

The truth of the matter

by *Jeremy Swayne*

“Do you know, this is the first time I have ever told anyone that in my life.”

That is possibly the most important statement a patient can make to their homeopathic practitioner – or indeed, anyone truly concerned to help them get well. And in homeopathic practice it is not uncommon. “That”, may be an experience, a relationship, an emotion, which has been buried, suppressed, even forgotten for years or decades. But as far as understanding the illness and starting the healing process is concerned “that” is likely to be absolutely critical. It is the truth of the matter.

There is something about the homeopathic approach that makes this kind of insight, this kind of revelation possible. Any good therapeutic relationship may, perhaps should, make it possible and it was certainly not new to my experience by the time that homeopathy began to make a significant contribution to my own therapeutic repertoire. But even after using a psychotherapeutic approach when appropriate for many years, there was something about the change that the homeopathic method brought to my consulting style that made a difference.

The consultation

The homeopathic consultation is a whole-making experience. Even in an acute illness, or in the treatment of a simple ailment, it looks at the *person* who is affected, as well as the problem. When the problem is more complicated this whole person approach is even more comprehensive. And it is very likely that it will be the first time the patient has been encouraged to think of themselves in this way. We rarely see ourselves as the remarkable and in fact unique mixture of bodily and personal characteristics that we are. To be encouraged to do so can be liberating, and healing in itself.

To be encouraged to do so in a therapeutic relationship that inspires trust, that demonstrates empathy and acceptance, that does not label or analyse, let



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alone judge, also encourages truthfulness. It allows and enables us to realise and express things that may have burdened us, consciously or unconsciously for much of our life. The pain, guilt, shame, loneliness, bewilderment, anxiety, fear, self-doubt – you name it – bound up in that experience may be a key part of the “illness process”; the heart of the matter; the wound or sickness that above all needs to be healed.

The healing process

Truthfulness, I believe, is essential to the healing process. Homeopathy, of course, requires accuracy; accuracy in the description of symptoms and characteristics. But truthfulness is more than accuracy. It involves a degree of self-awareness and honesty that we may not be accustomed to, and that we may not find comfortable. Even to say, “When I have a migraine (or PMT, or a hangover, or whatever) I become a really nasty per-

son” is not easy. And there are truths about ourselves and our lives that can be a lot harder than that.

I am not talking about psychological illness in particular. In fact that tendency to think in terms that separate mind and body is mistaken and unhelpful. Every experience and every illness affects us as a whole. Emotional dis-ease will always affect us physically. Physical disorder will always affect us emotionally. This is taken for granted in homeopathy, which does not allow any reduction of the experience into component parts.

Among the circumstances that affect our well-being for better or worse, the most important are our relationships. We all run into difficulties in our relationships from time to time, and common ingredients of those difficulties are poor communication and lack of truthfulness. A homeopathic consultation for a condition of even moderate complexity will need to gain some insight into a person’s relationships. Indeed, this may provide a helpful clue in the treatment of even an acute or minor illness. Bringing such an insight truthfully into the open may enable change in those relationships to a quite unforeseen degree.

All that I am writing about here applies to all good therapeutic relationships. The general principles were probably familiar to us and influenced our practice before we encountered homeopathy. But I think it is true to say that all of us who have adopted the homeopathic approach find that it enhances our ability to apply them. We more readily find our way – or more correctly, the patient finds their way – to the truth of the matter, and the heart of the healing process.

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