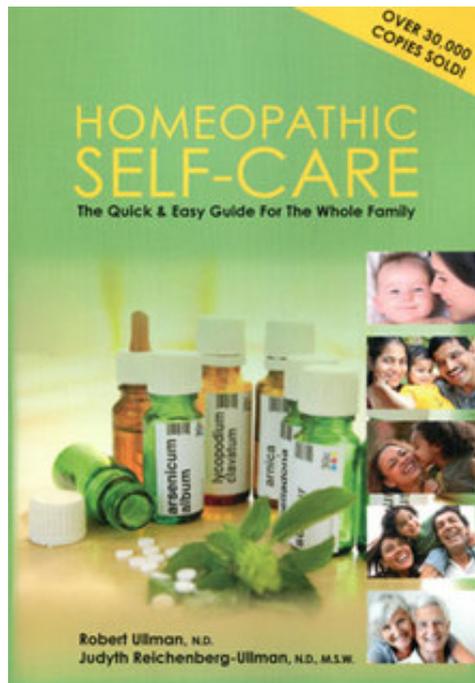


Reichenberg-Ullman / Ullman Homeopathic Self-Care

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Homeopathy: Safe, Effective Family Medicine

WHAT YOU
NEED TO KNOW

THE FASCINATING EVOLUTION OF HOMEOPATHY

What exactly is homeopathy? Homeopathy is not a new form of medicine. In fact, it celebrated its two-hundredth birthday in 1996. Homeopathy provides an *alternative* to conventional medicine in that it can be effective in situations where conventional medicine fails. It is also considered *complementary* because it works well with, and adds to the existing benefits of, standard medical treatment. It is one of the most popular forms of alternative or complementary medicine in use today. Homeopathic medicines are derived from natural substances and are given in very small, specially prepared doses to stimulate the body's ability to heal itself mentally, emotionally, and physically.

The concept of *like cures like*, which is the basic principle of homeopathic medicine, means that the same substance that can *cause* a particular set of symptoms in a healthy person can *cure* the same or similar symptoms in a person who is ill. This idea, also called the *law of similars*, dates back over five thousand years to the ancient medical texts of China and India. Hippocrates, in 400 B.C., and Paracelsus, the renowned medieval physician, also referred to this same idea.

Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843) is the founder of homeopathy. A German physician, chemist, and medical translator, he was discouraged with the harsh, often dangerous, medical methods commonly used in his time. He sought to discover a more gentle and effective type of medicine. Hahnemann expanded the ancient idea of "like cures like" into a complete medical system for the first time. He coined the term *homeopathy*, from the Greek roots for *similar* and *suffering*, to describe the new system that he evolved from the law of similars.¹

¹ Robert Ullman and Judyth Reichenberg-Ullman, *The Patient's Guide to Homeopathic Medicine* (Edmonds: Picnic Point Press, 1995), 2.

Although many of Hahnemann's contemporaries attempted to discredit his ideas as being radical and contrary to accepted medical theory, homeopathy was such a successful medical innovation that it spread throughout much of Europe and to the United States as well. The growing popularity of homeopathic medicine has continued in Europe to this day. The national health care systems of a number of European countries, including the United Kingdom, France, and Norway, utilize homeopathic medicine.

Homeopathy took a more roundabout route, however, in the United States. Initially, homeopathy received considerable recognition for its effectiveness in treating epidemics of life-threatening illness including cholera, scarlet fever, and yellow fever. By 1900, approximately one in every five medical doctors was a homeopath. More than one hundred homeopathic hospitals, over twenty homeopathic medical schools, and at least one thousand homeopathic pharmacies flourished in the United States at that time.²

Political opposition from conventional physicians in the early 1900s, however, led to eventual closing of all of the homeopathic medical schools and nearly led to the demise of homeopathy in the United States. People who managed to discover homeopathy and wanted to learn more had to study on their own or find others to establish homeopathic study groups.

Fortunately, the homeopathic scene has advanced dramatically over the past twenty years. More books and articles have been published about homeopathy worldwide in the last five years than in the preceding fifty. There are more than one thousand medically trained homeopaths now practicing in the United States, including medical doctors, naturopathic physicians, chiropractors, physician's assistants, acupuncturists, dentists, nurses, nurse practitioners, and veterinarians, as well as a growing number of trained but unlicensed homeopathic practitioners who are currently seeking certification.

The tremendous resurgence of interest in homeopathy is being fueled to a large degree by public demand for safer, effective, and natural health care. In 1992, the National Institutes of Health appointed a group of respected health professionals to evaluate the effectiveness of alternative therapies, including homeopathy. This process is beginning to stimulate research on alternative medicine in this country for the first time. These studies have not been published yet, but this was a breakthrough toward eventual mainstream acceptance of homeopathy and other effective alternative therapies. A survey published in the January 28, 1993, issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* revealed that more than one-third of Americans were using some form of alternative medicine, including homeopathy. The total number of visits to all categories of alternative practitioners was greater than those to primary care physicians.³

2 Dana Ullman, *Discovering Homeopathy: Medicine for the 21st Century* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1988), 48.

3 David M. Eisenberg, Ronald C. Kessler, Cindy Foster, et al., "Unconventional Medicine in the United States," *New England Journal of Medicine* 328, no. 4 (January 28, 1993):246-52.

THE HEALING POWER OF THE VITAL FORCE

The correctly chosen homeopathic medicine sets into motion a process of healing that can continue for days, weeks, or months. How is this possible?

Homeopaths use the term *vital force* to describe the intelligence that animates each and every person. This is a concept that has been recognized universally for thousands of years and called by many different names, including *life force*, *breath*, *chi*, *ki*, *prana*, and *mana*, depending upon the particular culture or tradition. This vital force is an energy force or a kind of innate wisdom, which is why homeopathy, along with acupuncture, is considered a form of "energy medicine." The *defense mechanism* is that aspect of the vital force which keeps each person in balance. *Symptoms* are the language of the defense mechanism.

Homeopaths spend a great deal of time learning to communicate with the defense mechanism by discovering how to interpret symptoms. Each individual is unique, and each defense mechanism communicates through its own particular set of symptoms. The homeopath's job is to carefully listen to each person to discover what is unique about that individual and his symptoms. While conventional medical doctors try to fit people into diagnostic categories based on the commonality of their symptoms, and select among a limited number of medicines that apply to the category, homeopathic doctors are continually trying to figure out the uniqueness of the individual's symptoms and how they may be matched to a single homeopathic medicine. The individual's particular way of being sick is the disease to be treated, not the common symptoms that are similar to everyone else who would be given the same diagnosis by a conventional doctor.

Take a sore throat, for example. One person will say that her sore throat is worse on the left side, made much worse by swallowing, and made better by drinking cold drinks and will complain of a lump in her throat. A homeopath would call this a *Lachesis* sore throat. Another person will complain that the sore throat hurts more on the right side and feels much better after he swallows warm drinks. This person will feel much better if he takes *Lycopodium*.

Which side the sore throat is on, whether it is worse or better when swallowing, and particular sensations such as a lump in the throat make up the uniqueness of a particular symptom picture, composed of a pattern of specific individual symptoms. One factor that makes a specific symptom unique is what makes that particular symptom feel better or worse. In homeopathy, this is called a *modality*. As in the example above, one sore throat may be relieved by cold drinks and another by warm drinks. This fact, when put together with other factors such as sensation and sidedness, makes up the symptom picture. Different symptom pictures require different homeopathic medicines.

These fine distinctions are essential to the homeopath in order to help heal the person, but would mean nothing to a medical doctor in terms of differentiating between one type of medicine and another. The medical doctor is more interested in which organism is apparently causing the sore throat in order to select an antibiotic to kill it.

WHAT YOU
NEED TO KNOW

The homeopath is looking for the substance in nature which can stimulate the person to heal himself, restoring an internal ecological balance which also relieves the sore throat.

HOMEOPATHY TREATS THE WHOLE PERSON AS A UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL

Many forms of healing claim to treat the whole person yet still focus on prescribing different pills or therapies for each part of the body or for each symptom. A homeopath always tries to take into account the person as a whole. Even in the case of an injury or other first-aid situation, the homeopath tries to understand how each individual has her own unique response. One person who is involved in a minor collision will refuse help and say she is just fine. This is an *Arnica* state. Another person, having experienced the identical circumstances, will develop an intense panic reaction. She will experience a racing heart, sweaty palms, and trembling, and will not be able to let go of the fear that she could have died. This is an *Aconite* state. Each person is an individual and reacts to the events and challenges of life in a unique way. For this reason, even those who experience similar life circumstances are likely to need different homeopathic medicines.

HOMEOPATHY TREATS THE PERSON, NOT THE DISEASE

This is one of the most essential and special features of homeopathic medicine. A homeopathic medicine restores balance to the health of each person. Symptoms are the clues to what is out of balance. Homeopathy places the emphasis on what is needed to trigger a renewed state of health for each individual. When the rebalancing occurs, symptoms will automatically improve. However, the converse is not necessarily true. Just because particular symptoms are eliminated, such as with conventional drugs, it does not necessarily mean that the person will experience an overall state of well-being. Homeopaths seek the medicine that will result in a *fundamental* shift in the person from disease to health. To that end, it is essential to use the principle of "like cures like" to match the state of the disturbance to precisely the substance from nature that would cause such an imbalance in a healthy person. Homeopaths seek to bring about genuine healing. The conventional approach, though well intentioned, often temporarily rids the individual of an annoying symptom only to have it return, perhaps even stronger, once the conventional medicine is discontinued.

A UNIQUE MATCH: ONE MEDICINE AT A TIME

Once the homeopath is able to perceive the uniqueness of the person and his symptoms, the next step is to select a single homeopathic medicine, made from the natural substance that is known to cause those same symptoms. This medicine,

paradoxically, can treat what its parent substance causes. A very highly diluted, specially prepared medicine is made from the original substance, which stimulates the body to heal itself.

There are over two thousand homeopathic medicines made from substances in the plant, animal, and mineral kingdoms. Any substance that you can possibly think of has either been made into a homeopathic medicine or could potentially become a medicine. Each substance in nature possesses its own unique traits. Think for a moment about a honeybee, from which the medicine *Apis mellifica* is made. Everyone knows that bees are busy and protective of their hives and that they don't like to be crossed. So, even if you know nothing about homeopathy, it will not be too surprising that people who need the medicine *Apis* can demonstrate all of these same traits.

Now think of iron, which comes from the mineral kingdom and is prepared homeopathically as the medicine *Ferrum metallicum*. Just as iron has the property of being strong and unbending, of becoming molten, and of being used to make prisons and armor, people needing the medicine *Ferrum* tend to be red-faced, irritable, and strong-willed and tend to engage in battles with other people. Another example is poison ivy, commonly known in homeopathy as *Rhus toxicodendron*. Just as poison ivy can cause a stinging, blistering rash with great itching that is very distressing, a person who needs *Rhus toxicodendron* will feel terribly restless, with itching or discomfort, and will go to great lengths to stretch and squirm to try to find a comfortable position.

In this same way, any substance in nature can be made into a homeopathic medicine and, depending on which symptoms it causes in a healthy person, can be of great benefit in relieving similar symptoms in a person who is ill. Understanding which medicine to give when is actually quite logical. Once you are familiar with symptoms and with the medicines that treat them, finding the needed medicine is like recognizing a friend you have met before. As long as you remember the principle that the symptoms a substance can cause are the same symptoms it will cure when it is made into a medicine, you will be able to understand how homeopathic medicines are discovered and used.

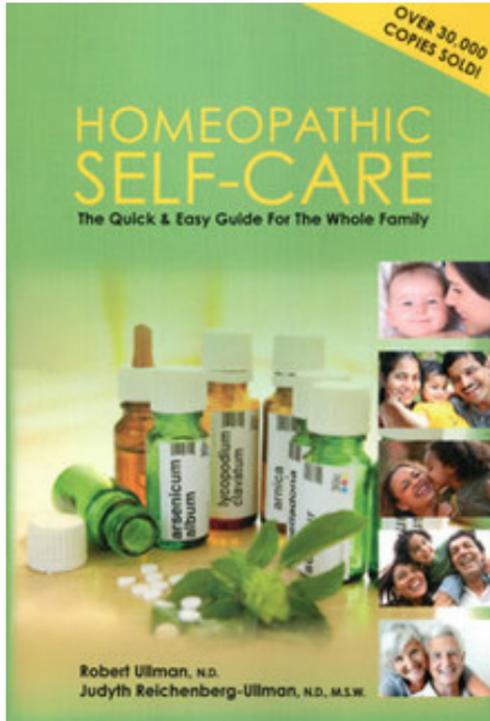
WHAT YOU
NEED TO KNOW

CLINICAL SUCCESS STORIES

The philosophy of homeopathy may be fascinating to some and bewildering to others. What speaks most loudly are the clinical success stories that every practitioner of homeopathy sees again and again. Here are a few typical case studies of people with acute illnesses who were helped dramatically by homeopathy.

Peter: Eye Injury

Peter, eight years old, was a patient of ours. His mother called, frantic, late on a Friday afternoon to tell us that a branch had flipped into Peter's right eye and scratched his



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