

Light at the End of the Depression Tunnel: A Real-Life Case Study

By Maria Ringo

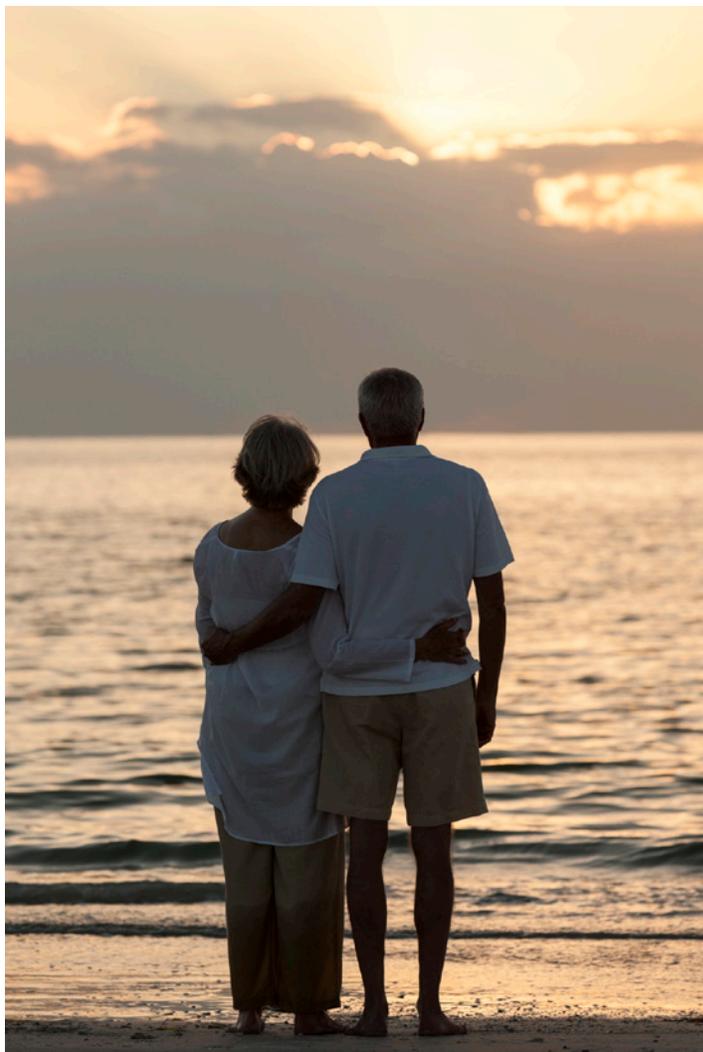
Have you ever gone through a tough time in your life and found yourself not only drained of energy but feeling like you were completely out of gas—not eating or sleeping well, maybe not up to it when a dear friend calls to invite you out? It is entirely natural, especially as we experience the highs and lows of our lives, to have bouts of depression. What our society likes to call “depression” has many facets and depths, all of them absolutely normal to some extent.

Depression becomes a problem when we can't find our way out of the hole and end up disrupting our lives and those of our loved ones because we miss too much work or school, we start overusing alcohol or drugs—or worse, we lose the thread of productive activity that keeps us connected to the world. When sadness or hopelessness overwhelms our ability to cope with our daily lives, we need help.

If this describes you or a loved one, there is hope. Despite all the ads on the subway telling you to go straight to your doctor for a prescription, there are alternative solutions for depression, and the best news is that all of them are completely natural. Exercise, for example, should be first on your list of possibilities. Just moving your body around produces mood-elevating endorphins in your brain that may give you that extra lift you need to start making good decisions.

Before you head to the pharmacy, consider a visit to your homeopath. Here is a true story. It's a case I took recently with the names and identifying factors changed to preserve privacy.

My patient Sally was tall, thin, and graceful. At 70 years old, she came in seeking help for insomnia, loss of appetite, and extreme fatigue—all three of these symptoms add up to the classic signs of depression. An avid walker and yoga student, Sally liked to travel, paint, read the newspaper, and have lunch out with her friends. As a retired medical professional, she had been a very active woman her whole life, yet for the past several months, she could barely force herself out of bed. Her husband and friends were worried about her and sent her in



to see me. She never liked to take pills and wasn't happy about the idea of adding a mood-elevating SSRI to the blood pressure meds she already took.

“I just have no interest or energy anymore. The worst is that I feel an irresistible tiredness during the day around 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. I am compelled to take naps. I go to sleep for 20 minutes to an hour; I just cannot keep my eyes open. I feel better after it, but if I sleep for a whole hour, I am too groggy. It has really affected my life!”

As I do with every homeopathic patient, I asked Sally about all of the symptoms that were bothering her, not just the main ones. She told me her blood pressure was high: “I can feel it,” she told me. “I can feel my arteries closing. I haven't any heart pal-

pitations or anything, but I know when to take my meds.”

In addition to the blood pressure and depression, Sally had hereditary high cholesterol, osteoporosis in her hip, continually dry skin, and often struggled with constipation. Her most serious disease was glaucoma, for which she took eye drops daily. She had one strange symptom too: “I always have a tissue handy because I feel like there is nasal discharge collecting in there. It never drips, but it feels like it will and I have to keep wiping it.”

She told me that the way she reacts to stress is to not eat. “My body feels heavy all over; I have no appetite at all and am never hungry. If I eat more than a small amount, I feel like it’s too much. The only thing I want is soup or ice cream.” In fact, she looked awfully thin to me, and she told me the last straw for her friends was seeing how much weight she had lost—that even for her she was too skinny.

She told me, “I am used to moving quickly, but now I move so slow—like something is pulling me down. I am so exhausted I have to force myself to do yoga. I used to be energetic, but now I just get through the days. I want to lie on your couch and read right now!”

Sometimes, depressed people describe tiredness during the day and insomnia at night, and Sally was no different. She needed a radio to lull her to sleep, and even then, she awoke every night at 2:00 a.m. with thoughts swirling around her mind till 4:00 or 5:00 a.m., at which point she fell back asleep just before it was time to wake up.

Something was behind this exhausted and depleted physical state, and I asked her what her life has been like for the past year or so. In every homeopathic case, this question is key to solving the physical puzzle. Sally’s story was a sad one: “My daughter died last March, and then my granddaughter tried to commit suicide by taking pills. Everyone felt so bad. When my daughter got sick, I sold my house out east and moved back here to help out. My granddaughter did not handle any of this well...then one day, she found her mother dead on the floor of kidney failure. What a horror show. And now she and I aren’t speaking; maybe we need some time apart. I’ve done everything I know to help...I feel her pain. When my daughter first died, I could not get out of bed at all; I was just worn down—and from fighting with the doctors, too.”

I asked her to tell me more about that: “My daughter’s doctors were not working as a team

around her, and I felt the need to be vigilant. When I get angry, I am very powerful. I don’t yell, I just speak in a low and serious voice. I cannot stand injustice and wrongdoing, especially to vulnerable people. Disrespect really bothers me. As a nursing student, I could not work on the psych ward—too much like *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*.

“I can’t stand any more of this. I’ve been dealing with illness and now everyone’s sadness for so long, I just can’t take it anymore. And now this inertia of mine...I’m unable to think—to find my way. I’m too weak.”

Sally’s depression, and all the accompanying symptoms of insomnia and fatigue, now made a lot more sense. After filling me in on her childhood, previous marriages, and other details, I had a pretty good picture of what makes Sally the unique individual she is. Several remedies came to mind to help bring her state back to equilibrium.

The goal of homeopathic medicine when dealing with depression is to give the patient an energetic ping that helps restore the will to recover. Here are some of the remedies we might consider in our search for the similimum for Sally.

Natrum Muriaticum

Generally prescribed for emotional, tearful people, who are easily hurt, with a fear of rejection, guilt,

A Healthy Reader’s Word Guide

Let’s review some of the medical and health terms that are used in this month’s issue:

Art therapy: A type of therapy that uses art to understand the root causes and underlying symptoms of a person’s disease or illness

Depression: A serious, debilitating disease that comes in many forms. For some people, it can last a few weeks and pass with no long-term side effects. For others, it may be a lifelong difficulty.

Irritable bowel syndrome: A functional disorder—also known as spastic colon—that can cause abdominal discomfort, severe pain, irregular bowel movements, diarrhea or constipation, and flatulence. ■

and a strong sense of responsibility. The person is irritable and always feels worse when people try to comfort them or cheer them up. They want to be left alone in their misery to dwell on past experiences. On the physical side, we would see a strong craving for salty food, pounding headaches, and an intolerance of heat and sun, though they may actually feel better at the seaside.

Naja

A person requiring this remedy would be in an overwhelming torpor; a complete collapse of energy that provokes in them a great deal of restlessness and anxiety because they feel paralyzed or trapped. They have a strong sense of duty and a fear they may have failed in that duty—that they have done things wrong. The physical symptoms we would see center around the heart: palpitations and fluttering. These people are chilly, worse after waking up in the morning, and have the interesting symptom of not being comfortable lying on the left side.

China

The state indicated for this remedy is severely agitated and depressed, full of exhaustion, often following the long illness or nursing care of a relative. These are sensitive, artistic people who express themselves in poems or painting. They have short tempers and are inclined to clash with others, which eventually exhausts them. Physically, their sensitivity extends to being very susceptible to cold, strong odors, touch, and noises. Thoughts crowd their minds at night, preventing sleep. They get really hungry at night, dislike acidic tasting food (wine, fruit), and tend to have headaches, intestinal gas, and gallstone pains.

These are just a few examples of remedies that we might research for melancholic depression, and in Sally's case the situation called for a close look at remedies for flat-out exhaustion from grief. Phosphoric acid, which is a remedy made from minerals, has the most important symptom in this case—if someone is “apathetic from his struggle with unequal circumstance.” In other words, they are exhausted from fighting battles they cannot possibly win. Persons needing phosphoric acid are homesick, weak, and often grieving a loss (they have “ailments from grief”).

Sally moved from a home she loved to care for a dying daughter, fought with the doctors, and then while experiencing her own intense grief, began

arguing with her granddaughter. Phosphoric-acid patients are listless, indifferent to things that used to interest them, and withdrawn from friends. They are especially vulnerable to changes in relationships—something Sally found quite challenging in the wake of her daughter's death as she and her granddaughter became estranged.

Patients needing phosphoric acid have no appetite, are chilly, have trouble falling asleep at night, but are better after a short nap. They crave refreshing things (Sally craves ice cream), and there is always a dryness (in Sally's case, she had dry skin) in these patients. Interestingly, phosphoric acid is also better for free secretions. Sally's nose feels like it is running constantly, so she always has a tissue ready.

I gave Sally one dose of phosphoric acid as well as a homeopathic sleeping remedy to help her rest at night. One month later, she came for a return visit and told me how she felt:

I finally separated myself from the emotional ups and downs of my granddaughter and feel free of that drama. I feel much more like myself again. I have no trouble getting to sleep, and if I wake in the night, I take one of the sleeping remedies and go right back down. I have no more feeling like I need to stay in bed in the morning. I got my energy back fairly soon after the remedy and don't feel a need to nap anymore. I'm back to art class! It took a few weeks to get my appetite back, but I've gained 6 pounds. Now I carry chocolate with me. My goal used to be getting even one thing done per day, but now I can do my whole day.

She reported having dreams at night, which was something she had not done in ages. Now that she had her energy back, she could carry on her favorite activities, which then allowed her to grieve her loss without losing the thread of her daily life. She found her way out of the hole. In subsequent visits, Sally reported continued improvement and is now once again enjoying the friends and activities she relies on as she continues to adjust to life after the death of her loved one.

Sally's case is but one of many types of depression, which can also manifest as anxiety, fearfulness,

extreme behavior, suicidal feelings, or a combination of these. Each individual will have his or her own set of physical and emotional symptoms, so each case of depression must be addressed individually. Remedies are prescribed not just on the feelings reported, but with all the physical symptoms taken into consideration as well—even the ones that are seemingly unconnected to the case.

Homeopathy is a truly holistic medicine, where all aspects of a person's health are carefully organized into rubrics and ranked to create a complete symptom picture. Finding the right remedy can help bring relief for both acute and chronic states of depression safely and without side effects, sometimes even if the person is already using antidepressants. For more information, ask your homeopath.



This article was written by Maria Ringo. Maria received her undergraduate Liberal Arts degree from the University of Michigan in 1985 and shortly thereafter began a year-long trek around the world by backpack. She spent the next decade as co-founder and president of one of the first natural dog-food companies in North America and one of the few manufacturing companies owned by women. After a successful career in business, Maria changed paths mid-life to follow her dream: graduating from the Ontario College of Homeopathic Medicine in 2009 with honors in both Science and Homeopathy. She is the Clinic Director of the North Toronto Homeopathic Medicine & Wellness Clinic—a private practice she opened in November 2009. She is a member of the Faculty of the Ontario College of Homeopathic Medicine and is currently serving on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Consumers Centre for Homeopathy, and as the Director of Healthcare for Carna4 Handcrafted Pet Food.

Maria has a passion for homeopathy that goes back 25 years to when she first discovered it while working as an office manager for a busy homeopathic family practice in Ann Arbor, MI. Having seen firsthand how effective homeopathic medicine can be for children and families, Maria devotes as much time as possible to learning more about the care of childhood illnesses, women's conditions, and alleviating chronic disease. She also has a special interest in mental health and nutrition. She recently received her certificate in Live Cell Nutritional Analysis with Microscopy and has added this fascinating educational service to her practice. ■

References

- Sue Young Histories, sueyounghistories.com/archives/2008/07/06/george-bernard-shaw-and-homeopathy/, accessed July 10, 2013.
- Benneth, J., "The Threat of Homeopathy," johnbenneth.wordpress.com/2010/11/07/the-threat-of-homeopathy/, accessed July 10, 2013.
- Kaplan, B., "Art Therapy & Homeopathy," drkaplan.co.uk/homeopathy-practice/homeopathy/art-therapy-homeopathy/, accessed July 10, 2013.
- Bragga, S., NaturalNews.com, "Sales of herbal and homeopathic remedies top \$6.4 billion," www.naturalnews.com/040718_homeopathic_remedies_homeopathy_sales_trends.html, accessed July 10, 2013.