



Forgiving and Moving Forward

Homeopathy can free us from past emotional hurts

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If your cup is small, a little bit of salt will make the water salty. If your heart is small, then a little bit of pain can make you suffer. Your heart must be large.

—THICH NHAT HANH



Forgiving the past—oneself and others—is a key step in fostering this kind of mindfulness as well as improving health.

As a psychotherapist and homeopath, I am honored to assist people who seek wholeness and happiness. I know I can depend on well-chosen homeopathic remedies to increase my clients' readiness and ability to make deep and lasting changes in their lives. I always enjoy witnessing the multitude of ways in which homeopathy enhances my clients' inner work.

Homeopathy can have a profound effect in resolving mental and emotional problems. Its long history is full of success in fostering individual health and growth. Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, often took mental and emotional factors into account when prescribing and noted how naturally homeopathy resolved emotional problems. Recent books by homeopaths Miranda Castro (*Homeopathic Guide to Stress*) and Peter Chappell (*Emotional Healing with Homeopathy*) identify stress and trauma as common presenting problems for those seeking homeopathic treatment today.

Mindfulness, forgiveness, and health

In my own practice I employ and teach mind/body techniques with "mindfulness" at their core. My clients are willing and eager to explore these techniques, but for many of them this is easier said than done. Our complex and fallible nature often needs assistance in overcoming unhealthy patterns. This is where homeopathy's role in getting us "un-stuck" is so evident.

The main tenet of being mindful or having a "beginner's mind" is to pause and focus while viewing the world as a part-to-whole interconnected process. The consequence of not recognizing our mutual interdependence with nature and others can lead to stress and "fight or flight" pat-

terns, all of which have been linked to compromised immune systems and other health threats. Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk who has helped popularize mindfulness, urges us "to be fully alive" and to "look at living beings with the eyes of compassion." This sounds simple, but it can be very difficult to enact.

Forgiving the past—oneself and others—is a key step in fostering this kind of mindfulness as well as improving health. For example, in his 2002 book *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness*, Fred Luskin describes how we form "grievances" as a result of not getting something we desire. When it becomes "personalized" ("why me?"), the grievance has enormous power to distort our perceptions and harm us both mentally and physically.

We cannot erase the marks that our wounds leave on us, but we do have a choice between uncomplicated grief that we put into perspective and complicated grief that keeps us connected to the past. The grievance or tale of woe keeps the connection. Luskin's main point is that the "offender" need not be the star of the story at our expense. Continuing to live in the story keeps us in "fight or flight" mode, which can cause physical damage as well as mental and emotional problems. Forgiveness is a mindful process that can disconnect us from the past and empower us to heal, but it is not easily accomplished without help and nurture.

How can homeopathy help?

For more than two hundred years, homeopaths have been using homeopathic remedies to ease the effects of all kinds of injury. The homeopathic repertory (a reference work that lists symptoms and the remedies that are known to address them) contains a host of information about mental-emotional symptoms related to brooding, disappointment, grief, anxiety, anger, humiliation, reproach, resentment, hatred, and holding on to the past. We also know that certain remedies address physical ailments that can result from withheld grievances, such as exhaustion, nervous affections, heart problems, immune system problems, and hypertension.

Here are some of the listings from the

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repertory's "Mind" chapter that describe being stuck in grievances from the past:

- Dwells on past disagreeable occurrences
- Brooding
- Ailments from disappointment, deception
- Ailments from mortification, embarrassment
- Indignation
- Sadness after grief
- Reproaches others
- Complaining about offenses long past
- Hatred of persons who had offended him

Many remedies have the potential to address the "grievance story." The one that can help any particular individual has to be chosen carefully based on how the grievance has affected them.

Sally's story

Sally, a 48-year-old nurse, came to me for a consultation. Her presenting problem was fatigue with a "trembling" sensation and the constant need to lie down. Her muscles were tense, stiff, and tired. Sally reported that over the past ten years she had also been "plagued by recurrent hard sties" in her eyes, which had a "burning sensation." Her demeanor was soft, courteous, and kind. When asked about when her symptoms had started, she quickly demonstrated anger and extreme discontent, describing how her ex-husband had left her ten years ago after several years of verbal abuse. She had hoped for reconciliation but was further humiliated when he started dating one of her close friends. Her narrative was full of wounded pride ("I am so insulted"). She mentioned that after all these years she still dreamed of wanting to throw things at him. However, she denied being angry and did not see a connection between her grievance and her symptoms of exhaustion.

Sally described her basic temperament as being helpful and upbeat at work and with her friends, but when alone she couldn't stop brooding about her marriage. Her biggest fear was to have people see how sad she had become. She mentioned that she fantasized about finding another relationship, especially a sexual one, but would then turn inward at the thought of being

sexually close with someone because she felt she "was less of a woman" due to losing her husband. She had been in psychotherapy and had been advised repeatedly "not to give her ex-husband so much power" over her, but she just could not let go of how she was hurt at that time.

Understanding Sally

It seemed to me that Sally was stuck in her grievance story. By maintaining her anger at her ex-husband, she was giving him power over her life, and the tension was literally exhausting her. Cognitively, she knew that she needed to let go of her anger and grief, but her attachment to her story was at such a deep level that she couldn't release it just through intellectual awareness. Knowing how deeply homeopathy works, I was hopeful that the correct remedy could help Sally let go of the past and move forward into her own healing.

Repertorization of Sally's main symptoms pointed clearly to the remedy *Staphysagria*, which appears in the following rubrics in the Millennium edition of the *Complete Repertory*:

- Mind, Indignation
- Mind, Ailments from mortification, humiliation
- Mind, Dwells on past disagreeable occurrences
- Mind, Throws things at persons who offend
- Generalities, Tension, tightness, muscles
- Generalities, Weakness, enervation, exhaustion; slight exertion aggravates
- Generalities, Weakness, enervation, exhaustion; nervous, neurasthenia
- Eye, Sties, recurrent

Reviewing Sally's case as a whole in light of my knowledge of *Staphysagria*, I was convinced that this remedy could help her. *Staphysagria* is indicated for people who become ill because of repressed anger and feel indignation and confusion in expressing this anger. They may also have a tendency to excessively grieve the consequences of what others have done to them, and they can experience sexual disturbances. Among their physical symptoms can be recurrent sties, nervous trembling, and extreme exhaustion. Sally

Remedies & the Path to Forgiveness



Many homeopathic remedies have the potential to help a person who is suffering with mental, emotional, or physical symptoms resulting from a grief, a loss, or other adverse event that they cannot seem to "get over" or "forgive," even years afterwards. Below are brief descriptions of just a few of these remedies. Please remember that using homeopathy in such cases is best accomplished with the help of a professional.

Aurum metallicum can help people who have very high standards for themselves and tend to feel failure and guilt keenly. Their self-reproach and blame may surface as depression when they feel they have fallen short of their goals. People who need *Aurum* may feel separate from others and may describe loneliness, aversion to authority figures, and a tendency to quarrel. Temperamentally they tend to show strong duty-bound and workaholic tendencies. There is much self-reproach, despair, and shame within their tale of woe.

Ignatia amara can help people who exhibit hysteria and seem stuck in acute grief. In people needing *Ignatia*, bitter disappointment of their idealistic outlook manifests in deep brooding and despair. The sentimental yet quarrelsome nature of people needing *Ignatia* makes them vulnerable to taking affront. There can be suspicion about what others think of them, and they are prone to contradict others even though they crave attention. When they have a grievance, they come across as being extremely and demonstratively upset as they continue to hold on to their insult. They may have a sensation of a lump in the throat.

Nitricum acidum is indicated when the lack of forgiveness is characterized by anxious, complaining, and irritable behavior. People needing this remedy can be very abrupt, unforgiving, resentful, and vindictive. Negativity, peevishness, and nastiness can be evident. They may be restless and dissatisfied with everything. People who need *Nitric acid* often feel anxious about their health.

Natrum muriaticum may help those who are romantic, responsible, somewhat fastidious, introverted, and prone to hold on to grievances based on their deep sense of grief and sorrow. Hurts from long past can keep them from forming close relationships. Their tale of woe is usually very silent and suppressed, and they may be reluctant to tell it. They feel better when alone, and their grief intensifies when others show sympathy. They are exquisitely emotionally sensitive and can be compassionate toward others even while burdened by their own grief.

Phosphoricum acidum can help people who are emotionally and/or physically depleted because of an overwhelming sense of disappointment and loss. There is a flat indifference and a weak apathetic quality to their grievance story, as if they don't have enough energy to feel anything any more. People who need *Phosphoric acid* may even show some degree of mental collapse such as disorganization and forgetfulness. They may be yielding and slow, and they hold on to their grief silently.

Staphysagria is warranted when the person's mild and sweet nature makes it difficult for them to identify their anger. They may deny feeling hurt but still show physical and/or emotional symptoms after disappointment, humiliation, or abuse. People who need this remedy may have outbursts of anger and throw things after suppressing their grief and rage. They may have low self-confidence and offer others the benefit of the doubt. A sense of betrayal with indignation and an irritable temperament can characterize those who need *Staphysagria*.

also described herself as mellow and kind, yet quite intense at times, which fits the personality traits that are characteristic of people needing *Staphysagria*.

I instructed Sally to take the remedy in a liquid solution of LM1 potency once every other day for a test dose of four doses. I chose this method because of the longevity of her symptoms and because in my experience this method is best for adjusting the dose in relation to the pace of improvement. As the test dose produced no worsening of symptoms but a gradual improvement in her energy, I asked her to continue taking the remedy on the same schedule.

Once we saw that the remedy was producing some improvement in her level of fatigue, I asked Sally to consider her dependency on her grievance story and see if she could recognize how impossible it was to change the past or the future regarding her ex-husband's actions. I also taught her some progressive relaxation exercises to address her extreme muscular tension. This too goes with the "forgiveness" process, since the softening of the body through mindful breathing allows for the "fight or flight" process to be alleviated. Although releasing her resentment had been suggested to her in the past, it had never been supported by the action of a well-chosen homeopathic remedy. This time, things would be different for Sally.

Sally's awakening

During her homeopathic follow-up after a month on the remedy, Sally demonstrated a striking difference in her attitude. She was noticeably aware of how she had been choosing the negative channels of life. "I cannot believe that I made my ex-husband so powerful after all these years," she remarked. Her anger was dissipating into a positive awareness of her potential to live a different life: "I am a good person with good intentions and should not hurt myself any more." Although she was still fearful and had doubts, she was more willing to take some risks, had new energy, and was trying new experiences. I asked her to drop the remedy dosage down to once a week, and I set up bi-weekly phone

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interviews to keep abreast of her progress.

As is always wonderful to see with homeopathic treatment, the accompanying physical symptoms such as fatigue and muscle tension continued to abate as Sally made emotional progress. We changed to the LM2 potency when the bottle of LM1 was finished. A test dose of the LM2 once every four days proved to bring a slight worsening of her symptoms, so I reduced the frequency of the dose, suggesting that she take the remedy once a week for several months. During these months she continued to improve; then she felt a "bit angry and had a slight slippage." At this point I suggested that she stop the remedy because she was exhibiting a slight return to her original symptoms. In my experience, this usually happens at some point with the LM potency and indicates that the remedy can be halted. Within one week she felt "on track" again. She did not need the remedy for several months but did take a dose here

and there when she had any slight relapse.

It has been more than two years now, and Sally is still doing well. Her energy is good, her tension is resolved, she is no longer plagued by sties, and she has been able to move on in her life by leaving her grievance story behind.

Forgiveness through homeopathy

Sally's story demonstrates how deeply homeopathic remedies can work. Even though Sally had tried counseling before, it was only with the assistance of the correct homeopathic remedy that she was able to harness the insights from counsel-

ing and relaxation exercises to release her grievance story, providing a foundation for her emotional and physical healing. Of course *Staphysagria* could not be expected to help just anyone who is fatigued and feeling stuck or unable to forgive. The remedy was carefully chosen based on a comprehensive and individualized understanding of Sally and of the indications for *Staphysagria*; another person would likely need another remedy. But Sally's story illustrates what a well-chosen remedy can do. By facilitating healing on both the physical and emotional levels, homeopathy can free us from the hurts of the past.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

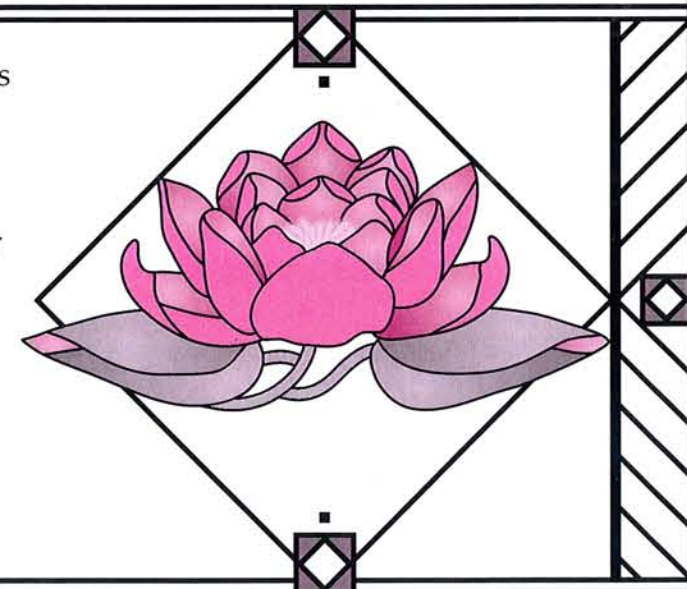
Kenneth Silvestri has a practice in psychotherapy and homeopathy in Green Village (Chatham Township) and Montclair, New Jersey. He is a certified classical homeopath (CCH) and has his doctorate in anthropology and psychology from Columbia University. He studied with homeopaths Luc De Schepper, David Little, and Jane Cicchetti, and he is an active black belt student of Aikido, a martial art dedicated to peace and harmony. He can be reached at ksilvestri@nac.net or www.drkennethsilvestri.com.



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