

Healing the Emotions- Bach Flower Remedies

by Stefan Ball, Author & Consultant at the Dr. Edward Bach Centre

A great many people have heard of Rescue Remedy®, which is used by all sorts of people to cope with crises and everyday emergencies: Princess Anne and Elizabeth Hurley are two of its better-known users. But how many know about the 38 individual flower remedies that are part of the same system of medicine, a system unusual in that it is aimed at treating the emotions rather than their physical manifestations?

Dr. Edward Bach, MB, BS, MRCS, LRCP, DPH, was a well-known bacteriologist, pathologist and homeopath whose career took him from University College Hospital to the London Homoeopathic Hospital and a successful Harley Street practice. His orthodox researches culminated in a series of oral vaccines that are still known as the seven Bach nosodes, but even though this work received great acclaim Bach himself was not satisfied. He wanted to replace the vaccines with plant material which he felt would be more effective. To this end he began experimenting in 1928 with medicines made from flowers.

Bach had always been more interested in the people suffering disease than in the diseases themselves - a fact that made him unusual at that time. But his work with the flower remedies convinced him that true health could only be maintained by treating the individual personality instead of concentrating exclusively on the diseases of the body. He found that by selecting flower remedies according to the personality and emotional states of individuals he was able to resolve these imbalances, and that well-balanced people got better physically because their bodies were quite literally free to heal themselves.

By the time he died in 1936 Dr. Bach had discovered the 38 remedies that were needed to treat every possible emotional state, with each individual remedy being aimed at a particular emotion or characteristic. Sometimes people find it strange that only 38 can deal with everything, but in fact used in combination over 292 million different mental states are covered by these 38 "primary" remedies, which are:

Agrimony for people who put a brave face on their troubles
· Aspen for people who are anxious or afraid but don't know why
· Beech for people who are intolerant and critical of others.
· Centaury for people who allow others to impose on them
· Cerato for people who doubt their own judgment
· Cherry Plum for uncontrolled, irrational thoughts and the fear of doing something awful
· Chestnut Bud for people who repeat mistakes and don't learn from experience
· Chicory for over-possessive, selfish people who cling to their loved ones
· Clematis for day-dreamers
· Crab Apple for those who dislike something about the way they look and as a general cleanser
· Elm for responsible, capable people who in a crisis doubt their ability to cope
· Gentian for people disheartened when something goes wrong
· Gorse for people who have lost hope, often without cause
· Heather for talkative types who are obsessed with their own problems
· Holly for negative feelings of hatred, envy, jealousy and suspicion
· Honeysuckle for people who live in the past
· Hornbeam for mental tiredness at the thought of a coming task
· Impatiens for impatience and irritation at other people's slowness
· Larch for fear of failure and lack of confidence
· Mimulus for people who are afraid of something real that they can name

Mustard for gloom and depression with no known cause
· Oak for strong, indefatigable people who can over-extend themselves by trying too hard
· Olive for people physically drained by exertion or illness
· Pine for those who blame themselves when things go wrong
· Red Chestnut for excessive worry about the welfare of loved ones
· Rock Rose for extreme fright and terror
· Rock Water for people whose self-discipline and high standards are carried to excess
· Scleranthus for people who find it hard to choose between possible courses of action
· Star of Bethlehem for sudden frights and shock
· Sweet Chestnut for utter despair and anguish
· Vervain for enthusiastic people who are always on the go
· Vine for domineering people
· Walnut to help protect against outside influences and the effects of change
· Water Violet for private, reserved people who can appear proud and arrogant
· White Chestnut for persistent worrying thoughts
· Wild Oat for people unable to find a direction for their lives
· Wild Rose for people who resign themselves without complaint or effort to everything life throws at them
· Willow for people who are full of self-pity, resentment and bitterness

When using the Bach Flower Remedies it is essential to ignore as far as possible any physical symptoms or disease. This can be a hard to do, but the physical side of disease can of course be treated using any other appropriate system of healing, whether orthodox or complementary. The Bach Flower Remedies themselves are selected according to the personality of the person being treated. For example, a kind gentle person who found it hard to say 'no' to other people would be given Centaury, while someone who always tries to laugh things off even when he is undergoing torture inside would need Agrimony. In addition, the current mental state is taken into account so that someone who was worrying all the time would need White Chestnut while someone who was feeling a bit despondent after a setback would be given Gentian.

The effect of the remedies is to transform negative thoughts and behavior into positive ones. They do not of course alter the personality or bring instant nirvana or bring back your past lives - instead they bring you gently back to yourself so that you can go on learning from the life that you are living now. So taking Centaury would not turn a kind person into a bossy tyrant; she would still be gentle and kind; but in addition she would be better able to draw the line and as a result wouldn't suffer from exploitation by more ruthless characters. And the White Chestnut worrier would be able to think more constructively about problems instead of circling endlessly around them and never reaching a rational conclusion.

Dr Bach once gave nine remedies to one of his patients at a single time, but in practice it is possible in almost all cases to limit the number given to six or seven. There are two main ways to take them. One is to put two drops of each selected remedy into a glass of water and sip from this at least four times a day - more if necessary - or until the problem has passed. Alternatively the two drops can be put into a clean empty 30ml dropper bottle which is then topped up with mineral water. From this bottle - known as a treatment bottle - four drops are taken four times a day. Kept in the fridge and used regularly a treatment bottle will last up to three weeks.

The treatment bottle dose is the minimum needed for the remedies to work effectively. You can take them more frequently for moments of crisis, because they are completely safe: it is impossible to overdose on them or become addicted or build up tolerance. In addition the Bach Flower Remedies do not affect the actions of other medicines or therapies, nor are they affected by them. This and the fact that they are free of side effects free makes them an ideal complement to other courses of treatment. You should always keep in mind, however, that the remedies are preserved in neat brandy, and for this reason use caution when giving them to recovering alcoholics or people who are allergic to alcohol or object to its use on religious or moral grounds.

As for the Rescue Remedy®, it is a mix of five remedies - Rock Rose for terror, Clematis for light-headedness, Impatiens for agitation, Cherry Plum for loss of self-control and Star of Bethlehem for shock. Dr Bach selected these five remedies because he felt there would be at least something in the mix that would help anyone going through a crisis. To take it you simply put four drops in a glass of water and sip as required - and in an emergency, if there is no water available, you can put the drops straight on the tongue or rub them on the pulse points. Common uses for Rescue Remedy® include calming down the victims of accidents and combating pre-operation nerves. Many midwives use them to help mothers through labour.

Dr Bach's remedies are still made today at the Bach Centre, Mount Vernon, the cottage in England where he spent the last years of his life. Since 1991 practitioner courses have been run at the Centre and are now run in the USA, Canada, Spain, Holland and Ireland as well. As a result more than 350 trained practitioners are now registered with the Centre.

This information was obtained at the Bach Centre website. Please visit them at <http://www.bachcentre.com>.

Bach Questionnaire

Instructions- Print this questionnaire out and mark if a statement applies to you, give it a rating, 1 being almost no reaction, to 10 being extreme reaction. Bring it into the office and we will work up a custom blend to help you "reset" your emotional state. You take it until you feel a shift; it might be 3 days or three weeks. Then, if you wish, reprint and redo the questionnaire to see what comes up next, and come in for your next custom blend to deal with the next facet that comes up.

Agrimony

- I hide my feelings behind a façade of cheerfulness
- I dislike arguments and often give in to avoid conflict
- I turn to food, work, alcohol, drugs, etc. when down

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Aspen

- I feel anxious without knowing why
- I have a secret fear that something bad will happen
- I wake up feeling anxious

Beech

- I get annoyed by the habits of others
- I focus on others' mistakes
- I am critical and intolerant

Centaur

- I often neglect my own needs to please
- I find it difficult to say "no"
- I tend to be easily influenced

Cerato

- I constantly second-guess myself
- I seek advice, mistrusting my own intuition
- I often change my mind out of confusion

Cherry Plum

- I'm afraid I might lose control of myself
- I have sudden fits of rage
- I feel like I'm going crazy

Chestnut Bud

- I make the same mistakes over and over
- I don't learn from my experience
- I keep repeating the same patterns

Chicory

- I need to be needed and want my loved ones close
- I feel unloved and unappreciated by my family
- I easily feel slighted and hurt

Clematis

- I often feel spacey and absent minded
- I find myself unable to concentrate for long
- I get drowsy and sleep more than necessary

Crab Apple

- I am overly concerned with cleanliness
- I feel unclean or physically unattractive
- I tend to obsess over little things

Elm

- I feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities
- I don't cope well under pressure
- I have temporarily lost my self-confidence

Gentian

- I become discouraged with small setbacks
- I am easily disheartened when faced with difficulties
- I am often skeptical and pessimistic

Gorse

- I feel hopeless, and can't see a way out
- I lack faith that things could get better in my life
- I feel sullen and depressed

Heather

- I am obsessed with my own troubles
- I dislike being alone and I like to talk
- I usually bring conversations back to myself

Holly

- I am suspicious of others
- I feel discontented and unhappy
- I am full of jealousy, mistrust, or hate

Honeysuckle

- I'm often homesick for the "way it was"
- I think more about the past than the present
- I often think about what might have been

Hornbeam

- I often feel too tired to face the day ahead
- I feel mentally exhausted
- I tend to put things off

Impatiens

- I find it hard to wait for things
- I am impatient and irritable
- I prefer to work alone

Larch

- I lack self-confidence
- I feel inferior and often become discouraged
- I never expect anything but failure

Mimulus

- I am afraid of things such as spiders, illness, etc.
- I am shy, overly sensitive, and modest
- I get nervous and embarrassed

Mustard

- I get depressed without any reason
- I feel my moods swinging back and forth
- I get gloomy feelings that come and go

Oak

- I tend to overwork and keep on in spite of exhaustion
- I have a strong sense of duty and never give up
- I neglect my own needs in order to complete a task

Olive

- I feel completely exhausted, physically and/ or mentally
- I am totally drained of all energy with no reserves left
- I have just been through a long period of illness or stress

Pine

- I feel unworthy and inferior
- I often feel guilty
- I blame myself for everything that goes wrong

Red Chestnut

- I am overly concerned and worried about my loved ones
- I am distressed and disturbed by other people's problems
- I worry that harm may come to those I love

Rock Rose

- I sometimes feel terror and panic
- I become helpless and frozen when afraid
- I suffer from nightmares

Rock Water

- I set high standards for myself
- I am strict with my health, work &/or spiritual discipline
- I am very self-disciplined, always striving for perfection

Scleranthus

- I find it difficult to make decisions
- I often change my opinions
- I have intense mood swings

Star of Bethlehem

- I feel devastated due to a recent shock
- I am withdrawn due to traumatic events in my life
- I have never recovered from loss or fright

Sweet Chestnut

- I feel extreme mental or emotional heartache
- I have reached the limits of my endurance
- I am in complete despair, all hope gone

Vervain

- I get high-strung and very intense
- I try to convince others of my way of thinking
- I am sensitive to injustice, almost fanatical

Vine

- I tend to take charge of projects, situations, etc.
- I consider myself a natural leader
- I am strong-willed, ambitious and often bossy

Walnut

- I am experiencing change in my life--a move, new job, etc.
- I get drained by people or situations
- I want to be free to follow my own ambitions

Water Violet

- I give the impression that I'm aloof
- I prefer to be alone when overwhelmed
- I often don't connect with people

White Chestnut

- I am constantly thinking unwanted thoughts
- I relive unhappy events or arguments over and over again
- I am unable to sleep at times because I can't stop thinking

Wild Oat

- I can't find my path in life
- I am drifting in life and lack direction
- I am ambitious but don't know what to do

Wild Rose

- I am apathetic and resigned to whatever happens
- I have the attitude, "It doesn't matter anyhow"
- I feel no joy in life

Willow

- I feel resentful and bitter
- I have difficulty forgiving and forgetting
- I think life is unfair and have a "Poor me attitude"

