

# homeopathy

## TODAY

YOUR GUIDE TO HEALTH THROUGH HOMEOPATHY

SPECIAL DIGITAL EDITION  
PROFESSIONAL COLLECTION

WHY I TURN SOME  
PATIENTS AWAY

WORKING  
WITH SKEPTICS

PUBLIC SPEAKING?  
YES, YOU CAN!

BACK YOUR  
HEALING  
STORIES WITH  
PROOF

HPUS AND HPCUS  
PLAY VITAL ROLES

WHAT IS HEALING?  
HOW CAN YOU ENCOURAGE IT?



LIMITED SAMPLE VERSION

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## PROFESSIONAL COLLECTION Article Collection



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# What Is Healing? How Can You Encourage It?

## Answers and examples from 40 years of practice

by PEARLYN GOODMAN-HERRICK, ND, DHANP

**W**hat does it mean to heal? Many people would be perplexed that we even ask the question.

"Well, the answer's obvious," they'd say.

"When the symptoms go away, of course!"

This response makes perfect sense when talking about acute illness. By definition, an acute illness or trauma lasts a relatively short period of time, with the person typically returning to their former state of health, as in the following examples.

### Simple acute cases, easy recoveries

While running on an uneven sidewalk, 3-year-old Bobby trips and falls. His mother immediately attends to her crying child. She picks him up and holds him, which gives him comfort and reassurance. Seeing that his knee is scraped and bleeding, she takes him home to wash it and apply a small adhesive bandage. A bandage, particularly one with pictures, seems to be an important part of the healing process for young children; a "boo-boo" without a bandage is just not worth talking about! The pain soon goes away. In time, a scab forms, then falls off, and new skin appears. It is easy to see that the knee has healed. That is something we can all agree on.

Samantha has flu with fever, malaise, and chills. She has bouts of nausea that are relieved for a short time by warm drinks. She feels awful and is mentally restless, but she's too weak to get out of bed. "I'm sure I'll never get better!" she moans. Her wife brings her tea and reassurance, both of which Samantha savors. Within a few days, Samantha feels better, perhaps even better than before the flu. She will say she has

recovered (healed), and we will agree with her.

Adam has been seeing his girlfriend, Lucy, for a little more than a year and cares for her very much. One day, Lucy announces that although she cares for Adam, she realizes he is "just not the right person" for her and breaks up with him. Adam is shocked and upset. Usually cheerful and social, he now spends a lot of time alone trying to figure out what went wrong and what he could have or should have done differently. Through the grapevine, he discovers that Lucy is dating someone else and was probably seeing this man even while he and Lucy were together. That adds to Adam's unhappiness, and he asks himself, "How could I have missed that?!" He is convinced he will never date again and never trust another woman.

Worried about himself, Adam starts seeing a psychotherapist, who helps him understand his relationship with Lucy more clearly as well as his own emotions, reactions, and tendencies. Within a few months, Adam feels healed from the breakup and is ready to start dating again. He meets Susannah, a lovely, bright woman, and they have a wonderful relationship with much in common and true mutual caring. A year and a half later, they are engaged to be married.

### The healing power of nature

Bobby, Samantha, and Adam each experienced an outside stress—a fall, a virus, a breakup—that knocked them out of balance and triggered their symptoms. But, their illnesses (even Adam's episode

of heartbreak) were self-limiting because Bobby, Samantha, and Adam each had enough innate vitality to complete the healing on their own.

Since the time of Hippocrates (circa 400 BCE), the founding principle of medicine has been that living creatures can often rebalance or heal themselves without any intervention. This is known as the *vis medicatrix naturae*, or the "healing power of nature." Hippocrates emphasized that the physician should not use any form of treatment that impedes this process—*primum non nocere*, or "first, do no harm."

### Make way for healing

Bobby, Samantha, and Adam each benefited from the care of a supportive human being in their healing processes—which is certainly something to be treasured! Their caregivers acted with the guiding principle of doing no harm, responding with gentle caring that allowed the *vis medicatrix naturae* to do its work. Bobby's mother tended to her son gently; she did not bark, "Stop crying like a baby—get over it like a big boy!" Samantha's wife was attentive to Samantha's needs; she did not make fun of Samantha's lugubrious thoughts and did not give medicine to stop the fever. Adam's therapist did not tell Adam that his thoughts were foolish; instead, she was empathetic and provided sought-after wisdom.

### Homeopathy: Go with the flow

In many cases of acute illness, however, the *vis medicatrix naturae* may need assistance. That is where homeopathy comes in. The beauty of homeopathy is that

it works *with* the *vis medicatrix naturae*, not against it. For example, when a homeopath wants to help someone who is sick with a fever, they do not offer a strong medicine that artificially brings down a person's temperature (e.g., acetaminophen) to go against what the person's body is trying to do; rather, they select a gentle homeopathic remedy that *causes* a similar kind of fever in a healthy person. This approach supports the person's own innate healing processes.

Had Bobby's injury and pain in his knee been more intense, his mom could have helped him feel better by giving him *Arnica montana*, the premier first-aid remedy for injuries, and applying topical *Calendula tincture* to help the scrape heal faster. If Samantha's flu had been even more debilitating, she might have taken *Arsenicum album* to help her natural healing processes because her symptoms (including chilliness, restlessness, and nausea relieved by cold drinks) fit that remedy. If Adam had remained stuck in his grief, with limited social connections despite his psychotherapist's assistance, *Natrum muriaticum* would more than likely have helped him regain his emotional balance.

### Differentiating chronic from acute

But, what about chronic conditions? These are recurrent or long-lasting health concerns that do not go away on their own. Sometimes, we confuse chronic conditions with acute ones, and we treat them accordingly, which can lead to unfortunate and unintentional consequences.

Here's an example that I see commonly in my practice. An infant develops a diaper rash in response to an irritant, such as a new brand of paper diaper or the detergent used to wash a cloth diaper. Or perhaps they develop a rash in response to a particular food to which they are sensitive. The cause of the rash is easily determined and removed. A soothing cream is applied, and with the removal of the offending irritant, in a few days, the rash disappears—it is healed. This is a clear example of an acute problem. The irritant or stressor has come from outside the child's body, and the body reacts to what it can't tolerate. Once the irritant is removed, the rash

stops, and the child returns to their normal comfort level. All is well.

However, some diaper rashes tend to be recurrent. They are not caused by the diaper, the detergent, or an offending food, so changing those variables doesn't lead to improvement. The rash may appear after contact with urine or stool that seems to excoriate the child's skin; or, the rash simply appears without any known cause. Parents (typically mothers) try a variety of creams to deal with this problem; if they're particularly concerned about the risk of toxins, they use creams with all-natural ingredients.

Regardless of the type of cream used, the mother has two goals: to protect the skin until the rash goes away and to make the rash itself go away. Protecting the skin is, of course, desirable. However, if the cream makes the rash disappear *without correcting the underlying imbalance in the child's system* that is leading to the rash, we may see further difficulties. Healing has not occurred. The *vis medicatrix naturae* has been interfered with, and, unwittingly, harm may be done. In these cases, homeopathy is vital to support the *vis medicatrix naturae*, allowing for true healing—the restoration of health—to occur.

### Nicky's rash gets suppressed

Eighteen-month-old Nicky was brought to see me by his mother, Julia. Nicky had had numerous ear infections that were treated with antibiotics, but he now seemed plagued with ongoing ear troubles that antibiotics weren't helping. So, his pediatrician was recommending that ear tubes be inserted into Nicky's eardrums. The parents were concerned at the prospect of surgery and came to me looking for other options.

Julia told me that Nicky had been fussy in the past few days, and an examination revealed fluid in his ears. In taking the child's history, I learned that he also had a previous history of diaper rashes. Julia reported proudly that the rashes had stopped when Nick was about eight months old, after the consistent use of "this great natural cream." Sounds good. "When did Nick develop his first ear infection?" I asked. "Nine months old," Julia replied.

I explained to her that I would give

Nicky a homeopathic remedy that would most likely help his ears clear up; and when they did, it was possible he would develop a diaper rash. I emphasized that the rash probably wouldn't last long. Homeopaths identify such an occurrence as a "return of old symptoms" and view it as a sign that a person is responding well to a remedy and in the process of healing.

I also explained to Julia the homeopathic theory of suppression—that symptoms are expressions of a person's vital force; if we oppose the vital force by artificially or pharmacologically quashing symptoms (e.g., using a suppressive cream on the rash), they may appear to go away but are instead driven deeper inside the body, only to reappear as a different, more serious health problem. For this reason, I instructed Julia *not* to use the diaper rash cream if a rash emerged and to instead call me with any concerns. Julia, a bright woman, listened attentively. She called me the next day to tell me how pleased she was with homeopathic treatment: "Shortly after receiving his remedy, Nick stopped being fussy and has been back to himself!"

Two weeks later, however, Julia scheduled an appointment because, once again, Nick was fussy and batting at his ears. An examination revealed that his ears were visibly filled with fluid. "Hmm ... perhaps I gave the wrong remedy," I mused. Julia sighed, looked a bit shame-faced, and told me, "Well about a week after you gave Nicky the remedy, he broke out in a diaper rash just like you said he might. The rash was really red, and the skin looked so irritated ... I'm so used to using the cream, and I thought, 'Really, what harm could it be? It's got all natural ingredients.' So, I used it on Nicky ... The rash went away in a few days, and then, little by little, Nicky started tugging at his ears again. Now I believe you!"

### Homeopathy to the rescue

I gave Nicky another dose of the homeopathic remedy, and once again, his ear discomfort was gone in a few hours; a few days later, a diaper rash broke out again. This time, instead of using the cream, Julia called me to report the event, and I cheered her on. A few days later, the rash was also gone. Neither the ear infec-

tions nor the rashes returned, and Nicky continued in good health.

### Patterns of suppression...and healing

In Nicky's case, the diaper rashes were not caused by an external stimuli but were the result of an internal imbalance that needed to be corrected. The *vis medicatrix naturae* could not resolve the rash on its own. A symptom on the surface of the skin is frequently the first indication of an internal imbalance, a clear signal that some help is needed. If that symptom is suppressed rather than being regarded as a signal, a deeper problem can ensue.

Initially, Nicky's imbalance was not corrected but was actually suppressed, so his problem went from the skin (a superficial level) to problematic ear infections (an internal level). We often see similar patterns of suppression of symptoms in children treated for recurrent ear infections; their ear problems may disappear after the use of antibiotics, but this is followed by the development of asthma. The health issues become more problematic, going deeper and deeper into the child's system. With the help of homeopathy, Nicky was able to

move forward in a healthy way.

Here's another common pattern of suppression I often see. Women with a history of painful menstrual cramps, who have been treated with pain-relief medication over time, are no longer bothered by cramps. Healing has not occurred, however, because now the women are suffering from emotional symptoms during the premenstrual time. In my experience, both the intensity and the duration of the premenstrual symptoms tend to increase without homeopathic treatment.

With a few months of homeopathic treatment, however, the women will report that the emotional symptoms have gone away, and now they have menstrual cramps, "kind of like I had in high school." These, too, will disappear in a short time, because true healing is occurring.

### Realities and healing

So, what is healing? As you can see from these examples, it is much more than the elimination of symptoms, especially when their elimination gives rise to deeper symptoms. True healing stems from the body's innate healing mechanism, the *vis medica-*

*trix naturae*, and moves a person toward a higher level of functioning. Homeopathy, when thoughtfully applied, works in concert with the *vis medicatrix naturae*.

I want to be clear here that I am not opposed to the use of conventional pain relief medication or antibiotics. Most of us have benefited from their use at some point in our lives. They most definitely have a valuable, sometimes lifesaving place in medicine.

However, where there is an opportunity to strengthen the *vis medicatrix naturae*, homeopathy provides a vital service, allowing the body to truly heal.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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## HOW WE WORK (Continued from page 39)

Earth to Water. Was Earth holding back Water's liberation? Because Earth corresponds to taste and digestion, I knew we had to look more deeply at his diet.

"I ended up testing him for celiac disease, and it turned out he had it. The model had led me directly there. When we took gluten out of his diet, Daniel never wheezed again. More to the point, Daniel's father had suffered since childhood from debilitating asthma. He was tested and also had celiac. This transformed his father's life. He quit his job, and the family opened a gluten-free bakery. So destiny

was manifesting in this old soul Daniel, this Water child, this sage, to heal his father. This is a brilliant, brilliant kid, and he was able to be liberated into the world."

### The child heals his family

What a moving story of healing! A child heals his family through his sickness, thanks to a visionary doctor who beholds the child's heroic journey and helps his family to stay on course.

## REFERENCES

- 1 The ideogram of 應 *ying* is a symbol of two birds talking at dawn. One calls; the other answers in resonance. 感 *gan* is to feel, to be touched; 感應 *ganying* happens when similar hearts-and-minds feel and echo one another when they meet in resonance.
- 2 Reston, J. *The New York Times*, "Now About My Operation in Peking," July 26, 1971. <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/07/26/archives/now-about-my-operation-in-peking-now-let-me-tell-you-about-my.html>
- 3 Prensky, W. *The New York Times*, "Reston Helped Open a Door to Acupuncture," December 14, 1995. <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/12/14/opinion/1-reston-helped-open-a-door-to-acupuncture-011282.html>
- 4 As nature is fundamentally dynamic in the Chinese worldview, the Phases are also dynamic and may be better understood as phases in transition. They are not Platonic objects with immutable essences.
- 5 For case studies and examples, see *Fire Child, Water Child*, by Stephen Cowan, New Harbinger Press, 2012.

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