

# **The Homeopathic Approach to** **Stress**

by Julek Meissner, N.D.



Stress is one of those vague, general terms that can apply to most anything. Effective stress-management needs to define what the person means by stress. What is stressful to one may not be to another. For some, public speaking is sheer terror. For others, it seems the only way to fulfillment. Certain people find parenting most rewarding, while others tolerate it at best. I know teachers who thrive in a large class of unruly students, while other teachers find it stressful even at the best of times. For some children, a reprimand is like water off a duck's back, while for others; even a slightly raised voice seems traumatic.

When it comes to stress, what differentiates one person from another is resistance. Just like death and taxes, stress is an inevitable part of life. The question is not how to avoid it, but how to make ourselves healthier and develop resistance, so we can react to stress in a constructive, rather than a destructive way.

The following examples are intended to illustrate not only how effective homeopathic medicine is in helping different people cope with stress better, but how crucial it is to understand the person's unique experience of stress, and how they differ from other people suffering from the same condition (for an explanation of the principles on which homeopathy is based, please refer to my article "The Patient, Not the Condition"). How does the person define stress? How do they experience it? How do they react to it? Remember, only by tailoring the treatment to the individual can homeopathic medicine be effective.

## CASE # 1

Jim is a 52-year-old senior office worker. In the past few months, he has been suffering from sinus infections, with severe pain in the forehead, and behind the eyes. The pain is worse in the morning. It wakes him every morning, always at the same time, between 4-5am. He wakes in a sweat then, feeling hot, especially in his feet, which he uncovers to cool off.

Jim has been under a lot of stress in the past several months, ever since a co-worker, who also happened to be a good friend, suddenly quit his management team. It took Jim by surprise. Now, he's stuck with twice the amount of work, while the office looks for someone to fill the post. He feels angry and betrayed by his friend, a feeling of disappointment.

When asked if he's ever felt this way before, he says it reminds him of how he often felt growing up, that he never felt he could really count on any of his friends. On further reflection, he realizes it's an old feeling that he had even in childhood, ever since his father suddenly died. It left him feeling abandoned, sad, but also angry, as if his father, his best friend, had left on purpose.



## ANALYSIS

What we need here is a prescription designed to help raise Jim's resistance to this feeling of abandonment, of deceived friendship. Clearly, this is the most central stress in his life, the kind of stress he is most vulnerable to. Furthermore, the medicine most homeopathic to his way of coping must be able to influence sinuses, along with sleep disturbances at 4-5am, and heat, especially heat in the lower extremities, which forces the person to uncover their feet.

This is just what the proving of the mineral Sulphur produced on healthy volunteers. Among other things, the 'side-effects' of sulphur are:

- the tendency to wake at 4-5 a.m., along with a tendency to experience heat
- the tendency for uncovering feet
- the tendency to produce nasal congestion leading to inflammation of the sinuses, which tend to be worse in the morning
- the feeling of being abandoned by those near and dear to them, a feeling of deceived friendship

Soon after the prescription, Jim developed a very runny nose, a thick, profuse, yellow discharge that seemed to gush from the depths of his nasal passages. At the same time, he felt an instant relief of the pain behind his eyes, a pain he had been suffering with for nearly two months. Within two nights, Jim's sleep had normalized. He began sleeping through the night, and waking refreshed. Moreover, his sweats stopped, and he no longer needed to stick his feet out from under the covers. Because his energy was better, he felt less overwhelmed with his workload. Most importantly, he realized that he didn't need to feel responsible for the extra workload. Doing his best was all that was expected of him.

As for his friendship, Jim realized that by choosing to leave, his friend too had done the best he could for himself, and that this had nothing to do with their friendship. With time, Jim began to feel more comfortable with his friends' choices in their lives. This in turn helped him develop resistance to issues around abandonment, helping him feel more secure, better able to enjoy his friends.

## CASE # 2

Michelle is a 27-year-old office secretary who consults me for stomach pains. These have been bothering her off and on for the past two years, but are getting much worse in the past several months. She has consulted her family physician, who advised a whole battery of tests, all of which have proved inconclusive

The pains are of a violent, cramping nature, as if a tearing inside. The only relief she gets



is by bending double, or by pressing her fists into her gut. At times, the pains get so severe, she throws up.

On inquiry as to what may be precipitating these attacks, Michelle points out that the pains are always provoked by conflict. She has a new boyfriend, who tends to be reserved, uncommunicative, and undemonstrative in his affections toward her. While she thinks he likes her, she keeps wondering if he really does, and takes his lack of affection as a personal slight, a sign of disapproval. This in turn makes her feel extremely angry, which leads to scenes of yelling, followed by tears, withdrawal, and then an eventual resolution... until the next confrontation. Each time they fight, she ends up having another stomach attack. The two of them have been seeking couple counseling for some time now, yet her pains keep getting worse.

When asked where this sensitivity might come from, Michelle tells me about her upbringing. She comes from a large family. She has 6 older brothers. Not only is she the only girl, she's the youngest as well. Growing up, she got accustomed to being doted on, getting her wishes met. Everyone was so affectionate at home, and she was the apple of everyone's eye.

A few years ago, when she met her boyfriend, her family disapproved, as he was from a different ethnic background. When they told her she either had to stop seeing him, or leave, she felt outraged, and found herself an apartment. That's when her stomach problems started. For a year, the family ignored her. Now, they have a sort of truce, but she constantly feels their disapproval, and feels defensive and angry.

## ANALYSIS

Michelle's way of coping with anger with her boyfriend or her family is to develop pain in her digestive tract. She and her boyfriend have wisely decided to seek counseling, yet her pain is getting worse. She could resort to painkillers, but is reluctant, due to the side effects, and because she feels that will do nothing to help her in the long run.

From the homeopathic perspective, what is needed is to help Michelle develop resistance to her sensitivity to conflict and criticism. Moreover, to be homeopathic, the substance chosen must have an affinity for the digestive system. It must be capable of producing these kinds of sharp, tearing pains, which are better with pressure, compelling the person to double-up.

Which is just what the plant *Colocynthis* (commonly known as bitter cucumber) is known to produce, when given to healthy volunteers (I stress this word to emphasize the dedication so many people have shown over so many years in an attempt to uncover the therapeutic indications for all of the over 3000 substances currently available in our homeopathic *Materia Medica*!).



Some of the "side effects" of Colocynth are as follows:

- stomach disorders and abdominal pains caused by anger, and indignation
- emotions felt in the stomach
- stomach and abdominal pains that are violent, cramping, gripping, tearing, cutting, etc.
- stomach and abdominal pains relieved by pressure, by bending double, compelling them to bend double
- vomiting after anger
- sensitivity to anger, with indignation
- sensitivity to criticism

Michelle felt instant relief, after a single dose of colocynth! Her pains disappeared, and have not returned in over 6 months. As important has been her change in temperament. Her sensitivity to criticism has been greatly improved. Instead of seeing everything any of her loved ones say to her as a slight, she now weighs what she hears, tries to understand where the other person is coming from, before responding. Her response has become far more graceful, wiser, and more tolerant. She realizes the profound change in herself, and concludes that homeopathic medicine has helped her take a quantum leap in health and in calmness!

### **CASE # 3**

George is Michelle's boyfriend. He's agreed to come in and see me, after witnessing his girl friend's remarkable recovery from her stomach aches, and the change he's witnessed in her personality.

He feels his main problem is a negative attitude, along with very low self-esteem. Although from appearance George looks strikingly handsome, he himself feels unattractive. "I feel skinny" (he's 6ft2in, 190 lbs!). He thinks it's because he grew up with an older brother, who used to make fun of the way he looked. His brother was athletic and more social than George, who always felt socially awkward.

When asked to describe how he got to be this way, George talks of his father, who was always negative. Nothing was ever right. He was always distant, never affectionate. When alone with his father, he often felt an awkward silence, accompanied by an icy feeling in his stomach. Fear of his father was not uncommon, especially as he had a temper. "He yelled often, slapped from time to time, and would often leave me feeling numb."

As for his mother, she was pragmatic, not affectionate. She took care of all the physical necessities.

Now, he too is cold in temperament, numb, unable to express his affection. Though



aware that his emotions, or lack of them, are getting in the way of a good relationship, he can't help the way he acts, distant. "That's how I feel inside, totally apart, even from myself. I need my space. I'm not a feely, touchy person. Affection is not a part of me, though I know that if it were, Michelle and I could be a lot happier."

George can't understand why any one would find him interesting, as he feels he has little to offer. He tends to be a loner, doesn't like to socialize, and though successful in his studies to the point of winning a scholarship, he constantly feels a failure, that he'll never amount to much. Yet, his girl friend's family sees him as nothing but confident. "It's a facade I put on, from fear of what they'd really think of me, if they knew me for real."

Though passive in public, he does have a temper, and can yell at his girl friend, or call her names, putting her down. He swears often then. Also, he can throw things in anger, or hit walls. "My anger is at myself most of all, a feeling of self loathing."

## ANALYSIS

George's stress is his inferiority complex, the result of a deep wound suffered from childhood, from being raised by a dysfunctional father. It's the result of having sustained abuse from the one who was supposed to love and protect him (who himself probably learned to be abusive from a long line of abused ancestors.).

From a homeopathic perspective, what George needs is a prescription that will help him developed resistance to his poor self-image. Clearly, he needs a lot of psychotherapy. The beauty of homeopathic medicine is that, as an adjunct to whatever other therapy you may be using, it can assist in the healing. Stimulate your defense mechanism, and you speed up your rate of recovery!

While there are many homeopathic medicines associated with poor self-image, one of the best known is a plant by the name of Anacardium (Commonly known as the cashew nut). This plant, when homeopathically prepared, can produce in healthy people:

- tremendously low self-worth, coupled with self-hatred
- rage, and the tendency to...
- swearing
- a feeling of separation from oneself, and from the rest of the world
- abusiveness, especially toward one's loved ones
- aversion to company, a tendency to being antisocial, related to....
- anticipation anxiety (this makes Anacardium a frequent choice for helping students suffering from low self-confidence to face their exams more calmly!)
- estrangement, from one's family, and from society



Although George's self confidence didn't improve overnight, his behavior toward Michelle sure did. From the moment he took his homeopathic medicine, he became more relaxed, more communicative, and less defensive. His temper improved. With time, he was able to argue, without having to lose his temper, or be abusive. He also described himself as feeling more in touch with himself, less disconnected, and more empathetic toward himself. It's as if he realized he and others deserve love, despite his suffering as a child.

## CONCLUSION

Homeopathic medicine really does at times seem too good to be true: a gentle and effective holistic approach which, when used properly, has no harmful side effects!! When tailored to the individual, it can provide all-round, long-term relief for people who would otherwise be sentenced to a lifetime of suffering and medication. It is only effective when prescribed accurately, and is accurate only when based on a thorough understanding of the person with the condition. Only then does it stimulate our own defense mechanism, the most powerful, yet least recognized (being the least glamorous) medical tool at our disposal.

When approached holistically, symptoms provide a glimpse into a person's unique way of coping. As my colleague Robin Logan so aptly puts it, "holistic medicine should mean more than 'treating everything'. It does not simply infer the application of a separate therapy, or in the case of homeopathy a different remedy, for every individual complaint. Nor is it sufficient to define holism as an approach that addresses the mind, body, and spirit of the person. In its deepest sense...we recognize the need to heal mind, body, and spirit and pay attention to all the patient's symptoms, but additionally perceive the inter-relatedness of all aspects of the person and seek to make connections between seemingly disparate signs and symptoms. Good homeopathy takes into consideration the inner world of the patient, attempting to make sense of their emotional make-up and its often-important part in the disease process. (From The Homeopathic Approach to Eczema)."

## FURTHER READING

If you join the National Center For Homeopathy, you will receive a very informative monthly newsletter. While this is a U.S. based organization, it may help you in locating a classical homeopath in Canada

-National Center for Homeopathy, 801 North Fairfax, Suite 306, Alexandria, VA, USA, 22314. Tel#: (703) 548 7790

-Organon of the Medical Art by Samuel Hahnemann. ISBN 1-889613-01-0.



This, the 'Bible' of homeopathic philosophy, while written over 150 years ago, is still the work all homeopathic practitioners refer to when trying to understand the science and art of homeopathic healing.

-Kent's Lectures on Homeopathic Philosophy by James Tyler Kent.

An excellent commentary on Hahnemann's Organon. While this book has no ISBN #, it can be purchased (in the form of a cheap edition from India) by contacting any good homeopathic specialty outlet.

-The Science of Homeopathy, by George Vithoulkas

This is a modern textbook on the principles and practice of homeopathic medicine. Vithoulkas was instrumental in restoring public awareness back to homeopathy. This book is full of insight, based on years of experience.

-The Spirit of Homeopathy by Rajan Sankaran

This is an outstanding, though pricey, book by a world-renowned contemporary homeopathic physician. Sankaran has packed this book with gems of insight and clinical experience. The book is divided into four parts: a) understanding homeopathic philosophy; b) the value of understanding the mind in disease; c) the value of a well taken case, and how to find the right homeopathic medicine; d) a description of several homeopathic medicines.

-The Homeopathic Treatment of Eczema by Robin Logan. ISBN 0-906584-47-7.

An excellent description of the most holistic approach to eczema.

-Ritalin-Free Kids by Judyth Reichenberg-Ullman and Robert Ullman. ISBN 0-7615-0719-1.

This book describes the authors' experience in treating ADD with homeopathic medicine, the safe, effective, and lasting alternative.

These books are likely not to be found in most bookstores. The best place to order homeopathic books is [Minimum Price Books](#), a U.S.-based company.

## INSURANCE COVERAGE

Although neither homeopathic nor naturopathic medicine are covered by OHIP,



naturopathic medicine is covered by most extended health care packages/ private group insurance plans. Being a licensed naturopathic physician, coverage may be available for Dr. Meissner's services. Make inquiries with your employer/ insurance plan.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julek Meissner, N.D., is a licensed naturopathic doctor, specializing in classical homeopathy. A graduate of the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon, he has been studying homeopathic medicine for over 20 years. Dr. Meissner has published his writings in several homeopathic medical journals, and is frequently invited to speak at homeopathic medical conferences. He is a past supervisor of the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, and is a guest lecturer at the Homeopathic College of Canada. Dr. Meissner can be reached in Ottawa, as well as in Almonte, Ontario.

