

Exploring Psychology and Forgiveness in Homeopathic Treatment

By Kenneth Silvestri, Ed.D, CCH

Recently Leo, in his mid twenties, presented with extreme migraine head pain. His head pain had been constant over the past three years, ever since he had a very serious stomach virus. He was wrought with anticipation, which caused him to continue to vomit despite not having any other stomach symptoms before or immediately after eating. His narrative was full of instances where he was compulsive, impatient and full of regrets. He indicated that he had isolated himself from his social life, relationships and family. His temperament was choleric, withdrawn and angry. Prior to three years ago, he was extraverted, passionate and artistic. His articulated grievance was that he missed his old self and was sad that he had become resigned to being depressed, due to his situation. His family of origin was described as one with much support and love. He said the only other time that he ever experienced these symptoms was when he was a teenager and had received a slight concussion playing in a pickup game of football. His headaches and vomiting were frightening at the time, but only lasted a week.

Hahnemann supported the use of humanistic psychology in treatment. "In all the so called somatic diseases as well, the mental and emotional frame of mind is always altered" (§210, 6th edition, *Organon*). In §211 he comments that "this preeminent importance of the emotional state holds good to such an extent that the patient's emotional state often tips the scale in the selection of the homeopathic remedy. This is a decidedly peculiar sign, which, among all the signs

of disease can least remain hidden from the exactly observing physician." Homeopathy's context includes detailed information of psychological states produced and cured by its remedies. Leo, in the above case, was withdrawn, compulsive and depressed. He also had suicidal ideations and was impatient regarding his situation. His presenting temperament was one of suppressed (introverted) anger, which was strikingly different from the outgoing sanguine artistic person that he had been prior to his constant vomiting.

HERING RESOLVED HIS EMOTIONAL GRIEF WHILE SEEING A BALLET BASED ON A GREEK TRAGEDY THAT WAS SIMILAR TO THE ORIGIN OF HIS SITUATION.

The importance of using psychology in homeopathic treatment is further supported by how physical symptoms disappear as mental illnesses appear. Documented cases demonstrate how serious physical disease can suddenly turn into deep one-sided mental and emotional dysfunction (§216). The physical symptoms improve as the mental problems become worse and in some cases can go back and forth (§220).

Hahnemann used crisis remedies when physical or mental symptoms worsened, then returned to the chronic remedy when appropriate to sustain his treatment. Leo had originally had an experience of vomiting after an injury years earlier. The brain is state dependent and remembers all that has ever occurred in one's life. The recent stomach virus brought up vivid memories of his previous encounter with fear and vomiting.

The differential assessment of psychological symptoms can be assisted with psychotherapy. In §228, Hahnemann

writes that psychology is “diet for the soul” and that the use of “honesty” and “empathy” is essential to join with a patient and insure continuing trust. This underscores that being sympathetic for the suffering of others is part of our own healing process and the power behind cure is compassion. The process with Leo was to listen, acknowledge and understand his feelings. Discussion about how others resolved similar situations further underscored a comfortable setting for him to articulate his grievances. His family, although loving, became judgmental, as did his friends. This pushed him further away causing him to withdraw.

Homeopathic mind cure must be homogeneous with the symptoms and kept in context of the individual and his/her temperament, i.e. grief cured by hearing another greater grief even if fictitious. Hering for instance, resolved his emotional grief while seeing a ballet based on a Greek tragedy that was similar to the origin of his situation. J T Kent in his *Lectures on Homeopathic Philosophy* talks of being empathetic, “Sympathy and similar can go a long way in the realms of the psyche.” I will use on many occasions short narratives from such books as *Chicken Soup for the Soul*.

I believe that the use of homeopathic psychology or “mind cure” represents a largely unexplored region of the *Organon* that can be used effectively when following the homeopathic principle of *like cures like*. This entails similar stories and suggestions related to the chief complaint, and opens the door to expressing more qualifying feelings and concerns in one’s own words.

The main tenet of being empathic and mindful or to have what Buddhists call 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” patterns, 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 the Buddhist concept of 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—of oneself and others—is a key step in fostering this kind of mindfulness as well as improving health. Fred Luskin (2002), in his book *Forgive For Good*, 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 to harm us both mentally and physically. In Leo’s case he was embedded in his pain and could not see any way out of his situation. When he focused on what he was not getting in life, he began to describe his sensations, modalities and causes of his pain without self-pity.

We cannot erase the marks that our wounds leave on us, but we do have a choice between uncomplicated grief that is put into perspective and complicated grief that stays connected to the past. The grievance or tale of woe keeps the connection. Continuing to live in the story keeps us in “fight or flight” mode, whose constant overuse can cause physical damage as well as mental and emotional problems. Forgiveness is a mindful process that can disconnect us from the past, yet not minimize it. It can empower us to heal, but it is not easily accomplished without help and nurture. Life improves as we focus on solutions rather than problems. When we work toward peace of mind, what flourishes are wishes and desires.

When we have unresolved pain there is a tendency to become the victim and create demands that are “unenforceable.” Statements of, “How could this happen to me?” do not recognize that the world says, “No.” However, we can have choices and wishes to change our framework and utilize our parasympathetic nervous system (the “calm down” part.) The first thing is to *know what you feel* so you can allow empathy to produce a “non-denial” of feelings. Widening your lens creates perspective as to what is the “wrong” that hurts you. This helps to avoid having your persona being overtaken by your shadow side. Within a few psychotherapy sessions, Leo began to see a wider perspective that would allow him to heal himself. He was given *Bryonia*, which was indicated for his immediate pain and mental state. *Bryonia*, as described below, related to his anticipation. He was stuck in a very rigid choleric state. It ranks high with the rubric of vomiting immediately after eating and his strong ailment of grief regarding his life situation.

The remedy was prescribed in the 6c potency, as a four-ounce bottle of medicinal solution. After eight succussions, one teaspoon was to be diluted into four ounces of water. Leo was instructed to stir and take one teaspoon twice a day for five days. I have found that starting with a 6c allows me to monitor sensitivity, frequency and effectiveness. I usually decide after the test dose whether to proceed with a higher centesimal potency or an LM.

Leo responded positively within a few days. His headaches subsided and the vomiting lessened. He also felt a strong sense of peace of mind.

Leo had to reconcile with himself that the world was not out to get him. Once he saw the wider perspective he began to reach out to his friends and family. The *Bryonia*, and his work on forgiving his situation, allowed Leo to feel less pain. He still had some compulsive tendencies, apprehensions about being in public and although the vomiting had nearly subsided, he still had the fear of it recurring. The follow up remedy was *Natrum sulph*, again in the 6c potency medicinal solution. This remedy was indicated in rubrics that dealt with obsessiveness, fear of being in crowds, symptoms resulting from injury to

the head and vomiting. Both *Bryonia* and *Natrum sulph* are ranked high for those having a choleric temperament and are anti-sycotic, which related to the prevailing miasm, since Leo presented with angry, impatient and compulsive behavior. Within a week the vomiting totally subsided. He began to eat regularly, and more importantly felt that he had found his old self and could be more social.

Between the lines of the above description of grievance and forgiveness are the clinical experiences of generations of homeopaths using homeopathic remedies to awaken self-awareness and balance the immune system after all kinds of trauma. The homeopathic repertory contains a host of information about mental-emotional symptoms related to “grievances” such as 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 afflictions, heart problems, immune system compromise and hypertension.

Homeopathic remedies have the potential to address nearly all of the traumas one may encounter and I have found that the use of forgiveness as referenced above helps facilitate the recognition of the needed “constitutional” remedy. The remedies shown below are examples of just a few that might be indicated for those who are holding on to their grievances and would benefit from the integration of psychotherapy in conjunction with homeopathy.

Selected Remedies Related to the Blending of Psychology and Homeopathy

Aurum Metallicum (pure gold) can help people who are full of self-reproach and blame and may address depression that arises from this. People who need *Aurum* have very high standards for themselves, so they tend to feel failure and guilt keenly. Their sadness is intense and can be suicidal usually as a result of not achieving their high goals. *Aurum* is indicated when a sense of loneliness is prevalent and there is a tendency to be very quarrelsome. The temperament of people needing this remedy shows strong duty-bound and workaholic tendencies. There is much self-reproach, despair and shame within their tale of woe. They feel worse from cold and boredom and usually feel better with music. This remedy can be called for when someone has difficulty expressing anger because of their depressive state, whereas people who need *Staphysagria* (see below) will still function and outwardly express their dissatisfaction. Other *Aurum* remedies may be more specific for certain differentiating symptoms such as when there is enor-

mous anger when thinking of one’s ailments, after mortification (*Aurum muriaticum*; chloride of gold). *Aurum muriaticum natronatum* (double chloride of sodium and gold) would be indicated when there is extreme unrest and impatience and *Aurum sulphuricum* (sulphide of gold) when there is a strong sense of despair regarding recovery from one’s trauma.

Ignatia amara (Ignatia bean) can help people who exhibit hysteria and a sense of being stuck in grief. In people needing *Ignatia*, bitter and longstanding disappointment manifests in deep brooding and despair. They are worse from criticism and being alone. They can be suspicious about what others think of them, and are prone to contradict even though

they crave attention. The sentimental yet quarrelsome nature of people needing *Ignatia* makes them vulnerable to taking affront. When they have a grievance, they come across as being beside themselves as they hold on to the insult. They may have a sensation of a lump in the throat. The person needing *Ignatia* feels better with heat, cries easily and improves from eating, unlike a *Natrum muriaticum* person who is aggravated by heat, suppresses tears and is worse eating.

Nitricum acidum (nitric acid) is indicated when the lack of forgiveness is characterized by anxious, complaining, irritable behavior and strong resistance to resolving their “tale of woe.” People needing this remedy can be very abrupt, unforgiving and vindictive with aversion to any conflict, which produces strong resentment. Negativity, peevishness and nastiness can be traits indicating this remedy. They are prone to hold on to their grievances with a grudging manner. They can be restless and dissatisfied with everything. Anxiety about health is a keynote as well as not admitting to any obvious improvement to their health. There is a strong oversensitivity to what people may think about them, which supports their holding on to hurts and blaming others for taking the joy out of their life. Food cravings revolve around fats and salts, and they are chilly by nature and complain of splinter like pains. They have a strong sensation of inner uneasiness or constriction throughout their body and are usually better when lying down.

Natrum muriaticum (common salt) may help those who are romantic, responsible, somewhat fastidious, introverted and prone to producing grievances based on their great sensitivity in relationships. Their grief and tendency to take things very personally result in silent and suppressed emotions. They are typically better for solitude, worse for consolation and dwell on past offenses. This is reminiscent of the biblical wife of Lot, who on looking back turned into a pillar of salt. There is a clear vulnerability with fear of rejection and the effects of

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loss, separation, resentment and humiliation. They like salt, which can be seen as being symbolic of the dried up tears of long-term grief, and other characteristics of dryness. They can be exhausted and are usually ameliorated by fasting.

Phosphoric acid has an overwhelming sense of disappointment and loss, and needs to be needed, especially by loved ones. They can become negative and they long for acceptance. There is a flat indifference, doubt and a weak apathetic quality to their grievance story, which differentiates them from the other remedies. The need for this remedy is also indicated when there is a collapsed and forgetful state. There is a yielding and slow disposition with a silent holding on to their grief.

Staphysagria (Stavesacre) is warranted when there is difficulty expressing the grievance clearly. There is much anger and apathy about all things, yet also an underlying sense of being mild and sweet which can confuse their sense of expression. Constant dwelling on unpleasant thoughts with low self-confidence is evident. Betrayal with indignation and an irritable temperament is characteristic of this remedy. Horrible and sad stories affect those in need of this remedy and they can easily throw things as a substitute for verbally expressing their anger. There is an aversion to physical exertion, being touched, and confrontation.

Bryonia (wild hops) is good for cases where there is strong irritability and a focus on wanting to stay home, longing for home, and keeping a daily routine. There is also a desire for things which, when offered are refused and an inordinate concern and preoccupation about business matters.

Another characteristic is anger with fright and an obsession with holding on to things. There can also be a tendency to self medicate with alcohol and to avoid company. Any motion or movement both physically and emotionally produces discomfort, yet there is a strong sense of determination to resolve issues because of a fear for the future. Other issues that produce stress are over concern with the material world and wanting things that may not be available. Headaches usually accompany complaints.

Natrum sulphuricum (sulphate of sodium.) Those who can benefit from this remedy are going through depression and may be having suicidal ideations and/or plans. There is much sadness that even music cannot ameliorate. Their tendency is to be reticent and melancholy, with moments of mania. They can be suspicious and tend to avoid crowds. In many cases there are mental problems associated with head injuries. They are sensitive to noise, which brings on exhaustion. They are industrious in a pragmatic manner, rather than out of compulsion or impulsiveness.

Conclusions

The use of psychology when integrated with homeopathy offers a larger framework to ascertain the sensations and modalities that contextualize presenting symptoms. Empathic dialogue and gentle probing take the adage of the unprejudiced observer to a new and contemporary level given the modern stressors we encounter each day. As Hering's story shows, similar inductions, when related to the grievances of one's narrative, can open the door to "mind cures" and subsequent remedies. In Leo's case, understanding how the source of his grievances affected his lifestyle and how the barriers he created perpetuated his symptoms led to the needed remedies that augmented his counseling. In essence, the importance and description of his emotional state tipped the scale in providing the solution both psychologically and somatically.

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