

The Outpost Exchange

Flower Essences

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Stress is a funny thing. Up to a certain point, it's a positive—and even necessary—motivator. Positive stress is what inspires us to get up in the morning, what causes us to strive and achieve. It feels expansive and exhilarating.

At a certain point, however, stress can become a negative. It makes us overwhelmed, anxiety-ridden and depressed. The muscles tighten and metabolism, breathing and heart rates speed up. We repeat destructive, negative thoughts. What used to give us our get up and go now nearly paralyzes us. What changed? Our ability to handle it or the way we view it.

Scientific evidence has established that repeated exposure to negative stress results in disease. Between 60-75% of visits to physicians are prompted by stress-related conditions, according to Dr. Herbert Benson, M.D., Associate Professor at Harvard Medical School and Chief of the Division of Behavioral Medicine at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

There are many well-documented stress busters, including exercise, meditation and breath work. Here's another tool to add to the kit: flower essences. While too much stress fosters discord and despair, the vibrational power of flowers restores emotional, physical and spiritual balance and harmony. You may not be able eliminate the stressors in your life, but you *can* change the way you deal with them, which is the gift of flower essences.

What Flower Essences Are...and Are Not

Flower essences are subtle liquid extracts generally taken orally and used to address emotional well-being, soul development and mind-body health. They are created by steeping flower blossoms in water for several hours in the sun. The water is then strained and the essence is stored in a dropper bottle, often with a bit of brandy for preservation.

Flower essences are not essential oils or herbal tinctures. They do not smell or taste (except for the brandy preservative) and do not work on a chemical level. Instead they are an imprint of the vital life force of the plant, whose subtle vibrations cannot be perceived by the five senses. Essences work on an energetic level, similar to homeopathic remedies. "Their impact does not derive from any direct bio-chemical interaction within the physiology of the body. Rather, flower essences work through the various energy fields, which in turn influence mental, emotional and physical well-being," state Patricia Kaminski and Richard Katzkin in their book, *Flower Essence Repertory*.

"Flower essences are a vibrational healing product, working on a vibrational level in the physical body and on the auric field, which is the energy field around the body," said Marie Greenfield, a Milwaukee-area reiki practitioner, Outpost employee and flower essence practitioner. The basic principal of vibrational healing (which can include flower essences, crystals, Reiki, hands-on energy

work, acupuncture, visualizations and more) is that all living things are created and maintained by a universal energy. This energy, as it flows into each of us, translates into our personal energy. If it's blocked or out of balance, we feel disharmony in some aspect of our lives. If left unattended, these blocks lead to illness, repetitive thoughts or cycles, or to just never achieving all we were meant to accomplish.

For those still clinging to the Newtonian law of physics that we--and everything we see around us--are solid objects, the idea of an energy field and essences that work on a vibrational level may seem far-fetched. So let's apply the concept to something scientifically proven which can be seen by the naked eye. Envision a harp and a tuning fork. When you strike the tuning fork, it emits a sound that travels in waves. If your tuning fork is in the key of C, when you strike it and hold it near a harp, the sound waves travel to the strings and any strings that are tuned to the key of C will begin to resonate without being touched. This is a physical phenomenon called sympathetic resonance.

"Flower essences work in the same fashion. They are one of nature's tuning forks," according to information on the Desert-Alchemy website, makers of some flower essences. "As we use an essence, we begin to resonate in harmony with the qualities of the flower, and limitations and disharmonies begin to change." Have you ever been stressed or upset, then listened to uplifting music? Did you notice that the music reduced your stress or lessened your funk? The vibration of the music affects *your* vibration. You cannot remain the same in the presence of a vibration that is different than yours. That's why some people bring you up (they have a higher vibration than you) and some bring you down (a lower vibration). "Flower essences either vibrate with the frequency you need to get back to, or in the opposite way so it pushes you where you need to go," said Kenyatta Hawkins, owner of Mind, Body, Spirit, a Milwaukee-based phone order business that carries flower essences, gem stone essences, aromatherapy products and more.

Like most alternative healing modalities, the use of flower essences for profound healing and spiritual growth has many ancient antecedents. But it wasn't until the 1930's that essences gained wider recognition and acceptance. Dr. Edward Bach, an English physician, developed a precise application of flower essences for specific emotions and attitudes. Other companies, such as Perelandra, Pegasus and Desert Alchemy among many others, produce essences in the method similar to the Bach Flower Essences, to address a vast number of issues, attitudes and growth opportunities. Today, flower essences are widely used by professional holistic health practitioners around the world.

In a society enamored of scientific research, there is little hard evidence to support the healing properties of flower essences. However, Dr. Jeffrey Cram, Ph.D., a research and clinical psychologist with the Sierra Health Institute in Nevada City, CA, has completed two double-blind placebo studies that demonstrate the positive effects of flower essences on stress, and the non-profit Flower Essence Society currently is funding a major multi-site clinical outcomes study on the use of flower essences for the treatment of depression.

When to Use Flower Essences

Do you ever have nagging fears, or become troubled by uneasy feelings? Do you ever feel out of control because you've taken on too many projects or have too many demands on you right now? Do you frequently feel tense, irritable or impatient? Does your mind constantly replay bits of conversation, especially at night, keeping you up? Are you indecisive about decisions big and small? Do you put a lot of emphasis on what other people think about you? Do you care too much for others at the neglect of yourself? Are you living your soul purpose?

These are just a few of the scenarios that flower essences may be able to address; the uses for essences are endless. Chronic health issues, emotional issues and desires for personal and spiritual growth are among some of the reasons people take flower essences. "The essences can kick off an expansion, a big spiritual growth experience, or they can move you through to finish it up and to become very different, much greater, more of who you are," said Diane Herold, a Reiki instructor and flower essences practitioner in Bay View. "Essences can also act as a support or as the means to blast through something or the means to integrate, process and bring new insight into old problems. An issue can be layered and the essences can be used to unlayer it."

Essences can affect subtle or major changes, depending on how ready the user is and if essences are being used in combination with other techniques such as therapy, journaling, meditation, yoga, breath work, or other vibrational healing techniques.

Jean Clougherty, a psychotherapist who runs the Art of Living Center with her husband, John, likes to "look for every avenue that presents possible change that's not chemical. We can do so much with our minds and energy; it's all spokes of a wheel. If people are well-defended on the spiritual and energetic levels, I need other avenues and in-roads," she said. Clougherty often turns to flower essences to break down those barriers.

Dr. Bach (who died in 1936 at age 50) and other proponents believe that flower essences are a key to changing our mental, emotional and spiritual states and thus positively affecting our physical health. As anyone involved in alternative wellness is aware, by treating the cause of the disease rather than the symptoms, we can alleviate, shorten or even avoid illness. Dr. Bach wrote: "The action of these remedies is to raise our vibrations and open up our channels for the reception of the spiritual self; to flood our natures with the particular virtue we need, and wash from us the fault that is causing the harm. They are able, like beautiful music or any glorious uplifting thing which gives us inspiration, to raise our very natures and us nearer to our soul and by that very act to bring us peace and relieve our sufferings. They cure, not by attacking the disease, but by flooding our bodies with the beautiful vibrations of our Higher Nature, in the presence of which, disease melts away as snow in the sunshine."

"Flower essences unpeel the layers and get to who you really are on the inside so you can get to the direction your soul wanted to go in the first place," Greenfield said.

Getting Started with Flower Essences

The fun of flower essences is that one can experiment with them and anyone—or thing—can use them: adults, children, plants, animals, any living thing that has an energy force. They are completely harmless and have no side effects, apart from perhaps bringing to the fore emotional feelings attached to the issues. One cannot overdose on them. If the essence selected is not one needed, the body simply passes it through.

Follow these six steps to getting started:

1. Practitioners all recommend that a person begin by reading the descriptions of the essences and the issues that they address and see what they are drawn to. “It’s OK for people to choose essences on their own [versus working with a practitioner],” Clougherty said. “It’s their own inner wisdom, their spiritual wisdom guiding them. If they’re reading this article, their inner wisdom is interested in essences. People learn by using them. If it seems overwhelming at first, just start someplace. Trust your innate knowledge.” To learn more about the properties of the different essences try these resources:

- Buy a \$5 copy of the Bach Flower Essence overview at area alternative health and wellness stores
 - Check out the Flower Essence Repertory Book on display at The Outpost
 - Go online to the Flower Essence Society www.flowersociety.org or the Edward Bach Centre www.bachcentre.com
 - Check out the book *Flower Essences* by Machaelle Small Wright of the Perelandra Center for Research
2. After reading the descriptions of the qualities the essences address, select up to six that speak to the core issue you would like to work on.
3. Purchase the essences
4. Take the essences by either directly placing four drops of each essence under your tongue four times a day OR create a treatment bottle by placing two drops of each essence into a dark dropper bottle and filling the rest with spring water. This will keep in the refrigerator for up to three weeks. Keep sanitized by making sure the dropper does not touch the mouth when administering drops. If using a treatment bottle, take four drops under the tongue four times a day. Most practitioners say that the drops can actually be taken as often as a person feels they are needed; again, there’s no risk of overdose. It’s important to remember that it’s most effective to take the drops more often than to take more drops (i.e, to take drops often from the treatment bottle. Though it seems counterintuitive, like homeopathic remedies, flower essences become stronger when diluted.) They are best taken 30 minutes before or after eating.

Because they are vibrational and work in the energy field, essences are just as effective topically. Practitioners suggest making up a treatment bottle as directed above, but in a spray mister and just spray on yourself, your kids, your pets or plants whenever needed.

5. Some practitioners recommend reciting a short affirmation or intent to focus when taking the drops

6. Most remedies take about 21 days to see a change. “At the very least, you will notice a subtle difference, an inner sense of feeling a little more together, a little better, a little less out of control or overwhelmed,” practitioner Herold said. Others have reported dramatic changes. (see A Personal Experience sidebar.) Essences do not force change or overwhelm. As they effect a shift in consciousness each person will experience them differently. It is important to stay attuned to our inner life to recognize the changes.

There is one flower essence that works immediately in crisis situations and that is Rescue Remedy or Five Flower Formula. It is a combination of 5 flower essences to be used in emergency situations, such as experiencing an accident, trauma, a stressful situation, before an exam or public speaking, even topically on bruises or sprains. Take a dose of 4 drops under the tongue or in a glass of water and sip frequently. Remember, essences become more potent when diluted, so if more assistance is needed, drinking the essence-infused water throughout the day is perhaps best. Usually Rescue Remedy is taken for anywhere from a couple of days to two weeks. After the initial crisis, the situation can be analyzed for the deeper imbalances which need to be healed with other essences.

“Flower essences are for everyone; they can help in so many different circumstances. But they are subtle and people have to slow down long enough to realize that their body wants a soft touch. They are subtle but work in powerful ways,” Greenfield said. “When a flower blooms, the most difficult thing it must do in its life, what it gives so much energy to, is opening to its full glory. It’s the blooms that are used to make flower essences. They are giving us their story and helping us to blossom into *our* full glory.”

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Flower Essence First Hand Experience Sidebar
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Flower Essences: A First-Hand Experience

Motivating Factor

A few years ago I had built a successful communications business with a couple of employees and a number of high profile accounts. Starting the business was the culmination of 15 years of hard work at top organizations and universities. It should have been my moment of glory. Instead, the joy was not there and it felt more like drudgery, especially the more successful I became. I began to wonder if, just because one is good at something, it's one's soul purpose. I suspected it was not. But how to find that elusive path?

Part of what made me so successful at work was my never-ending bubble of enthusiasm and willingness to take on more, and more and more. I recognized that I was a workaholic and started to wonder if being the one to take on what others shirked was a virtue or a vice. It made me a great employee, but a lousy person after a while. I wanted to learn to say no, to be less overwhelmed, to be less over-extended, more patient, less of a worry wart. Although these were a lot of different issues, I realized that they all were related to a desire to reign in my tendency to over-commit.

The First Step

I started journaling, reading about spiritual growth, attempting yoga and meditation (who has time when one is so stressed and over-committed??). I was in full exploration of my current situation and wondering about my life purpose, so the ground was fertile for some shifts. One day I read a brief article about flower essences, of which I had never heard before. Several of the characteristics of essences profiled matched the issues on which I was trying to work. I rushed out and purchased six different essences and began taking them religiously.

The Result

About two-three weeks later I was riding in a taxi-cab in New York City. Out of the blue, it occurred to me, "You don't need to be doing this[business]. You don't want to be doing this. Scale it back. Do less of it so you can enjoy your family more and pursue your other interests." It seemed so crystal clear. Prior, I had been paralyzed with the fear of having to admit that I'd changed my mind about what I wanted to do, after I'd spent so much time working towards it. It seemed I'd built an impossible fortress from which to extract myself.

A week or two later, as I was working through scaling back the business, another thought flashed, "This isn't enough. This is still taking you away from what you really want to do. You need to scale back further to free yourself up." I was giddy with excitement. It was so true. I'd imprisoned myself with my own fears and insecurities. I was being set free. I began to pursue with earnest my first love—writing—and to delve further into the study of alternative therapies and wellness, along

with spending significantly more time with my family. Former colleagues are mystified by my change, maybe think I've "lost my drive," but perhaps someday they'll discover flower essences for themselves!

The Verdict

Although I was clearly in full-blown self reflection, doing a lot of growth work and open to changes, I credit the flower essences for the break through to the other side. There is no other explanation for it. What once caused me to be mentally overwrought with indecision and guilt became crystal clear in a flash.

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Flower Essence Side Bar—sample essences

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Area flower essences practitioners shared some of the more common concerns that clients wish to address and the essences they often recommend. Remember, there are dozens of essences, each with their own set of qualities. Take time to familiarize yourself with them so that you select the essences that are right for you.

- Aspen—for unnamed fear or apprehension
- Cauliflower—for babies right after birth to help seat their soul and do a complete body/soul fusion, allowing the soul to incarnate in a much more complete way
- Cerato—to trust in one's intuition and divine guidance, to find one's life purpose
- Gentian—for despondency
- Gorse—for pessimistic anxiety, such as "What's the use?"
- Star of Bethlehem—good for receipt of bad news, such as the fact that someone died
- Elm—Overwhelmed with responsibility and cannot cope with it all, yet too giving and a perfectionist
- Impatiens—for irritability, anxiousness and impatience
- Agrimony—for hiding behind a brave mask
- Mimulus—for fear of known causes, like crime, crowds and constant demands
- Dill—for overstimulation, and feeling that nerves are stretched to the breaking point
- White Chestnut—for the mind that constantly replays bits of conversations or experiences without resolution; inability to achieve inner peace
- Indian Pink—for taking on too many projects and activities then feeling like you're spinning out of control
- Dandelion—for one who overschedules self, trying to cram as much as possible into every day and hour.