

A young mother at the end of her tether, suffering from psoriasis and painful muscles, led *Anne Pettigrew* to prescribe a constitutional remedy of

Calc carb



Modern life is stressful. Not in the way our ancestors perceived stress. No one nowadays has to run from a sabre-toothed tiger! Man alone in nature has had the power of reason and the ability to control his environment, admittedly not without ecological mistakes. But thinking we can control everything takes its toll of our health.

Many people now assume the human body should be able to withstand everything we throw at it, and that all emotion is controllable. Recognising our coping limit is reached, that we need space and time to breathe and that sometimes saying “no” to others’ demands is permissible, is seen as weakness. As a GP in the 21st century I am aware this is a growing problem, especially in women now fulfilling so many roles at once with little time for contemplation of their own needs.

Such a patient was Margaret. This was a young mum referred to me by an enlightened rheumatology colleague. She had psoriasis and fibromyalgia, a condition with painful muscles that until recently many doctors did not believe in. Now that an assessment scale counting

recognised specific, common painful points has been invented, the condition has become accepted. (Would that we could introduce homeopathy similarly!) Like many “diseases”, once recognised it seems quite common, mostly in women.

Margaret was plump, jolly, trying to appear cheerful, yet looking tired with dark shadows under her eyes. Speaking frankly, she was convinced she had some kind of “inflamed arthritis”, worrying that lack of blood tests or x-rays proving this indicated a mental illness, which was less worthy in the eyes of doctors, her family and indeed herself.



We need to learn that we require space and time to breathe and relax

She also had a diagnosis of hypermobility syndrome: patients with very mobile joints able often to bend their thumbs back towards their wrists. Patients with this are often atopic, that is to say they are allergy sufferers. Margaret didn’t have allergies but suffered sore, painful knees which cracked, especially first thing and climbing stairs; she had aching lumbar/neck pain worse for lying on her back, pains in various muscles and weak wrists which made her drop things. Her weight had steadily climbed to 16 stone from 9½ before her two children, now eight and two years old.

In the first pregnancy she was puffy with high blood pressure resulting in an induced labour. Her second delivery was traumatic and painful as her epidural failed. She admitted to anger for some time that she suffered so much at delivery, but now felt with the perspective of time that it was no one’s fault. She now only feels angry pre-menstrually when trifling incidents are disproportionately irritating. Her “long-suffering husband” she said just ignores this now!

After her first pregnancy she had psoriasis on her back, scalp, left forearm and elbow,

which had waxed and waned. Reading that psoriasis can “cause” severe arthritis, she worried this would happen and reduce her ability to care for others. She felt unable physically to work to augment family income as her friends mostly did, though admitted money was not short. Socially she had always been gregarious, keen to help, supportive, talkative, and “out all the time”.

Now she felt she wanted to “blend into the background”, becoming irritable when people wanted to involve her. Confidence had slipped, concentration was difficult and her memory for locating things and people’s names was poor. It was not until we explored how she was perceiving and thinking about her surroundings and family and friends that she realised how much she had changed since the birth of her last child.

Always conscientious, she felt guilty giving up as the Young Women’s Group secretary, her Brownie Pack leadership and helping friends as much. She had no fears except that she might go or be thought mad, had no dreams, slept well but was uneasy at how she envied those without pain. She tried not to feel sorry for herself, but did (“it’s just one thing after another”) and felt powerless to do all the things she felt she “needed” to, which she thought was the same as “wanted” to. Finally though she concluded “but I can’t do everything”.

This should be an anthem for all young mothers, whether working or not! Daily I see exhausted, depressed women acting as worker, mother, wife, lover, cook, housekeeper, accountant, gardener etc. They have lost touch with themselves, seeing life as a treadmill of service expected

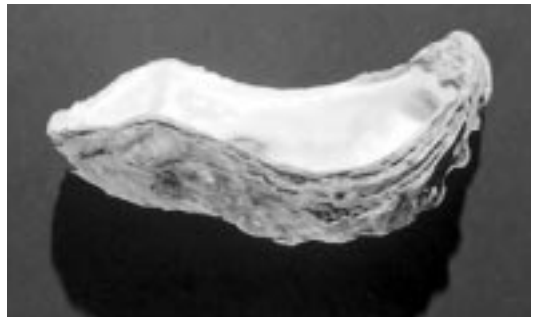
by society, and seem powerless to ask for support. They do not recognise in themselves the “wrong thinking” (as the Indian homeopath Sankaran suggests) of deluded indispensability or “wrong living” (as Hahnemann suggested) of continual activity triggering their physical complaints. Anger (at inability to achieve the unachievable in modern woman) and vexation (at insufficient time to attempt it) are both considered fertile ground for illness by Hahnemann in his book, *Chronic Diseases*.

This lady summed up her situation: “I want to shut myself up in a shell”. Life seemed more than she could cope with. Her instincts told her to nurture her children, but she felt social pressure to

warning or PMS. Psoriasis settled over several months.

Margaret needed further doses of Calc carb over a two-year period at times of additional stress eg financial loss (Calc carb also has fears over security/money issues). More importantly she has looked for the first time to herself as a person with needs. She started yoga for relaxation, exercise to improve fitness and had support from a slimming group to lose weight. The only conventional treatment she had been offered was an impossibly punishing physiotherapy regime without emotional support or effort to explain its rationale.

She now realises that the best way for her to take care of those she loves is to look after herself physically,



Calc carb people often feel the need for a protective shell

work, to serve others. Curiously the remedy, which banished her pains and psoriasis, Calc carb, is made from oyster shells! A most useful polychrest remedy covering many of her symptoms.

Four days after taking 1m/200c/30c doses over three days, she had an aggravation with severe muscle pains and a rash on neck and chest. After four weeks she was free of pain in her knees, feet, elbow, neck and back, less irritable, less depressed, was thinking more clearly and aware of an energy surge. Her period came without

emotionally and mentally, that stress sends signals to her muscles preparing for primitive “flight or fight” which is impossible in civilised societies and exhausting if not relieved. She understands now that emotional signals to her muscles can “prime” them to reduce pain thresholds, she listens to her body, allowing periods to repair emotional or physical exhaustion and above all, knows she cannot do everything.

I wish a few more women would take this to heart. And men too need to say “no” to impossible work demands, which have a similar effect.

Anne Pettigrew MFHom, a West of Scotland GP for 23 years, has found homeopathy invaluable in her practice especially in women’s health and psychiatry.