

Essences for transition

by Hilary Barnett LCH MARH



My interest in homeopathy started 25 years ago with the birth of my children. I qualified from the College of Homeopathy in 1997. I then went on to undertake Practitioner Training at the Lakeland College of Homeopathy and became a core tutor with them for ten years. I have also done extensive training with Steve Johnson of the Alaskan Essences. My particular interests include teaching the A&P of the endocrine system through the chakras. Currently I am expanding my interests and have embarked on a yoga teacher-training course.

Age Gracefully (Quote from *Thought for Today*)

There is nothing more inevitable than the greying of hair and the crinkling of skin. Resisting it is like trying to hold back the tide of the ocean. Accepting it is the way into a graceful life and the possibility of true leisure! Our lives are mostly without leisure as we succumb to the marketing men and their determination to convince us that the tide can be beaten back; at the very least, kept at bay. As a consequence we count the greys and measure the length and depth of the wrinkles. We spend our time and attention on the surface of our forms, and create the habits of anxiety and worry as they inevitably deteriorate. But when we truly know ourselves as spirit within the form, all those subtle tensions are dissolved. We never age, never grow old, never die – only our bodies do. Knowing ourselves as we truly are is the doorway to freedom and to the graceful acceptance that we are destined to inhabit and play many roles in many bodies. Is that not both a liberating and a relaxing insight? If you play with it, explore it for truth, meditate on it, seriously give it 'house room' in your head, you may actually experience yourself as a free spirit. And when you do you will know true relaxation.

What is 'old age'?

Can we define old age easily? My first thought was: is there a chronological age that defines old, 70, 80 maybe? And secondly, does there have to be a certain age that means you are now old? I have reached mid-50s, is this old? I don't feel it but I thought it was when I was in my twenties. My partner is reaching the mid-60s and he's as fit, healthy and full of life as I've always known him. Certainly I wouldn't think of him as old. I believe age is about transition, something that happens throughout our lives. From birth to toddler, adolescent to adulthood, middle age to old age. It's about being able to move through life with all the ebbs and flows that accompany it. So rather than define old age as an age, I would rather work with transition of age.

Positives of getting old

As we move into our latter years, this is a time when we are able to

ease back and enjoy life. There is a natural slowing down, giving us more time for ourselves to start something new, travel maybe or take up a hobby or new venture that we'd always wanted to do but never had the time. If you feel good, this new freedom gives you the opportunity to really step in and focus on the things you want to do for yourself. But as well as adjusting, maybe to the ending of a career, retirement, a downsizing of your house, it's also a time when health problems, bereavements, possible loss of the income you were used to, the ability to remember names, places and events can become a struggle and all sorts of other events can begin to come into this space, and the sense of well-being can be lost. The 'What have I done with my life?' / 'What have I achieved?' thoughts begin to float into the conscious and the purpose of life can become meaningless, including losing all passion for the things you used to love. Coupled

with this, if there's been a history of finding it difficult to let go, getting stuck in the past, rather than moving forward, it can knock us for six.

As well as looking at the mental and emotional feelings, our physical bodies also tend to slow down. For example, the bowels can become more sluggish, our ability to assimilate and absorb may not be what it was, the kidneys may not filter so well, our muscle mass reduces, skin can become wrinkly, the joints begin to ache, it takes longer to get out of bed in the morning, the hair gets thinner ... oh my, 'enough' I hear myself say, as I'm getting closer and closer to what one may define as 'getting on a bit' and reaching some of these milestones!

Defining transition / change

So let's move on to transition. How do we define transition? What does transition mean to you? To me, healthy life is about flow. There is nothing in nature that doesn't flow. Stasis is unnatural. It is when we try to hold on or hold in that we cause sickness. Change and growth is essential to making full use of why we are here. Energetically we are undergoing transformation all the time. Problems often date back to where there had been resistance to a major changing point in our life. For example a mother letting go of a child, menopause, staying in a relationship that isn't going anywhere and of course the transition into our more mature years. An awareness of change and how it's happening in our lives is helpful. For example:

- Where change is necessary but it's being denied – at this stage



Steve Johnson

Blue topaz – help for those ‘away with the fairies’

group. For me it was the Alaskan Essences. Just over 13 years ago I was drawn to attend a workshop run by Steve Johnson of the Alaskan Essences. By the end of the workshop, I had ordered the complete Alaskan Essence set and booked a consultation with Steve. Since then, I have been on an inner journey, which has transformed the way I live and work. Change still happens, but I handle it very differently now and the results are always good, and sometimes quite surprising. I felt that the energy from the Alaskan Essences contributed a huge part. Also, along the way a dear friendship has formed with the man himself – an added bonus!

About the Alaskan Essences

To give you a little background of these essences, let me tell you where they come from.

Alaska is a land of extremes, an environment where a fifth of the country is permanently covered in ice. For nine months of the year everything lies dormant. By contrast, during the three summer months there is an explosion of plant activity. Because of the short growing season the flowers have no choice but to be flexible and cooperate with one another. They grow close together just above the ground – forming a kind of carpet – which minimises wind damage as well as keeping them warm.

Mirroring this process is the transformation of ice – a form of crystal which stores energy. As the plants enter their intense growing season, Alaska’s many glaciers begin to melt. This melting process releases negative ions – known to support and enhance our sense of wellbeing.

Because of its environment, Alaskan energy is intensely cleansing and constantly challenging us to change. This is especially relevant today where we are faced



we may not even know what changes we need to make.

- Resistance to change – while it is still happening.
- Where changes have taken place and this is still having a traumatic effect, a sort of ‘never been well since’.

In order to allow change it requires that a part of us needs to die in order to let something new in. I love to watch the sunrise and sunset; as one day ends we know a new one will begin. This always helps me when I know I’m resisting something in my life.

One of the most powerful tools I’ve found for helping people with transition is the use of flower essences. These beautiful essences can be the most powerful, but gentle, medium for facilitating change, perfect for coming into our latter years. They are the essence of energy.

I love to combine the traditional, new homeopathic remedies and the Narayani remedies with flower essences. I do this by treating at three different levels. As well as

using constitutional remedies, I may also support and strengthen the physical body with organ or system supports and the emotional body with essences. I find this offers the patient an emotional safety net to support them in expressing and releasing whatever is preventing them from moving forward. This work is a privilege and a joy.

There are so many wonderful essences and my experience of working with them is seeing the many different and delicate energies they all produce. It may be that you get drawn to a particular

How do we define transition? What does transition mean to you?

▷ with ever evolving styles and paces of life.

So the key features of the Alaskan Flower Essences are:

- Purity and cleansing
- Flexibility and adaptation
- Transformation and transition.

The three-part system of Alaskan Essences

The essences made in Alaska are from plants, minerals and the environment. Using them together can help support the entire network of life on our planet. Combining each of them can help support us with energy, structure and conscious awareness. When we have the simultaneous, cooperative action of these three qualities supporting us, we are able to meet our life challenges in a graceful, efficient and integrated way.

- Flower Essences ~ Consciousness and awareness
- Gem Elixirs ~ Structure, strength and stability
- Environmental Essences ~ Energy and cleansing.

To me, it was like a missing piece of the jigsaw. I now understood why I had been so taken with the essences from Alaska; how they enhance the way I prescribe and complement my prescriptions so well.

One of the first essences that came to mind with reference to transition is the Alaskan Combination Essence *Fireweed combo*.

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This is a combination of three fireweeds: *White fireweed*, *Dwarf fireweed* and *Fireweed*. It also contains the flower *River beauty* which is part of the Fireweed family.

All these fireweeds help to work with transition and change – each one of the three has its own unique way of supporting. Forest fires are common in Alaska and fireweeds are one of the first flowers to come in afterwards. It's like they set the new etheric energy in soil, so other plants can come in. They move old energy out, helping bring the new in – pure clean energy. They keep everything circulating. *River beauty*, also in this essence, belongs to the fireweed family but it's the water element. So here we are working with both fire and water.

It's the first flower to come up after a flood, so this part of the combination is for emotional devastation – whether now or in the past. It sets up an exchange programme between you and the plant, and supports you in your grieving – an exchange. 'I'll take it from you, hold the space for you in exchange for you letting go.' 'I will then give you fresh clean energy from nature.' This is a lovely combination of essences to help with new beginnings. A new, fresh start in life.

I like to work with the chakra system so, if I was helping someone through change, a homeopathic remedy that I may include in this prescription would be a grounding remedy, working with the base chakra where we can have issues with feeling safe and supported. I would select the remedy according to the individuality of the person. This is the beauty of working with both essences and homeopathic remedies. We have all the tools to individualise our remedies, creating that support network needed. I would look at the theme of the case; is there shock, fear or anxiety for instance? Remedies that come to mind are *Oak* (wonderfully calming on the adrenals), *Calc carb*, *Organic brown rice* or *Arsenicum*. For example, if there were fear and anxiety in the case, with a resistance to letting go, and the symptoms fitted, I would give *Arsenicum* along with the *Fireweed combo*. Or I may think that tissue salts could benefit the patient – they can be a great way of prescribing for the elderly. *Kali phos*, *Nat sulph*, *Nat mur* and *Calc phos* are all worth looking at. The Narayani remedies have a wonderful mix called *Calming pills*, which contain the remedies *Avena sativa*, *Passiflora*, *Valeriana*, and *Ignatia* – a lovely soother.

Working with the essences and remedies during this stage of life can be gentle and effective, not putting any strain on the organs and systems of the body that may already be showing signs of wear and tear.

Continuing on with the theme of fear and resistance other essences spring to mind, particularly from the environmental group. Transition is all about movement and flow and having the energy to do this. The environmental essences from Alaska fit this perfectly and I have selected two:

Glacier river is an environmental essence from Alaska



Steve Johnson

Glacier river

The water at the base of this glacier is filled with ground up rock (silt). It has a fast current moving the silt onwards. This essence helps with the letting go of, and resistance to, change where there can be a stubbornness and inflexibility: a stuckness. It's working with the power of nature, surrendering to it. Encouraging you to work with it rather than against it. Like it's saying, 'Why walk up stream, water is so powerful – it always wins – don't resist it'. Beautiful in washing away all that needs to go and giving the energy and support to do it.

Tidal forces

An essence from the sea, beautiful in helping let go. The following quote is from Steve Johnson's book *The Essence of Healing*, as I feel he sums up this essence so beautifully:

The tide is the force of the sea, the rhythm of seasons and life. It is the giver and taker; it washes away the old and brings in the new. It persists in all seasons and in all-weather wild and calm. This is an essence of rhythm and balance, of loss and gain, of adapting oneself to the swiftly changing currents of life. It helps one release the old and receive the new with constant and unyielding fluidity. It helps us remember that the old is not being swept away against our will, but rather it is being removed because in our wisdom we have volunteered it.

I love to give *Natrum mur* or *Sea salt* with this essence, especially where there's sadness, and a loss and grief picture is uppermost.

Gem and flower essences

A gem essence that springs to mind when working with change is *Peridot*.

The emphasis with the gems is structure and stability. Structure plays an essential part in helping to do what needs to be done. This essence has lots of fears; fear of the unknown, afraid to take risks, fear of failure – getting it wrong, fear around any new experience, life change and so on. It's the stone of new beginnings, to make that jump. *Peridot* helps provide a safe, exciting space for anything new to be born / grown into; a big one for working with our creativity. And as we move into this stage of life it can be wonderful for helping us see how many new and exciting things we can do that maybe we never



Steve Johnson

had the time to do before. It's never too late ...

Working more with rigidity or a feeling of stuckness, the flower *Sticky geranium* can play a big part in 'getting us moving'! As Steve mentions in his *Essence of Healing*:

The flower is not a plant that waits patiently for its seeds to fall – it is a plant of action. Its seedpods split, curl and catapult their seeds into the surrounding areas.

So if you need a keynote for this essence it would be 'to give you a kick up the backside'. *Sticky geranium* is a great one for procrastination, helping you move forward in life to reach your potential; it brings back a purpose to life, very empowering. *Lycopodium* jumps into my head with this essence, the two can work beautifully together.

The flower essence *Chiming bells* is wonderful for depression when all the joy in life has gone; there's

Bunchberry can help release our attachments to distraction

nothing to look forward to. The angel of joy comes through this essence, to reconnect with the quality of joy you had as a child before things got serious. *Chiming bells* brings great support during or after emotional transformation where there's been unresolved and / or suppressed grief; it helps access and deal with this. I love to give this with *Ignatia*, which can bring such support when there is silent grief.

What of clarity? As we grow and age, a fogginess can occur whereby we have difficulty finding words, become forgetful and mental confusion occurs. Acceptance of these symptoms and using essences can greatly enhance these issues.

Bunchberry, a member of the dogwood family, can really help bring this back. The keynote of this essence is all about mental focus, getting easily distracted by others and unable to concentrate when there is a lot going on around you. It's an essence we often give to children with learning and concentration difficulties. In our latter years we can see many instances where we can produce symptoms similar to those we may have had when we were young. *Bunchberry* can help release our attachments to distraction. So often as age creeps up on us we find that it can be difficult to keep up with a group conversation, too many different voices, jumping of subjects and so on. I've prescribed this essence a lot in these types of situations. It helps you to focus on what is going on in that moment and also works on emotional clarity, so as not to get unsettled or out of sorts with so much happening at what appears to be the same time.

A gem essence that can complement this is *Blue topaz*. The keynotes are: soothing – calming – clarity. The focus has gone elsewhere; we might hear sayings like 'she's away with the fairies'. On a surface or therapeutic level there is mental confusion and chaos, no focus, lots of struggle with the understanding of their thinking process. This essence helps to clear that fog, clarifying the mental and thought process, working at the brow / crown chakra level. So often as we move into the latter years of our life we gravitate more to the brow and crown chakra, communicating from this level – maybe becoming more distant. But *Blue topaz* also works



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▷ with the grounding process (base chakra), helping you apply the intuitive thought process into application. This can be particularly helpful for dementia sufferers. Where the focus is no longer here, it's 'out there'; helps bring the soul to the mind. I can also see benefits of giving it to stroke and MS sufferers where they need to build new ways of doing things mentally. As a general tonic *Blue topaz*, I'm sure, can help keep us sharper into the 80s and 90s. Similar to *Bunchberry*, we often look at this one for children, a lovely saying I heard from Steve Johnson is 'they are cable ready when born'. These children often learn in a different way, finding the old education systems difficult, hence being labelled with learning difficulties. The similarities to this and working with the elderly – although different circumstances – is very striking.

The beauty of these essences is that they don't need to be limited to just those people coming through your practice. We can make them up as room sprays as well as giving them internally. For example, the *Bunchberry* and *Blue topaz* (or your own selection) could be a wonderful spray for granny's house when you feel that she's not quite as sharp as she used to be. They have such a gentle quality and can be very effective for the elderly. If they are becoming forgetful, family and friends can always spray the room for them during visits – gentle, simple and effective.

A homeopathic remedy that I would include with these essences is *Baryta carb*. This remedy can be a wonderful tonic for the elderly, like a spring energiser, getting back to the simpler things in life. When we retire we need to let go and allow enjoyment to come into our lives. There are lots of fears with *Baryta carb*: fear of the future, fear of getting old, fear of retiring and so on. It can help us to trust that everything will fall into place. Other keynotes of this remedy include memory; concentration is poor and one can feel incapable of doing what is required without help, lots of confidence issues and indecision. The *Baryta carb* child has many similar symptoms. I always remember being taught that it was a remedy for the old and the young.

Vulnerability springs to mind when talking about *Baryta carb*

and this is another area where we can help so many. *Guardian*, the combination spray that Steve has put together, is one that's easy to give a friend, relative or prescribe at your clinic. It contains *Covellite*, *Devil's club*, *Round-leaf orchid*, *Stone circle*, *White violet* and *Yarrow*. All of them have an affinity with safety and protection but I'd like to talk about a particular one, which I use in many different circumstances: *Devil's club*. The doctrine of signatures is amazing. The leaves of this plant are massive, about three foot across. On the underside the leaves and stem are covered in thorns. It grows as a family, staking out its territory, the baby leaves growing up underneath and nothing else grows around it. It has a quality of defence but is not defensive. *Devil's club* teaches you to have your own space, your own boundaries and to feel safe within that space.

I find it useful to bring this plant into my awareness when I'm in crowded situations. Walking down Oxford Street, for example, I put *Devil's club* all around me and it never fails to surprise me that

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Sticky geranium is a great one for procrastination

somehow a pathway is cleared and I have my own little cocoon of space to continue my window-shopping! It can also be beneficial when one is beginning to feel unsteady and vulnerability is creeping in. Maybe it's time for the use of a walking aid. *Devil's club* helps with the feeling of creating your own space in any crowded situation, to feel safe and protected as you go about your day.

Muscle tension, aches, pains, falls, injuries, operations, joint stiffness are just some of the symptoms that can begin to creep up on us as we get older. Injuries of the past can begin to niggle on a more frequent basis. We have our wonderful remedies: *Arnica*, *Rhus tox*, *Ruta*, *Bryonia* to name a few, that can be so beneficial (on all levels) in these situations. There are also a couple of flower essences that I have found incredible when prescribing on this type of thing and complement our remedies so well – *Cotton grass* and *Dandelion*.

With *Cotton grass*, these soft fluffy balls of cotton that stand up to 12 inches high can have the most remarkable effect in helping us let go of our attachment to pain, helping to lift the memory of why it was there in the first place. It's the end of the pattern and the beginning of the new. Everything is learnt; it's now time to move on. *Dandelion* works in a very similar way but has an affinity for releasing tension (on all levels) held in muscle tissue of the body. This essence helps us get to the bottom of it, why it's there. The deep root system of the dandelion shows us it has the capacity to survive, no matter



Steve Johnson



Steve Johnson

what. Both these essences can be used topically too. A couple of drops into massage oil can be very healing when massaging the affected area.

Narayani remedies

Lastly, this is a wonderful combination from the Narayani remedies – the *Advancing age combination*. Something that any one of us could take as a little ‘pick me up’? How about putting this with a bit of *Blue topaz* to enhance the clarity?

Bone 1 – wonderful to help bone and calcium balance

Aurum met, *Bone* (nosode), *Calc fluor*, *Calc phos*, *Hekla lava* (when reindeers eat this it has an effect on their horns, promoting their growth), *Parathyroid*, *Pinus sylvestris* (great for strengthening bones and tissues), *Symphytum*, *Teeth*.

Brain tissue salts – for brain and memory

Calc fluor (gives elasticity to the brain without which the brain would not have the capacity to think). *Kali mur* (works on the muscles, nerves and brain cells. It is the basic salt found in fibrin, which covers the brain. There would be no brain without this protective covering). *Kali phos* (works on the nerves, muscles and blood vessels in the brain. Prevents the degeneration of cells.) *Mag phos* (found in the white nerve fibres and muscles of the brain).

CB7 – for muscle tone
Arnica, *Bellis perennis*, *Calc fluor*, *Causticum*, *Conium*, *Fucus*, *Muscles* (sarcode), *Sepia*.

Comb 12 – to tone the tissues
A combination of all the tissue salts.

Eye pills – for failing sight. A general tonic for the eyes and eye muscles.
Arg nit, *Chelidonium*, *Euphrasia*, *Muscular* (sarcode), *Onosmodium* (blurred vision), *Phosphorus*, *Physostigma*, *Ruta*.

KBS (Kidney, Bladder, Stones) – to keep the kidneys toned
Benzoic acid, *Berberis*, *Calculus* (potentised kidney stone), *Cantharis*, *Equisetum*, *Erbium* (a tremendous kidney tonic), *Ocimum canum* (uric acid diathesis), *Parathyroid*.

Tidal forces is an essence from the sea

Vitamin E – 500 units daily
Vitamin A – 25,000 units daily
Vitamin B Complex – 2 tds

The book suggests the above to be taken once a day, it can seem quite a handful, but Swami Narayani explains:

In a mixture there are a certain number of remedies working in a particular direction. We feel certain that in this combination some change takes place so that the mixture is a different substance, as it were, totally foreign from the original ingredients and yet made up of them. For example, one takes five ingredients to bake a cake – all are blended together and the cake is the result. The same ingredients are still there but in a different form. The mixture in actual fact has become one remedy and, we may add, a very valuable and potent remedy. It is for you to try to experience and to prove their value.

There are all sorts of other wonderful snippets in her two books (*Handbook on Healing*, Books I and II). I would like to end on a paragraph from the ‘Advancing Age’ section where Swami Narayani has defined the age of 56 as reaching our advancing years (a bit too close for comfort for me). As you read the section, her suggestion is we start looking after ourselves BEFORE we reach our 70s and 80s and what better way than to take the *Advancing age mix*. To quote:

This means from 56 onwards. Once over 40 we must realise that the body is growing older and now is the time to help it a little. Diet should play a sensible part in our lives. Exercise is essential. Breathing – especially the cleaning breath, the Yoga breath and Pranayama. A quiet time each day, to be still, analyse yourself and meditate. This programme will help you to enjoy growing old while remaining young. That sounds good to me....

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