition, I work to repair gastrointestinal tract function by restoring proper PH, balancing flora, correcting intestinal permeability, and addressing constipation, which is linked with increased mortality from cardiovascular disease. To boost the health of the microbiome, I often recommend eating naturally fermented or cultured foods, including sauerkraut, kefir, yogurt, and miso.

 **Address blood vessel dysfunction.** Healthy endothelium (the inner lining of blood vessels) is essential for proper cardiovascular health. When the endothelium is not functioning optimally, the risk of arterial inflammation and plaque buildup increases, which can lead to heart attack or stroke. Tobacco use, obesity, hypertension, high cholesterol, a sedentary lifestyle, and poor diet all contribute to endothelial dysfunction. Endothelial function can be improved using a combination of lifestyle modifications, botanical medicines (e.g., hawthorn berry extract), and nutritional supplements (e.g., alpha-lipoic acid, Coenzyme Q10), depending on the individual presentation and needs.

 **Motivate physical activity.** As most people know, exercise is paramount because it is associated with improvements in a variety of cardiovascular risk factors, such as obesity, depression, inflammation, and diabetes. Taking time to understand a person's history with exercise, what has worked for them, and what is realistic, and then basing recommendations on that information, will have the best chance of success. Finding ways to build enjoyable movement into everyday life is key.*

*Some information above is sourced from the Institute for Natural Medicine FAQ, "How Do Naturopathic Doctors Prevent and Treat Heart Disease?" (<http://naturemed.org/faq/faq-how-do-naturopathic-doctors-prevent-and-treat-heart-disease>).



Don't Just **SIT THERE!**

Sitting is bad for your heart! In 2017, the American Council on Exercise sponsored a study to discover how much you need to move to counteract the ill effects of sedentary behavior.* It recruited 13 men and women who exercised regularly but who also spent six hours or more a day sitting; they all had some unhealthy cardiac markers. By taking a 5-minute break for gentle movement during each hour of sitting, these people improved their cardiac markers after just one week as follows: HDL cholesterol up 21%; triglycerides down 24.6%; blood glucose down 6.1%; blood pressure down 6 to 12 points. So, keep this in mind as you sit in front of those computer and television screens—stand up once an hour and move around!

*Keeling SM, Buchanan CA, Dalleck LC, et al. What is the optimal FIT to reduce sedentary behavior to improve cardiometabolic health? http://acefitnessmediastorage.blob.core.windows.net/webcontent/December2017/ACE_OptimalFITStudy.pdf. Published December 2017. Accessed November 18, 2019.

Medorrhinum prescription, such as chronic vaginitis, genital warts, genital herpes, or ovarian problems.

As for *Sulphur*, Carrie was too organized and practical to fit that remedy, as people needing it tend to be more disorganized and scattered. They also tend to be philosophical and full of theories, with many ideas for projects that they procrastinate about and never undertake. With Carrie, I did not hear any theorizing, rather more concrete ideas and to-do lists that she worked hard to complete—so that remedy, too, I left on the shelf.

A perfect match for Carrie

With the remedy *Belladonna*, we find the perfect match for Carrie. Her liveliness, the hypertension, the red cheeks, the sudden onset of illnesses with fevers and their easy resolution—all these point to this wonderful remedy. We most often think of using *Belladonna* for acute illness, especially in children, where it's truly a homeopathic superstar; the sickness comes on suddenly, the face is red and hot, the pupils are dilated, the fever is high, the symptoms are intense, inflammation is present, the pain is throbbing or

pulsating, and hallucinations or delirium may occur. But *Belladonna* also works well in more chronic cases; the person who benefits from this remedy constitutionally is usually warm-blooded, healthy, robust, and mentally balanced. When they do get acutely ill, the illness passes quickly, as was true for Carrie. Their chronic conditions tend to be of a congestive nature, as hypertension is. *Belladonna* is also closely related to the remedy *Calcarea carbonica*; they share certain symptoms and are often considered complementary remedies, with people moving between needing one or the other at different times in their lives. This is how I understood Carrie's penchant for organization as well as her irritability if things were not getting done or getting done properly—these are *Calcarea carbonica* tendencies. Also, her enormous sense of responsibility and her great capability are qualities seen across both *Calcarea carbonica* and *Belladonna*.

Lifestyle and naturopathic approaches

We also worked in many naturopathic approaches to hypertension right from the beginning. These included lifestyle

changes, such as exploring with Carrie how she might fit more physical activity into her busy life. This had the potential to help in many ways—lowering blood pressure, losing weight, reducing stress levels, and increasing overall circulation (i.e., perfusion in the capillaries), which would have a synergistic effect on every other therapy

We also worked in many naturopathic approaches to hypertension right from the beginning. These included lifestyle changes, such as exploring with Carrie how she might fit more physical activity into her busy life.

we were employing. She was open to bite-sized steps for starters, like parking at the far end of the lot and taking the stairs, as well as scheduling a walk with a colleague over her lunch break. I knew that once she began to feel exercise's good effects, she would want to move even more.

We also explored how Carrie could begin to ditch the salty, sugary, "empty-calorie" fast foods and replace them with an anti-inflammatory diet of fresh vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts, whole grains, and cold-water fish. Lowering inflammation is important to reducing the risk of heart disease, and these healthy, satisfying foods would set her on the path to losing weight. Such a diet emphasizes fiber, magnesium, potassium, and omega-3 fatty acids, which are known to lower blood pressure. I also urged her to use garlic liberally in her cooking, as well as to take garlic in supplement form, as research shows it can relax smooth muscles (blood vessels) and lower blood pressure. I also suggested some additional blood tests and natural medicine supplements tailored to Carrie (for examples, see "5 Keys to Heart Health" on page 33).

Our goal of having Carrie lose 10% of her body weight—19 pounds—seemed ambitious, but she was game. I did not put a time frame on that, but rather talked about how slow, permanent weight loss was the ideal.

Steady improvement

Over the course of little more than a year, Carrie reached her goal. She told me that the hardest part was the need to plan ahead with regard to food, whether preparing meals at home or eating out. But she had developed a good routine and felt pretty darn pleased with her efforts. "It's odd, but I feel a kind of resolve and determination that I've never felt before ... all those times when I tried to eat right and lose weight before and I could never stick to it...I think the homeopathic remedy is what's making the difference now," she said. In fact, I often find that self-agency and self-discipline, both essential ingredients to living a healthier lifestyle, are supported by a homeopathic constitutional remedy.

As the weight came off, Carrie's blood pressure also dropped. By the 2-year mark, Carrie had lost a total of 32 pounds. Between the effects of the homeopathic remedy on Carrie and her determination

to make lifestyle changes, along with the support of a few other natural medicines, Carrie was able to get her blood pressure into the normal range.

I have been working with Carrie for more than 20 years now, and she comes in every year or two for a tune-up. She has most always needed another dose of *Belladonna* to help her, such as a few times during menopause when she developed bad headaches, which fit the classic *Belladonna* migraine pattern of severe knife-like pain that was worse from light, noise, and motion, and better when lying quietly in a dark room. Another time, when Carrie injured her back, she took *Arnica* and then *Hypericum* over a few weeks, but she then returned to her underlying *Belladonna* state and was helped again by a dose of *Belladonna*.

Homeopathy can help with hypertension

In my experience, incorporating homeopathy in the treatment of hypertension is always a good idea. I see homeopathy alongside lifestyle changes as the best approach to treating hypertension. An appropriate remedy helps in the areas of self-agency and discipline that are needed to adopt and stay with healing lifestyle factors. I recommend treating constitutionally, giving the homeopathic remedy with the widest impact for the whole person, and contextualizing the homeopathy in a whole-person natural medicine approach.

Naturally, I dedicate this piece to my father's memory.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Amy Rothenberg, ND, is a licensed naturopathic doctor in Northampton, Massachusetts. Her writing can be found on the Huffington Post, Medium, and Thrive Global. With her husband, Paul Herscu, ND, MPH, she is celebrating 30 years of teaching through the New England School of Homeopathy (www.nesh.com). New classes start in Seattle (January 2020) and Western Massachusetts (Fall 2020). She can be reached at nhcmed.com.

I often find that self-agency and self-discipline, both essential ingredients to living a healthier lifestyle, are supported by a homeopathic constitutional remedy.





STRESSFUL TIMES IMPACT HEALTH

HELP YOURSELF

By Amy Rothenberg, ND, DHANP

The

BURNOUT

EPIDEMIC

It feels like no one's life is easy these days. In my 36-year career, I have never seen more people under more stress for longer periods than I see now.

Tired, unmotivated Mara

When Mara, 68, came to me for help, she had spent the last two years care-taking her ailing mother. More recently, she'd been refereeing family dysfunction related to the pandemic and different levels of precautions people were willing to take. She was worried sick about her grown kids and their issues but also irritated for the demands they placed on her.

Mara owned a business with her partner, and the responsibilities were unrelenting. This stress affected both their relationship and their livelihood. "I'm not coping very well," she said. "I'm making more mistakes. I can't think straight. And I'm snapping at him all the time." She also felt troubled by political events in her community.

"I feel like I can never catch a break. When we finally got away for a few days of vacation last month, I spent half the time on my phone or laptop, putting out fires and managing other people's problems," she said. "My energy is zapped." She felt tired and achy, unmotivated and aimless.

"My digestion is not working right anymore either," she added. She often felt constipated and/or bloated.

Though exhausted, Mara did not sleep well at night. She felt jittery and anxious. She relied on caffeine for energy, which she

BOUNCE BACK

knew was not helpful in the long run and contributed to both her anxiety and sleep troubles.

A pandemic of "the blahs"

Mara's physical exam was unremarkable, and her screening blood tests were within normal ranges, including her thyroid tests. She did not take any prescription medications and had

no other chronic ailments. There really was no specific diagnosis for Mara's condition, but she certainly was not thriving. Her story reminded me of a recent *New York Times* article¹ describing the effects of pandemic stress on many people in 2021. As the pandemic has dragged on, the acute state of anguish people felt in 2020 "has given way to a chronic condition of languishing," according to the article.

Languishing—feeling joyless, unmotivated, stagnant, empty—is not as extreme as depression, but it is far from flourishing. We can think of languishing as the *absence* of well-being. This concept fit Mara perfectly. When I shared the article with her, it actually made her feel a little better. At least she was in good company!

A backdrop of vulnerabilities

Even before COVID-19 arrived, our constant access to work, social media, and the defeating news cycle—on top of political strife, climate change, and environmental toxins—created a backdrop of vulnerabilities. The ongoing pandemic stress

has revealed or exacerbated people's physical, emotional, and cognitive imbalances and illnesses.

We are also more aware that adverse childhood events, low income, and being a person of color in this country create additional stress, and that stress is not meted out evenly across zip codes or populations. Indeed, racism², long a public health crisis, has been further highlighted by the pandemic.

And far-reaching pandemic stressors continue. To name a few: Worry about getting infected; coping with viral infection and its aftermath; loss of loved ones; uncertainty about the future; inability to be with family and friends; loss of social support networks; loss of work and income; worry about rent or mortgage payments; change in school routines; disruption in everyday activities, such as participating in health clubs, choirs, and worship services.

Chronic stress can undermine health

With the unrelenting stress of 2020 and 2021, we're not bouncing back like we used to because we have not had

BURNED OUT, STRESSED OUT?

Here are the top tools and recommendations I use with patients suffering the ill effects of ongoing stress.

1. Get Homeopathic Constitutional Care.

First and foremost, I prescribe a homeopathic remedy individualized to the whole person—their physical, cognitive, and emotional states. A well-chosen constitutional remedy will not only address the person's symptoms, it will raise their threshold for feeling stressed, so they are less susceptible to stresses that previously triggered their symptoms. A constitutional remedy often increases a person's self-agency, empowering them to make healthier lifestyle choices, and improves their mood, energy, mental clarity, and sleep. Whole-person, constitutional care is best delivered by a well-trained professional.

2. Rule Out Underlying Illness. Depression, overwhelm, and burnout can result from stress, but they can also be by-products of chronic disease. I screen fatigued patients with appropriate exams and blood tests, to see if there are other reasons for their symptoms, and then work to mitigate or reverse those ailments, as relevant.

3. Optimize Nutrition. An anti-inflammatory, appropriate-for-the-person diet is often key to reducing the effects of stress. I typically recommend plenty of fresh vegetables and fruits, beans and nuts, lean meats, eggs, whole grains (but not white

flour), cold-water fish, fresh herbs and spices, and fermented foods. Balancing blood sugar levels is also important, so I ask patients to reduce frequent snacking, cut back or eliminate refined sugars and carbohydrates, and keep alcohol consumption to a minimum.

- 4. Drink Enough Water.** Hydration improves sleep quality, cognition, and mood, and keeps all the body's systems functioning well. But drinking enough water is easier for some people than others. I ask my under-hydrated patients to set out four small juice glasses of water each day, as a starting goal. We work up from there, aiming for half a person's weight in ounces, so a 150-pound person drinks 75 ounces of water daily. It's amazing how being adequately hydrated can help a person feel better. For those who are not big fans of plain water, I recommend herbal teas, diluted fruit juice, or water with a squeeze of lemon or lime.
- 5. Sleep Well.** Sufficient, regular, and restful sleep—which is essential to good health and the ability to bounce back from stressful events—is an enormous challenge for some people. See my article, "Sweet Dreams: Homeopathic Help for Insomnia," in *Homeopathy Today* Fall 2019 for help.
- 6. Move More.** Exercise is one of the best ways to blow off steam, clear the mind, sweat out natural toxins related to metabolism, improve sex drive, and help with sleep. Research⁷ shows that exercise

Stress alters insulin metabolism and sensitivity, one risk factor for developing diabetes.

the chance to heal. Chronic stress leads the brain's hypothalamus to stimulate the adrenal glands, which in turn release adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones raise heart rate, blood pressure, respiratory rate, and glucose levels, while lowering immune function. Is there such a thing as "adrenal exhaustion"? The conventional medical literature says no³, but we certainly see patients who seem to experience their problems as fallout from chronic stress.

Studies⁴ show that chronic stress may lead to histamine release, which can cause allergy symptoms, asthma, and rashes. Stress alters insulin metabolism and sensitivity, one

risk factor for developing diabetes. Stress also affects stomach acids, which can lead to all manner of digestive complaints. Ongoing stress contributes to arterial plaque buildup. It also suppresses natural killer cells, which perform many important functions, including preventing cancer development or spread.

Beyond contributing to physical ailments, unmitigated stress can wreak havoc on the emotional level, contributing to depression, anxiety, irritability, and insomnia. All elements of our health are intertwined. That's why whole-person, whole-medicine approaches, such as homeopathy and naturopathic medicine, are key to healing, especially now. They offer a fresh perspective on the treatment of stress and how it affects the human condition. (See my article, "Whole Person Help for the Anxious Child," in *Homeopathy Today* Summer 2020.)

It's important to remember that stress impacts each person differently, according to individual susceptibility. Genetics, coping skills, personality, and access to support systems are a few factors that influence how a person reacts to and manages stress.

TOP 10 TOOLS TO BOUNCE BACK AND FEEL BETTER

improves quality of life and delays the onset of more than 40 chronic ailments! Most people would benefit from more exercise. I work with patients to get them moving more, reminding them that exercise comes in three parts: aerobic, weight-lifting, and stretching. One caveat: Over-exercising or exercise-bingeing is not advised, as it can make a person feel as overwhelmed and unwell as being sedentary.

7. Consider Supplements and Botanical Medicines. Nutritional supplements and botanical medicines, tailored to the individual by a professional, can help to address specific or synergistic biochemical issues related to burnout. Of many possibilities, here are my top five:

- Vitamin C for its roles⁸ related to improving energy and reducing overall inflammation
- Vitamin B Complex⁹ for its roles related to stress and cognition
- Adaptogenic herbs, including ashwagandha¹⁰ and rhodiola¹¹, which address both mental and physical fatigue and support adrenal function
- Licorice root¹², because it supports adrenal function (deglycyrrhizinated licorice, known as DGL, is recommended because it does not raise blood pressure.)
- Curcumin, the primary bio-active substance in the culinary and medicinal herb turmeric, for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant qualities; studies¹³ show it also improves overall quality of life.

8. Practice Body-Mind Approaches. Body-mind approaches help us relax and normalize an activated stress response. I recommend practicing regularly, so that when such a tool is especially needed, it is there for you to use! Examples include: breathing techniques, mindfulness meditation, yoga, qigong, and hobbies that help you to relax—from art to music to building model airplanes.

9. Simplify Your Space. Simplifying home and work spaces can do wonders to lower stress levels. I recommend Marie Kondo's popular book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. Her method "encourages keeping only those things that speak to the heart. Discard items that have outlived their purpose; thank them for their service—then let them go." She emphasizes being mindful, introspective, and forward-looking.

10. Do Less. Think about what you are trying to accomplish in any given day. Sometimes we put too much pressure on ourselves to get through the to-do lists and to be productive, as if we were human *doings* instead of human *beings*! A tremendous amount of stress can be alleviated by literally doing less. I have conversations with my patients to help them identify what the most stressful things are in their lives and invite them to think about ways they might actually reduce their stress, whether letting go of a difficult relative, shifting their work schedule, or adjusting expectations from family members.

A path through the stress cycle

Of course, stress and our emotional reactions to it are normal parts of life and need to be given time and attention. In the book, *Burnout—The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle*⁵, Emily and Amelia Nagoski beautifully describe the neurobiology of the stress cycle. They write about how every emotion has a beginning, a middle, and an end. You have to feel your emotion all the way through, especially the more challenging ones, in order to keep moving forward.

They suggest ways to process emotions including talking about them, having a good cry, doing regular deep breathing exercises, sharing a caring hug, having a deep belly laugh, getting physical exercise, doing something creative like writing, drawing, or singing, and feeling the connection of family and friends.

I concur with their list entirely and would add spending time outdoors in greenspaces, at parks, or in the woods. The more we study⁶ the need for time outdoors, the more we see its positive impact on overall health. Watching TV or streaming video, surfing the internet on computer or phone, and playing video games have become fallback activities for many children *and* adults. We're missing out on the essential role of sunshine, greenspace, and time away from screens.



The more we study the need for time outdoors, the more we see its positive impact on overall health.

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Helping Mara manage stress

So, how do we help a person like Mara, who is burned out, languishing, and exhausted, suffering the effects of chronic stress? In general, I follow the approach summarized in the sidebar on pages 20-21, “Burned Out, Stressed Out? Top 10 steps to bounce back and feel better.”

The first step was to find Mara a constitutional homeopathic remedy by considering her major symptoms. She'd told me she “woke up like a bear,” and it took several hours and two cups of coffee to “feel human again.” She was irritable and impatient with her partner and could not seem to stop snapping at him and pointing out all his faults, yet, her irritability never rose to the level of yelling or aggression.

Mara had a few good hours from late morning to late afternoon, and then she totally crashed. She could not accomplish much after 5:00 p.m., so her diet suffered, as she had no creative energy to food shop or cook dinner. Instead, she bought fast or processed foods. All she wanted was a quick fix, a candy bar, toast and jam, any sweets really. Mara had gained more than ten pounds during the pandemic. She was chilly and could not seem to get warm, even as the weather warmed up.

Mara's symptoms were fairly run-of-the mill, which didn't give me much to go on, in choosing a remedy: general malaise, irritability, chilliness, feeling worse in the morning and later afternoon, brain fog, making mistakes in reading and writing, and constipation.

Choosing between two

I narrowed down the choice to *Sepia* or *Lycopodium*, as people who benefit from these remedies share many qualities.

Both can be chilly and irritable. Both can feel worse in the morning on waking, as well as worse in the late afternoon. And both can slant toward constipation.

People needing *Sepia* feel better with movement and exercise, as a way to combat an underlying sluggishness throughout their body, but Mara was entirely disinterested in exercise. Even a gentle walk around the neighborhood, if she could get herself to do it, would exhaust her.

The constipation of *Sepia* is related to low muscle tone, with no sense of a need to evacuate, whereas *Lycopodium* constipation is accompanied by a sense of fullness and the need to pass gas. Mara's constipation with bloating fit the *Lycopodium* profile better, as did her preference for sweets.

In the psycho-emotional realm, those who need *Sepia* can be irritable but often lean toward flat emotions or depression. In contrast, *Lycopodium* patients can easily become anxious about anything at all, especially if they feel the subject reflects poorly on them. Mara was not depressed but anxious, jittery, and sleepless over work and family matters, which fit the *Lycopodium* profile. People who need *Lycopodium* can also be somewhat dictatorial, and Mara was slanting that way, especially with her partner. Mara's mistakes with her business's paperwork also fit *Lycopodium*'s particular type of brain fog.

I prescribed *Lycopodium* 200c for Mara. I also advised her on ways to improve her diet and nutrition, get more sleep, and figure out ways to reduce the stressors in her life, as outlined in the sidebar on pages 20-21.

The fog clears

Six weeks later at our follow-up visit, Mara's first comment was: "I'm clear-headed again—it's good to be back to myself!" Thinking more clearly made operating her business less stressful. She thanked me for our conversation, which had prompted her to set better boundaries with her adult children. She'd also initiated some difficult talks with her partner, which resulted in improved communication between them. Mara reported better sleep and less fatigue but said she "still had a ways to go" in her energy. Her digestion was "still off," but it wasn't bothering her so much. She had removed some of the junk food from her diet and was cooking healthy meals a few times a week.

This was a good report, as Mara was now moving in a positive direction with her health and her actions. I am always inspired when patients take up lifestyle habits that help with healing. When someone has this kind of positive report after taking a constitutional remedy, the best thing to do is to wait rather than give another dose of the remedy. So I congratulated Mara, encouraged her to continue the healthy approaches she'd adopted, and suggested we follow up in another six weeks.

Over the next six months, Mara continued to do well, with gradual improvement in her energy level. She was sleeping better, felt less irritable, and cut way back on her caffeine and sugar intake. On two occasions, I gave her additional doses of *Lycopodium* 200c—once when she had a right-sided sore throat

that was better from warm drinks, fitting of *Lycopodium*, and once after the holidays, when she was overly stressed by family dynamics and repeat offenses from a particular relative—and both times she bounced back. I look forward to periodic check-ins with Mara to be sure she continues to move in the right direction.

A whole-person path forward

For many patients who are languishing or burned out with "adrenal fatigue," it will be a long unwinding back to health. But homeopathy and other whole-person natural medicines that address root causes, stimulate the body's inherent healing capacity, and work to reverse the role of chronic stress, can help. Taking stock, cultivating self-awareness, and welcoming change can also help people feel better and reduce the harmful effects of chronic stress. 💧

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Amy Rothenberg, ND, DHANP, practices in Connecticut and Massachusetts (www.nhcm.com) and by telemedicine. Dr. Rothenberg is the AANP's 2017 Physician of the Year. With her husband, Paul Herscu, ND, MPH, DHANP, she teaches through the New England School of Homeopathy (www.NESH.com), where virtual learning is now available. For information on NESH's new entirely virtual class, as well as other resources, see www.nesh.com. Her writing can be found at *Medium*, *Thrive Global*, *The Huff Po*, and more. When not working, Dr. Rothenberg enjoys spending time with her family, in nature, and puttering in her art studio.