



INTRO TO
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The Thought Behind the Action. Family gatherings, family healing - Lessons for homeopathic practitioners - December 2003

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This is the season for family gatherings, with all their rich histories and challenges. It is also the season for gratitude, and those of us who include homeopathy in our way of life have much to be grateful about, for our families' sake as well as our own.

Amy's story

Amy came to me a few years ago for treatment of recurrent bladder infections. Her handshake was warm, her voice musical, and her eyes lively and responsive. Other than the infections, she was in good health, and I was optimistic about the difference that homeopathy could make in her life.

The bladder infections had been a problem for six years; they came on after intercourse, "like clockwork," no matter what precautions she took, and none of the usual natural treatments had helped. She was tired of the "cycle of antibiotics" she felt forced to use for prevention and treatment.

Now in her early thirties, Amy was married for the second time, and she and her husband had each brought two children into the marriage. Totally devoted to all four of the children, she home-schooled them and kept up with their dizzying schedule of sports and other activities. She had also founded a scrap-booking club and created a book for each child every year. She loved having the children at the center of her life.

The root of the problem

I wondered about the source of the infections. Homeopathic philosophy had taught me that some special susceptibility was at the root of the problem, not intercourse alone, as a mechanical viewpoint would suggest. I asked myself why her body was reacting in this way.

The answer was not long in coming. She described her husband as "rude, boorish, and insensitive" to both her and the children. She said that when he got home from work, he never inquired about their day, but lay around on the sofa in front of the TV and called Amy and their daughters to bring him food. He drank "far too much beer" on weekends, and after Amy refused to buy it for him, he didn't speak to her for three days. She was afraid to confront him because she knew she could not support the children without his salary. She cried softly as she told me all of this and added sadly that he had repeatedly refused to go with her for counseling. She seemed to think I was psychic when I asked if they had been married for six years (the length of time she'd been having the bladder infections).

A complete homeopathic understanding

In my case analysis, I took account of the particularizing symptoms of Amy's bladder infections along with the rest of her health history, her likes and dislikes, and everything else that made for a complete homeopathic understanding of her, only a fraction of which I have related here. I chose Aurum muriaticum as her remedy, and as is my habit, I also made a few notes about what results I expected to see if the remedy acted correctly.

By the time of Amy's six-week follow-up visit, I predicted the infections would have lessened in severity or frequency or both. Natural methods such as warm

baths and drinking extra water would be effective in clearing whatever discomfort she might have after intercourse. Far more significant, I hoped she would have made strides toward major changes in her marriage. Evidently her husband was one of the reasons for her problem, so perhaps she would have gained the strength to stand up to him; maybe she would have even kicked him out of the house!

Obstacles crumble in the face of healing

This theory was based on a phenomenon I have observed in many people as they heal: they find the strength to make long-overdue changes in their lives. Obstacles that once seemed insurmountable crumble in the face of the strength that comes with healing. It was clear to me that the real center of this case was emotional rather than physical, that Amy's marriage was the reason for her problems, and that once she gained a realistic perception of herself as a strong, bright, capable woman, she would clear the deadwood from her life, starting with this demoralizing relationship.

For ethical reasons, I explained some of this to Amy. I could not suggest what I thought might happen—that was entirely up to her—but I prepared her for the possibility that the remedy would give her a new lease on life and might prompt some dramatic changes. Before giving her the remedy, I gathered enough evidence to satisfy myself that her husband was not actually alcoholic or abusive and that she would be safe at home. I also made sure that she had a strong network of friends and family to help her and the children through any upheaval they might experience if changes occurred in her marriage.

A big change

When she returned to my office, she was glowing. She gave me a big hug and declared, "Your remedy changed my life." I settled back in my chair, awaiting the account of her husband's move from the house, the adjustment period, her satisfaction in having found herself. "It has been amazing," she said. "I've felt up, strong, positive, and energetic every day. I never even needed an afternoon nap!" Her need for an afternoon nap was something I had not heard about before. "Even when the kids whine, complain, fight, I keep my cool, I'm in control." I had not heard about her losing her cool either. She mentioned almost as an aside that she had had no bladder infection symptoms.

"And your husband?" I ventured. A look of mild surprise that I would ask, then she melted into an even deeper glow than before. "He's wonderful. He has that cute little chin, the big brown eyes—did I show you a picture?" She reached for one she kept in her wallet. "He works so hard for all of us. He's a great dad, you know; that's one of the reasons I married him. That and those thighs ..."

I asked about her husband's drinking, his demands on her and their daughters, his lack of interest in the events of their day. She acknowledged those as occasional problems but saw them as part of a larger picture that also included loving behavior. Now I heard about the times he washed the dishes, tucked the children into bed, took them on camping trips, and built a swing set. I heard about his gentle touch on her shoulder when he walked past her in the kitchen and about how he called her from work just to say hello. He was "not a big talker," she admitted, but fundamentally he was a devoted husband and father.

I was astonished at the shift in her perspective and the completeness with which she had forgotten what she had told me before. But I knew that one of the hallmarks of our gentle way of healing is that people can forget about their former problems, so total is the shift in their lives. And I had to look no further than a few pages into Samuel Hahnemann's *Organon of Medicine* to understand what had happened.

Feelings and functions

In paragraph 9 of the *Organon*, Hahnemann describes the perfect balance within a healthy human being. The healthy vital force, he says, animates the

organism and keeps all of its parts working in efficient harmony, “as regards both feelings and functions.”

This latter detail has profound implications for family life. Alternative translations read “sensations and functions” or “sensations and activities,” clarifying Hahnemann’s message. In health, we live in a state of peace and honesty not only internally but also with our surroundings. We are well inside, and we are well with our world. Our perceptions are accurate and our actions are appropriate to our context.

A second philosophical principle that applies here is the homeopathic definition of disease. The real disease is not the immediately perceptible problem (in Amy’s case, the bladder infections) but the inner disorder that allows it. “It is the disease-tuned life force alone that brings forth diseases,” says Hahnemann in paragraph 12. And since the life force animates the entire organism, when it is “disease-tuned,” problems can be manifested in any part of the person’s being—physical, mental, or emotional.

Both Amy’s body and emotions had been in a state of imbalance before the remedy, and her “feelings and functions” had not been “accurate.” Physically, she had “sensed” intercourse as a cause for illness and had responded with the “function” of a bladder infection. Her emotional feelings and functions had been similarly out of line with reality. She had overlooked the loving and devoted parts of her husband’s behavior and focused only on the negative ones. With her newly balanced viewpoint, she could embrace her husband as a whole human being. “Our marriage is better now than it has ever been,” she said, “and I’m so glad that now I can just relax and enjoy it.”

Lessons for practitioners

In addition to reflecting on these implications of homeopathic philosophy, I also had an opportunity to learn something as a practitioner. Amy’s initial description of her husband had fooled me as thoroughly as her own misperceptions of him had fooled her. To satisfy myself of her accuracy, I had asked for and received many concrete examples of his irresponsible behavior, but now I could see that since they all came from Amy herself, even those examples were selected and colored by her perspective at the time. How is a homeopath to know the truth?

Hahnemann’s instructions on case taking suggest that the homeopath gather information from the patient’s family as well as from the patient herself (*Organon*, paragraph 84). The case might have been clearer to me if I had interviewed the family, because I could have compared Amy’s “truth” with that of the other family members and perhaps I could have seen that Amy was exaggerating her husband’s insensitivity.

However, in paragraph 89, Hahnemann sums up his advice on this topic: “Of the accounts received from the patient and from others, most belief is to be attributed to the patient’s own account.” The best remedy is the one that fits the patient, not her circumstances—the one, in other words, that fits how she experiences things. “The” truth is not the most important point; “her” truth is.

If I had interviewed the family, I could have seen the relationship between “the” truth and “her” truth. I would have avoided buying into her view of her husband and would have been freer to notice that the remedy might produce changes in her emotional perception. I still would have known that the remedy needed to address her on the emotional level, and I would have found the same remedy because I still would have prescribed on “her” truth—but I would have been better prepared for its results. More important, however, I realized that I had forgotten that it is the patient who gets to define what healing is for them, not the homeopath!

Family matters

Of course, where there are serious problems in a relationship or family, the correct remedy will never blind the person to them; on the contrary, some patients perceive problems for the first time after a remedy, and their healing prepares them to respond appropriately. Time and again, though, I have seen family life improve because of the healing of one family member, from the

father who for the first time could discipline his children calmly, to the brother who broke five years' stony silence with his siblings.

Our "feelings and functions" condition our entire lives, but they are especially evident in our most intimate relationships. Families based on healthy, accurate, balanced feelings and functions are healthy, happy families, while the imbalanced viewpoint of a family member can jeopardize the entire family's well-being. Homeopathic healing, therefore, has an even more profound impact than it might seem: by healing an individual, we heal families as well.

It is now three years since Amy first came to see me, and she is doing well in all respects—she hasn't had any bladder infections, and is enjoying her life, her marriage, and her family.

About the author:

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