

The Relationship between Homoeopathy, Therapy and Counselling

by Ernest Roberts

This article explores how counsellors, therapists and homoeopaths can work together, and it suggests that homoeopaths could benefit from getting some level of training in counselling and psychotherapy. I will begin by listing eight factors common to all therapies.

1. Central to therapy is a process of discovering what the patient's needs are. In homoeopathy we call this 'taking the case', although 'receiving the case' is a better emphasis. This process begins with a long first interview but can, if necessary, continue over shorter follow-up appointments.

2. Therapists must be aware that they make value judgements about their patients, and that these influence their assessment of 'what is to be cured' in each individual case. Therapists should therefore develop some form of detachment in order to best serve needs of their patients.

3. Responsibility for health, progress or cure must not be taken away from the patient. This means therapists cannot squeeze patients into any groups, creeds, belief systems, health models etc. they subscribe to. It also excludes them from making promises of cure, or allowing the patient to become overdependent on the practitioner. With the responsibility for health clearly in the patient's own hands, the process of therapy lies in helping the patient to recognise and remove blockages to their self expression and creativity, along their own individual lines of development.

4. It is further recognised that disease of whatever kind involves all levels: spiritual, mental, emotional and physical and no matter on which level the disease manifests, it has repercussions and parallels on all other levels.

5. It follows from point 4 that outside influences like bacteria and viruses etc. only affect those individuals whose internal state or susceptibility on the psychic, neurological, endocrinological and immunological levels is already disturbed. The mind and emotions directly influence the nervous and hormonal systems.

6. Curative action, whether on the physical or any other level, involves a conscious recognition of the cause of disease which was previously held in the unconscious. Cure of these unconscious roots of disease involves the physical body as well as the emotional and mental processes.

From these principles we see the possibilities of suppressing symptoms or groups of symptoms by removing them without changing their deeper cause. Suppression can take place on every level, spiritual, emotional and mental as well as physical. It can be brought about in many ways; by homoeopathic and 'natural' remedies and by counselling and psychotherapy of every kind, as well as by conventional medicines and surgery. If the true needs of the patient are not identified and if the underlying cause of the disease is not treated, suppression will take place in proportion to the extent that the illness is 'ameliorated'. It may be necessary to suppress as a short term measure because the patient is unable to see or to cope with the deeper cure that is needed. Here the intention is not suppression as such but a postponement of the deeper cure, as a temporary expedient.

7. Therapists have a responsibility to support and nurture their patients in the longer term, and to freely share their knowledge of the processes of healing, in order to help the patient move towards more mature levels of health and growth in an on-going

process of awareness.

This level of healing requires therapists to have a clear understanding of their own points of weakness, as well as of the patient's deepest needs, and a thorough knowledge of the processes of healing.

8. The existence of conflict, struggle and difficulties is natural and closely relates to our purpose in being alive. Those regimes, methods and health philosophies which advocate methods or formulas for health and happiness that will somehow remove illness and the need to suffer or to face difficulties and conflicts are bad because they give us the additional problem of negative feelings when these promises do not prove correct. Either we fail to keep to the prescribed rules and feel guilty, or we keep to them and still meet conflict and then think 'I have failed' or 'there's something wrong with me'.

Homoeopathy

Homoeopathy is an energy medicine and can release from the subconscious fears and delusions long unrecognised. We take delusions, fears and dreams to be powerful indications of what is to be released. In taking the patient's history we note everything that has been experienced from conception to the present time. There are three key stages in the process of homoeopathic treatment.

1. Receiving the correct information from the patient. This interviewing process is inspired by certain ideas which I shall discuss later.

2. Analysing the information. This is done both during and after the interview, for as long as is necessary until a diagnosis is achieved. A diagnosis decides what is to be cured. In the case of chronic illness the decision of what is to be cured is partly decided

ed by our own belief systems before we even see a patient. What is our task? To remove physical symptoms? To find the cause in the psyche? To convert the patient to a right way of living physically, emotionally or spiritually? Let us assume we have an open mind on this and that we seek to discover the patient's deepest needs in order to find ways to meet them.

3. Assessing the patient's reaction to the medicine.

Counselling in Homœopathy

Can counselling techniques help homœopaths to 'take the case' or are these designed to achieve something quite different? Let us consider eight aspects of counselling skills:

1. Listening skills involve hearing what a person has to say interrupting them, but obviously the practitioner cannot be like a mirror or a tape recorder or a blank wall to be talked at. Listening has a purpose; consciously or not, the listener has a programme. I suggest that the homœopathic listener has a unique purpose in that they are trying to identify in what the patient says a deep cause of his or her present conditions including the presenting complaint. This requires us to listen openly to the patient and not to 'interpret' what they say.

The basic skill lies in asking 'Why?'; in going back to the deepest causes of which the patient is aware. To obtain this we have to first discover the most traumatic, disturbing, disappointing or distressing events in the patient's life. Then we have to ask how the patient reacted to each of these events, how he felt, what he did, what it reminded her of, how she interacted. If this knowledge is accurately obtained we have reached the essence of the patient's difficulties.

There is normally a clear pattern to these life events and to how the patient attracted and reacted to them. This pattern often represents an "inappropriate posture" or 'delusion'. A delusion is any belief which is not warranted by the facts as they are at the present time. This idea related closely to the idea of 'life scripts' in

Transactional Analysis. We must be aware not to unconsciously interpret what patients say about the deep and powerful secrets of their life. We witness what they mean to the patient. The things that colour our listening are our own unrecognised prejudice and blocks. Is counselling a strong enough practice to help this process of detached 'uncoloured' listening?

2. Reflecting back and paraphrasing are not really necessary and can be detrimental to the process. If you allow the patient the chance to give a free flow for their inner need to be healed, which has brought them to you in the first place, this is sufficient to prompt them to talk. If you merely ask 'why' or just nod non-committally, the really deep information will emerge. You have to open the flow. You may have to ask them, 'How did you feel at that time?', or 'What did you do?.', 'Who did you turn to?', 'Did you cry? Alone?' Some more closed patients may need such prompting. However, to repeat or to paraphrase is like putting a punctuation mark in the stream of consciousness; it halts the flow and you have to get it started again.

I have observed students taking the case use 'paraphrasing' and actually giving back a subtly different meaning, thereby losing the essence of what the patient meant. Such slight variations do matter when your purpose is to find the correctly matching homœopathic remedy. Some of our medicines have similar essences, such as 'Lack of self confidence', but the reasons for this symptom can vary subtly in ways which distinguish the correct remedy from the others. *Baryta carbonica* has want of self confidence because their power to cope with life is limited, they enjoy a familiar routine. Complex situations or ideas are beyond their capacity. *Silica* has a want of self confidence because of a lack of stamina; they will undertake nothing new in case they fail to finish through physical or mental exhaustion. This subtle difference may be the only way to differentiate the two remedies.

4. Empathy and 5. Probing. I have discussed these skills under 'listening skills'. The skills of gentle minimum

interference are most important in these techniques.

6. Challenging. 'Clients need to be invited to challenge themselves to change'. If healing comes from making conscious what was unknown, a challenge may reinforce the position of ignorance. I believe challenging is not useful in case taking. During the homœopathic interview, many a light dawns and patients realise the existence of their own blockages. The correct remedy is able to initiate and facilitate this process. Change must come from the patient's realisation that only he or she can make the change. I occasionally point out the logic of what the patient is saying to allow them to reflect more on this, but 'challenging' is too strong a word for this. I would prefer any work of this kind to be done as part of an integrated therapy.

7. Goal Setting. 'Helping the patient to look at options and possible plans of action, though ultimate responsibility belongs to the patient.' In homœopathic practice, patients often expect and ask for goals but almost always on the level of physical health. If they are asked for, goals about health regimes, exercise, smoking, diet etc. can be given.

When clients are aware of the need to change on deeper levels and ask for advice, it can be given along with the correct remedy. This is one of the areas where a skilled therapist can work with a homœopath to help the patient move forward.

8. Condition of Worth. This concept often goes to the essence of the patient's difficulties but a feeling of unworthiness or of being of no value or of being inadequate etc. is only one symptom of many. The purpose of the interview is to find out why these negative views are held. This is what needs to be cured and will be the reason for all of the negative ideas and illnesses suffered including a lack of self worth. However, positive thinking, affirmations etc. will be of some help but a deeper stimulus like the correct remedy or in-depth therapy is usually required to accomplish cure.

Transactional Analysis

Transactional analysis states that 'A script is an ongoing process of psychological self-definitions that may or may not be self-limiting'. There are four 'OK' life-positions that help to explain why patients follow life scripts which limit their self expression and produce delusions. These positions are, for example: 'I'm OK, you're OK'.

Transactional Analysis further asks, Why do we behave in child or parent mode on occasions? Why do we use time inappropriately? Why are we dominated by one motivating driver for a lot of the time? These drivers are, for instance: Must please, Hurry up, Be perfect.

In homoeopathic terms, what gives us our 'delusion'? Delusions are sometimes referred to as 'roots'. The father or mother's dominant state or delusion can be passed on to the child at the time of conception, or the mother can do this while she carries her baby. Roots can also be acquired at birth or during any other traumatic life event. They can also be inherited from past generations, and such roots can be very strong.

Another way of looking at these deep rooted inappropriate postures or delusions is to ask in what situation would it be appropriate to behave, think and feel in this way? Sankaran gives an example: A young boy abandoned by his father had to resort to begging and living on the street. He becomes deaf and dumb yet smiles and is religious and happy all the time. This posture saves his life as everyone shows him pity and he is eventually well taken care of. Later his speech returns and he remains happy and religious. This situation is that of *Veratrum album* which has delusions of being deaf and dumb and of being in contact with God. The posture adopted by the boy was appropriate to his situation. When someone has this posture outside of this kind of situation, it becomes a delusion and limits their freedom of thought, feeling and action.

Homoeopathy and Therapy

I hope it is now clear that the process of homoeopathic treatment is a deep therapeutic one which requires con-

sideration of the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual symptoms of each patient.

Edward Whitmont, an eminent psychotherapist and classical homoeopath, gives many cases in which homeopathy and therapy complement each other. One of them is summarised here:

A sensitive Catholic priest was undecided for years whether to marry a nun he had fallen in love with, or to stay in the ministry. He presented with a bad cold and mentioned a dream where he was in the same clinic in a very uncomfortable position having his case taken. In therapy, he was asked to take up the uncomfortable position of his dream and accentuate it until it was unbearable. He told the therapist 'I can't'. Urged to intensify the position more he repeated 'I can't'. The therapist asked him to go on repeating 'I can't' which he did and he eventually fell into a trance during which he relived his own birth stuck in breech and hearing his mother saying 'I can't'.

Later he dreamed that he was eating sand. Sand is Silica and this was given as a homoeopathic remedy (it is one of our main remedies for those who cannot begin new things). Shortly afterwards, he married. Both homoeopathy and therapy were needed in this case. The remedy for the mother at our patient's birth would have been *Pulsatilla* to which Silica is a more chronic complementary remedy. Nature's language is clear if we know how to listen to it.

A homoeopathic remedy can facilitate the necessary change in consciousness for the next step to be taken. There are powerful homoeopathic remedies which can awaken unconscious motives. It is usual for the patient to realise their blockages but to be powerless to change them. Even if they are not aware of them, the trained homeopath will usually be able to identify them.

However, sometimes the cause of their illness is so deeply buried in the patient's unconscious that we are unable to discern it, or the patient may not wish to change. They may

feel OK with their disease. When patients do not respond to well selected remedies, this is because we have failed to see the underlying cause of their inappropriate posture when taking the case. In such situations we usually give a remedy for the layer we can see as a temporary expedient while we continue to look for the deeper causes.

Conclusions

The advantage of homoeopathy is its neutrality. We perceive the posture of the patient and the roots of this posture and give the indicated remedy. This remedy dynamically removes the need at the subconscious energy level to hold on to this inappropriate posture. There is no outside authority imposing conformity or change onto the patient. The remedy is like a catalyst and the process is personal and free.

The disadvantage of homoeopathy is that we are limited in our training and time available to patients so we cannot always identify deeply-held delusions, nor give the support needed in this process. A second disadvantage is that there is a tendency for homoeopaths to detach too much and assume a god-like presence, not giving anything back to the patients. Some even refuse to tell the patient which remedy they have prescribed. More support, reassurance and sharing is needed from homoeopaths.

I think the way ahead is for homoeopaths and therapists to work together as a team to help patients discover and reveal their hidden postures, a process which homoeopathic remedies can help. My own experience of working in this way with a therapist was most encouraging. She was able to show me from her own work the needs of patients which in homoeopathic terms led to more helpful prescriptions.

Remedy examples

Below are the essences of six remedies which this therapist's work led me to prescribe with good results.

Palladium Must please so as to constantly be praised, they only feel OK when they are being praised, and

they fear the disapproval of others. The whole of their life and progress is like giving a performance so as to obtain praise.

Asarum Are unable to love or feel, or to accept their own needs. They cannot receive love and their nervous system is incapable of tolerating any stress, especially noise. They behave like a ghost, floating and therefore safe from the pressures of life. Alcoholism in themselves or their parents is often a causative factor.

Cyclamen Has a belief that it is their responsibility to put everything right, to make things work and to see that everyone is happy. This leads to the delusion that they have committed a crime and that everything that goes wrong is their fault. Furthermore, they feel that they have been forsaken, so only they bear these responsibilities.

They reproach themselves and show unreasonable conscientiousness. Aurum Is similar to Cyclamen but they think they have neglected their duty and deserve reproach. Aurum must be the best, they must be perfect, and if there is any rejection or failure in achievement or in personal behaviour, the remorse and guilt is very strong. Aurums feel they are not valued enough, they are the best and yet the world does not recognise this. They only feel okay when they realise they can leave this unworthy and unappreciative world and commit suicide.

Stramonium Has a fear and violence so intense that it is deeply rooted in the subconscious. We see these things come out in nightmares, in a fear of violence and of losing their temper - for when they do they fear they will lose all conscious control

and could kill quite easily.

Staphysagria Is humiliated, they act as if they are a servant or a slave to an unreasonable master. The only alternative to this employment is starvation. They are incapable of confrontation, of facing the cause of their humiliation and suppress their anger. When they do express it, they do so inappropriately in time, fashion and place, so that it never addresses its real causes. If the instinctive reactions aroused by these traumas are not appropriately expressed at the time, the energy generated will turn into feelings of worthlessness. Homoeopathy and psychotherapy together can bring these feelings to light and help the patient to heal.

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