

# FLOWER ESSENCES FOR CANCER

by Marina Angeli

## *Psychosomatic research*



Many years ago I had become impressed by the meaningful psychosomatic research findings of Bahnson C.B. and Bahnson M.B. concerning the psychosomatic dimension of cancer. Years later, already familiar with flower essence therapy, I considered the idea of using flower essences to address the negative emotions which Drs. Bahnson & Bahnson associated with cancer. The idea was to try to help certain relatives or friends of mine, suffering from cancer. At about the same time, I heard about the work of Dr. O. Carl Simonton and his wife, Stephanie Matthews-Simonton, on a holistic approach in the treatment of cancer, presented in their book 'Getting Well Again'. Their findings, as well as those of other researchers, seemed to verify the mental-emotional 'profile' of cancer already suggested in the wonderful Bahnsons' work.

I started giving flower essences to cancer patients, watching for the results, while at the same time examining whether the supposed 'cancer-type' psychological profile was present in them. I found that it always was. Flower essences proved to be of great help in making people suffering from cancer feel very much better. Most importantly, they seemed to allow a profound change in the way cancer patients were handling their problems, resulting in much healthier patterns of behavior regarding the type of psychological tensions associated with cancer. The particular changes in the psychosomatic balance seemed to work very positively in the direction of giving strength to the organism, restore 'the will to live', help to respond positively to the medical treatments and move towards cure. Besides, the deep changes in attitude which occurred seemed to serve as a wonderful means in the effort of preventing future recurrences of the problem.

## *What 'causes cancer'?*

As we all know, every day our bodies produce cancer cells which our immune system destroys, thus keeping us healthy. In the case of cancer, the immune system ceases doing this, so cancer cells build up and create tumors, which finally take hold of the whole organism. The so called 'cause of cancer' is considered to be unknown, while the numerous potentially harmful influences such as foods or other materials, environmental pollution, unhealthy life habits, heritage and the 'genes of cancer' etc, usually blamed for this problem, should be viewed as predisposing factors rather than as causes themselves -which explains *why only a number* and not the totality of people affected by these factors eventually become ill, and why no prediction as to whether, when and under which conditions illness will appear can be made.

Similarly, the existing therapies such as surgery, radio/chemo-therapy etc, fail to cure *the totality* of same type cancer patients, the prognosis of who remains unknown. If the cure of cancer depended exclusively on these treatments, then why some people respond positively to them while others do not?

Facts like these can be considered as clear indications that, besides the many physical factors directly affecting the body, other factors must be playing a very important role in the creation as well as in the possible recurrence of the cancer problem in a certain human organism.

There is a particular area in the human condition, which may provide essential information in the process of understanding this disease -the area of the underlying mental-emotional situation of a person who eventually becomes a cancer patient. Although very important

research has taken place in this field during the last decades, findings have not yet attracted the attention of either the medical community or of the general public to any considerable degree.

Some of us may be familiar with theories about a ‘cancer personality’, a type of personality that predisposes to cancer. Although there may be truth in these theories, life shows that it is better to consider a particular ‘*state of mind*’ rather than a certain personality type. It seems that everybody can find oneself experiencing a ‘cancer type of stress’, at a certain time in one’s life, under specific conditions.

### ***Defining the ‘psychology of cancer’***

In trying to describe the various components of the typical ‘psychology of cancer’, as it has been perceived in people in pre-cancerous and cancerous states, we should state that in most cases they concern *subconscious* emotions and states of mind, which, however, usually become immediately recognized and confirmed by cancer patients when mentioned to them:

**Shock:** Research has recorded that about 6 to 18 months before cancer becomes diagnosed, the person consciously or sometimes subconsciously has experienced a severe shock or a number of shocks in an area of major importance for his/her life.

**Grief and despair:** Since then, the person has been living in profound grief, despair and distress, suffering the loss of an essential soul survival mechanism.

**Hopelessness:** The person believes that there is going to be no end to this suffering.

**Helplessness:** The person feels left alone; no help can come from anywhere, as others are either unaware or unable or unwilling to help.

**Resentment:** Hidden feelings of bitterness, resentment and sense of having been unjustly treated by certain significant others are part of the emotional complexity of the situation.

**Powerless anger:** As a result of feeling a victim of injustice, there is suppressed silent anger and rage together with a sense of total powerlessness. The person feels ‘defeated’.

**Guilt:** Taking action to break free from the particular psychological bind seems impossible, either because of ethical obligations, of moral dictates, love attachments or other obstacles. Simply getting past of the stressful situation would make the person feel guilty for being ‘unfaithful’, ‘unloving’, ‘irresponsible’ ‘cruel’ etc. Many times, guilt and resentment go hand in hand, as the person partly considers the stressful life condition as a punishment for his/her faults and shortcomings in this matter.

**Lack of expression of negative emotions:** Either out of fear, guilt, confusion or simply despair, the person finds no outlet to express their wounded feelings. Instead, emotional toxicity is being accumulated within. The person ‘silently carries his / her cross’.

**Sense of being ‘entrapped’:** As a result of all the above, the person feels ‘caught in’ a horrific emotional prison, of which there is no way out.

**Exhaustion:** The prolonged heavy soul pressure finally results in tremendous exhaustion, both physical and emotional. Under the particular stress, the person can find no rest, no ‘inner sunshine’, and no ‘air’ for the soul to breathe and to refresh. Life becomes ‘a burden’.

**Depression:** Because of the above negative emotional state, the person can find no joy, no sweetness in life, no reason why to genuinely wish to live.

**Resignation:** It seems as if nothing can be done. Although he or she may seem to still be trying, the person totally resigns inwardly, and ‘submits to fate’.

**Unconscious wish to die:** Despite any conscious desire to live, possible fear of death, concern about loved ones and wish to fulfill life goals, a person in a pre-cancerous or cancerous state deep within his/her soul would like to die.

Because of this unconscious desire to live no more, cancer has been described by some researchers as ‘a noble way to commit suicide’.

**Sweetness, quiet acceptance of despair:** Short before the onset of cancer and often also during the course of the disease, the person usually appears to be very quiet, sweetly accepting his/her life burden, not blaming anybody, not asking anything for him/herself. He or she may display an exceptional kindness, a ‘saintly’ quality which is ‘not of this world’ (people are often especially moved when remembering cancer patients).

### ***Choosing flower essences for cancer***

The idea for this article is not to suggest ‘an essence formula for cancer’, but rather to initiate the thought that flower essences can offer great psychological support regarding the emotional issues statistically found as closely connected with the deterioration of the natural defense mechanisms which, under normal conditions, are able to fight cancer in the body. As examples of such essences, I will name a few for each ‘emotional component’ of the particular psychological profile.

#### *Bitterness and resentment*

**Willow** can be very helpful, as an extremely powerful essence for transforming bitterness, resentment, anger and hatred towards people or situations associated with the person’s disappointment and affliction. The essence will alleviate tensions associated with feelings of being a victim, of being unjustly treated (no matter if of an objective or subjective nature, the consequences on health being the same in both cases). It will also transform the negative outlook towards life in general, a natural consequence of resentment, disappointment and exhaustion.

**Spiderwort (Tradescantia Virginica)** will provide a fast, powerful reverse of negativity.

**Dagger Hakea (Hakea teretifolia)** flower essence will act as a quick and powerful cleanser of negativity and bitterness in interpersonal relationships very often involved in the emotional turmoil which is in the basis of many cancer cases.

**Holly** will ease the subconsciously envious, angry feelings towards the people or situations which seem to unfairly triumph over the patient.

**Geranium (Pelargonium)** flower essence will transform negative emotional experiences of past relationships and help the person overcome them and let go.

#### *Hopelessness, grief and despair*

**Gorse** will ease feelings of hopelessness and despair.

**Gentian** and **Borage** will help with dissatisfaction and discouragement.

**Apricot (Prunus armeniaca)** will help the patient lighten up, improve appetite for food when decreased, etc.

**Stinging Nettle (Urtica dioica)** and **Hawthorn English (Crataegus laevigata)** will greatly assist with the stress and the grief from separation, divorce, feelings of being abandoned although still in a relationship, loss of a significant other’s love etc.

### *Exhaustion, struggle for personal survival*

**Aloe Vera (Aloe barbadensis)** flower essence will ease the bodily stress and will greatly assist the organism in its desperate struggle for personal survival. This essence is particularly recommended for cancer. **Oak** is suitable to aid in the constant struggle, to ease the feeling of being emotionally burdened and overwhelmed.

### *Guilt, avoidance of expression of anger*

**Pine** and **Hyssop (Hyssopus officinalis)** will free the person from guilt about both feeling and expressing negative emotions and will lend them courage to break the vicious cycle of dysfunctional emotional attachments that seem to be keeping them under stress.

They will also release the feelings of guilt that people experience in these cases, as they have the tendency to blame themselves for a severe loss.

**Red Chestnut** will assist in the special kind of guilt (in the form of worry for others' health and well being), which often arises during the person's attempt for radical changes of behavior towards loved ones.

**Centaury** will assist those who find it very difficult to say 'no', to express their anger and disappointment and to claim their power.

### *Wish to live*

**Wild Rose** is an imperative essence choice in attempting to transform feelings of resignation and withdrawal from life, to restore the will to live and to recover the ability to feel a true interest for life.

*It is important to keep in mind that the reason for trying to remove bitterness, anger, resentment and other negative feelings from the patient's psyche is exclusively to free the soul from an emotional burden that creates distress, not to make the patient 'behave nice'. On the contrary, flower essences which help to release guilt about expressing anger and other negative feelings are very important here. Through removing both guilt and resentment, painful pressure is taken away from the soul, while **awareness** of the particularly stressful life conditions which have contributed to the creation of the problem, remain.*

Flower essences like the above have proven to be very important in cleansing and rebalancing the mental-emotional state, giving space to the person's soul to bring him/her back to life again and unblocking the energy system to a point where it is able to nourish and cure the body.

After the underlying dangerous negative mental-emotional state has been transformed to a considerable degree, more flower essences can be applied to help in different areas of dealing with the problem. Such areas usually include:

### *Cleansing the body*

**Yarrow Special Formula** will help to detoxify the body after radiotherapy, while **Crab Apple** will be of help in detoxification after chemotherapy.

### *Bearing side effects of medical treatments*

For adverse effects after a chemotherapy session one may benefit from flower essences such as **Crab Apple, Star of Bethlehem, Rescue, Gentian, Willow** etc.

## *Fear*

Concerning the extreme fear that often arises during medical treatments, in between and during medical tests and follow ups etc, essences that seem to be of much help include **Rescue (Five Flower Remedy)**, **Mimulus**, **Grey Spider Flower (Grevillea buxifolia)**, **Waratah (Telopea speciosissima)**, **Tomato (bud of Lycopersicon esculentum)** etc.

## *Self healing*

**Self Heal** as well as **Apple (bud of Pyrus malus)** will help one connect with one's own healing potential and feel and be healthy.

## ***Defining the basic emotional conflict in cancer patients***

Although one might think of making a flower essence 'formula' based on this particular mental-emotional profile, and while such a formula might often prove to be of critical help in the process of dealing with the illness, it is always good for the cancer patients, after the initial relief provided by flower essences like the ones described above, to determine and become consciously aware of their distressful difficulties, often with the help of a trained health care professional. In this way, more specific and personalized information may become available, which may lead to the choice of flower essences important for the healing process of each particular case.

Experience has shown that not all people are willing or capable of dealing consciously with their stressful issues. Fortunately, flower essences have proven able to be of critical help even when a cancer patient never works directly with the problems which led his/her organism to such a distress. However, gaining awareness over the situation and working out healthier strategies to deal with this particular type of stress will best protect the person from similar future health adventures and will further their self-awareness and psycho-spiritual development as well.

I have never seen a cancer patient who was able to immediately answer the question 'Well, what was that caused such a distress to you?' It is only after posing careful questions that they respond, opening their heart in great relief. But even then, they never think of relating their soul pain with their illness. Often, cancer patients have much difficulty talking about what has been deeply hurting them, while they may easily talk about other issues of theirs. Agrimony flower essence can be of much help in allowing them loosen up and feel comfortable about expressing themselves more openly. In many cases, talking with people from the patients' environment has often provided the essential information which uncovered the basic emotional conflict in them.

B.S., a now healthy 38 year old woman was found to have an aggressive type of breast cancer more than five years ago, after she had successfully completed her graduation exams to become a lawyer. She had been 'happily married' and had already three beautiful young children. Everything seemed idyllic in this person's life at first glance. Everybody was shocked to hear about her cancer: 'What a bad luck...' Tactful conversation revealed to me no relevant information from this person about any stress in her life at that time and it was only through a family friend that I knew the facts which in my eyes formed the typical emotional 'portrait' of cancer. She had been through a time period where she had exhausted herself studying for her exams while being the mother of three kids, one of which was a new born. 'Practically she could get no sleep' said the friend. She received no help from her mother, who preferred to tour when B.S. was studying all night while taking care of the kids during the day. Her rich in-laws, who disliked her despite her efforts to please them, did not volunteer to support the couple who were going through a financially stressed phase. On top of all this, her husband had been threatening her that he would find a girlfriend if she continued to be 'always so tired...'

She had stood all that without really complaining, always ‘brave and strong’, always ‘nice’ and caring.

The shock from the illness and the awareness, empowerment and relief gained through the flower essences quickly resulted in a deep change in that woman’s attitude. ‘I take good care of myself now’ she told me some time later. ‘I take care to feel good deep within me, and to be satisfied with how I live my life. I don’t let anyone ‘squeeze’ my energy or hurt me. I love and adequately defend myself’.

Emotional distress caused by love relations seems to be one of the most common types of stress that we see in cancer cases. Often people decide to submit to situations that are deeply hurting them, situations where they are being emotionally exploited and subtly abused. They usually accept to remain in such situations, because they are emotionally/physically/financially/morally etc attached and dependent on the particular person(s) or situation(s). Often they will say that they hold on to certain relationships because they ‘love their partner’ and ‘would never get angry at him/her for letting them down’. At other times they may accept to stand entirely painful situations ‘for the sake’ of their children or other loved ones. People in these cases suppress their true feelings of grief and sorrow and deny the fact that they do feel abandoned and abused. Grief depletes their system from energy and tension builds in, the suppressed rage and resentment finding no way to become released.

Needless to say, the particular organs and parts of the body where the illness of cancer appears does not seem irrelevant to the type of stress the person has experienced –which can further facilitate our understanding of the life area that requires special attention and care.

Sometimes it is very difficult to perceive the particular emotional background in certain cancer cases, as *what makes one distressed can be very personal and quite different from the way someone else would have reacted under similar conditions*. We should avoid the temptation to set ‘rules’ as to what might cause distress to someone, but rather focus on the way a particular human soul feels deep inside, regardless of the ‘objective’ severity of circumstances.

I remember J. B., a friend’s father in his seventies, who suddenly was diagnosed with advanced liver cancer, while everything in his life looked to be fine or at least without any visible negative changes. Quite the opposite, the man had recently got his first and very much awaited grandchild, the only grandchild in the family after many years his only son had been married. Cancer appeared soon after the child was born, while still the atmosphere of enthusiasm in the family was high. The grandfather’s disease was seen as a ‘truly bad luck’. J. B. had spent most of his life between severe and slight depression. His wife had always been a strict, authoritarian woman, ruling and repressing him but at the same time treating him like a powerless child who needed to be taken care of. Although living in another town, their son always had an emotionally important role in their life, opposing the mother while also caring for and empowering the father.

Since the man’s cancer appeared, I was closely attending the situation, providing essences and questioned by having found no signs of relevant stress. Then one day, when the patient said that he was soon going to die, one of his cousins said to him: ‘No, you *must* live, we need you James!’ ‘You have another James now...!’ he answered in a bitter voice. ‘I am no longer needed... I am only a burden now...’ By ‘another James’ he meant his grandson, who was named after the grandfather as it is custom in Greece. Rather than his unusual statement, it was the tone in his voice – afflicted, aggrieved, resentful, totally desperate, weary, quietly resigned - that which alarmed me, suddenly providing an opening through which I could see what was happening in that person’s psyche. Though I could not tell in which way, it was now apparent that the birth of the grandson had brought changes in the family dynamics, which had been tremendously distressing to the old man. My impression was that he had

sensed that his wife's attention and his son's interest and care had entirely moved away from him and to the child, something that presented a severe blow for the particular person in that old age. The old man took flower essences; he did very well at first, but did not finally overcome the conflict. His wife firmly refused to get 'some drops for herself as well'. Perhaps the family system was not willing to have two 'babies' to take care of.

Once while I was talking with a psychologist on this matter, I finally said: 'We can't know what can cause someone this type of distress. It could be anything he or she *perceives* as an unbearable pain from which there is no way out. For some it might even be the fact that they've got old...' 'Well, that sounds true to me!!!' she answered. She said that her father had been a man who had built his own identity on being a physically strong and healthy person, who drew satisfaction from life mainly by working out things successfully in a physical manner. He had never been happy at home with her mother, but work always helped him feel good. When in his late seventies he realized for good that he was no longer strong and able to do things nor was he ever going to be so again, in one of his rare moments of in depth communication with his daughter visiting him, he had told her in profound despair: 'I had never actually believed that I would get old... never! It has been such a shock: it's all over; time won over me. I feel *defeated*...' A little later, she said, he was diagnosed with cancer'.

Retirement often presents a very stressful life change, especially in men, who traditionally depend a lot on their professional identity in order to feel efficient and energetic, to overcome problems and to find interest in life. Many times work serves as an 'oasis' for them, allowing them to stay away from disturbing emotional issues in the family. Soon after retirement, marital problems may become especially prominent and stressful, as one finds oneself 'at home with the wife all day for the rest of his life'. A client of mine recently told me that her father was just found to have a malignant right brain tumor, less than a year after he went on pension. 'What a bad luck, right when he had the chance to rest and to enjoy free time after so many years of hard work... to be visiting his grandchildren, to play with them...' 'Was he happy after having stopped his work?' I asked. 'He is sad and aggrieved at my mother-in-law' said her husband, who was present in the session. 'She is domineering and speaks to him in a harsh way full of irony. He never resents and never says a bad word for anyone. After selling his shop when he had to retire about a year ago, he found himself in my mother-in-law's way. Now, when he knew that he was ill, he said that it happened 'because of sadness' and said to my mother-in-law: 'it is because of you'. 'The truth is', said his wife, 'that my mother has always been a very 'negative' person, very unpleasant to be around, always 'poisoning' mine and my brother's lives with her words and attitudes. She was never satisfied, it was impossible to please her in any way. Only when she was through phases of depression she became humane...

My father had always avoided conflict, not interacting much with her, spending the whole day in his shop. There he felt well, talked with clients and friends, and met a lot of people... He was popular, friendly and sociable. Of course when he retired, he lost all that. He was suddenly 'locked into the house' alone with my mother and had nothing to expect but remain so for the rest of his life. My mother now threw all her 'negativity' on him. It was hard for me to stand that atmosphere whenever I visited them. And I don't think my father deserved this. But he was the type of personality who doesn't react, who keeps everything inside. From now on, he would have to live as if on a baking pan...'

### ***Searching beyond appearances***

The fear, even the terror that cancer patients often feel about their disease and the desperate desire they express to get well and continue to live should not prevent us from perceiving the resignation, the despair and the almost suicidal disposition that coexist in the background. I always remember one of the first cancer cases I was asked to assist as a young psychiatrist many years ago. I had not become familiar with alternative therapies yet, so I had to only talk with the patients, trying to offer some consolation and psychological support. I had spent

many hours talking with a very capable, dynamic, industrious woman in her fifties, who had been diagnosed with depression as a reaction to her bone cancer.

After years of a passionate debate in the court concerning some family property to which she had felt particularly attached, she had lost rights over that property and ‘not only that, but soon after that she got cancer’. She felt immense hostility from and towards her relatives, and great resentment. She described their attitude towards her and her mother as really outrageous and sarcastic. Although she did not understand why I wanted to know about those things, she eagerly spoke of her inner turmoil and told me many times that she was feeling extremely sad, angry and ‘defeated’ not so much because of the property loss per se but because of the way it had been lost. The worst thing was that she could not avoid meeting those relatives many times a day as they had come to live permanently in ‘her’ lost parental home, next to her apartment, now being her neighbors for life. Of course she did not relate any of those feelings to her cancer.

Meanwhile she was experiencing extreme terror knowing that she had cancer: ‘Words can not describe this torture... Only in my sleep I relax a bit but I literally sink back into hell when I wake up in the morning and remember... One should not wish even one’s worst enemy to go through what I am going...’ I haven’t met anybody in such a terror for having cancer like that woman was. But the striking thing about her was that, with just a little probing she would reveal that she had no desire to live! ‘I can hardly bear to go on living, feeling the way that I feel... My life is awful; my life is a burden... And yet I am terrified at the idea of death... I don’t want to live and I don’t want to die... Living is an unbearable thing... When I try to think of my husband, of my kids, I can’t visualize them being happy in the future, looking forward to enjoy things in life... as if life has nothing worth to offer, nothing worth to live’.

### ***Contacting the soul level***

Allowing the patients become aware of their inner distress and relating it to their illness provides tremendous relief in them, because subconsciously they already know what is causing harm to them and they want to uncover and to release it. I am always impressed how speaking on behalf of a cancer patient, in an effort to guess and describe their soul difficulties makes sense to them in a very profound way. Once while on holidays in Crete, I was talking with a German writer who was also spending her holidays there, and who told me that was suffering lung cancer. Me having mentioned flower essences, at some point she asked me what she could do in order to choose some. I answered that she might choose in accordance to her deeper feelings.

As is usually the case, cancer patients do not relate their cancer problem with their authentic, overall emotional state but approach the issue as to how they feel *about* the illness. I remember that she started saying things such as ‘I feel courageous now’, ‘I am not entirely free from fear but am also quite optimistic’ etc, supposing that a ‘positive state of mind’ was what would be expected from her. I tried to explain what I meant, but again she was not able to answer: she just kept smiling, like a truly polite and good mannered person: ‘everything is fine, everything fine’. ‘Listen’, I said, ‘I will try to describe a particular emotional situation and you please try to tell whether this has anything to do with the way you have been feeling for some time before the problem was diagnosed’. As I talked, I could see the ‘mask’ of un-expression being removed from her face, as she was apparently feeling more and more comfortable and relieved. Very soon, she burst into tears, uncovering a big amount of accumulated inner pain. She had the eye look of the person who ‘finally feels understood’. Soon her husband was back in the room and asked her how our talk went. She turned to him and said in a low but firm voice: ‘She told me everything about me...’ ‘And, which method did she use?’ he asked. ‘Well...’ she whispered thoughtfully, ‘...I think she is a psychic!’...

I was amused with this statement and explained to her that I did not have psychic abilities but what I had said were only psychosomatic research findings. I never asked about her life

events or had the slightest idea about that woman's life, and still now I can make no hypothesis as to what the 'basic conflict' might have been for her. However, I was glad to have witnessed the particular misunderstanding; it served for me as a vivid spontaneous confirmation of how these findings about the emotional background of cancer sound true deep within the soul of the person concerned.

### ***'Spontaneous cures'***

Personally I believe that there can be no cure of cancer if the inner state, the soul, is not taken into account and cared for. Cases that seem to have responded with total recovery to a particular treatment that does not directly address the soul level, if watched closely always seem to reveal a simultaneous change of attitude that enables the patient to permanently benefit from the treatment and not become ill from cancer later again. Sometimes the family, the partner or other loved one who happens to be directly associated with the extreme stress that the ill person experiences, becomes alarmed by the onset of the illness and by showing real care, unknowingly helps the patient overcome his or her distress and recover his or her unconscious will to live. G. P., a woman in her early thirties, who had always been almost symbiotically attached to her husband, experienced a radical change in her life when he announced to her that he had decided them to have an 'open marriage'.

Soon after that, she was found to have breast cancer of a very poor prognosis. The illness presented a shock to the husband, who now completely concentrated in her recovery, forgetting all about bringing more sexual partners into the marriage. They became much closer, practiced yoga together, traveled together, and spent a lot of time dealing with homeopathy and nutrition. She never had another cancer episode in the more than ten years which have passed since then.

At other times, it is the patient him/herself that becomes alarmed and hastily changes his/her unconscious choices, instinctively adopting alternative ways of dealing with their problems and thus breaking through with their distress. Dr. Edward Bach himself, as we know from his biography, has exemplified this at a certain time in his life before turning to the flower essence work. When Dr. Bach knew that he was suffering cancer and had only a few months to live, he stood up, determined to finish up with what he wanted to do in his life before passing. We are told that he worked day and night without rest, making passengers who would see his lamp light always on during the whole night speak of the 'light that never goes out'. We know that eventually Dr. Bach did not die at the time predicted by his doctors, and we are told that those doctors reacted as seeing a ghost whenever they met him later in his life. Contrary to reasonable suggestions, Bach did not take care of himself, did not even give himself a minimum of rest to help his organism fight the illness. We can once again think of the imperative role of the soul in one's recovery and overall health.

There may also be times when a coincidental life change enables a total shift in the patient's inner state. I recall several cases that I happened to have heard about. In one such case, a teenage girl was operated for thyroid cancer soon after her mother died and she went to live with her sister-in-law. That woman treated the girl in a harsh, inconsiderate and cruel manner. Nothing seemed able to 'save' the girl, who was of a soft, obedient nature and never expressed anger or fought back to demand her rights. Coincidentally about the same time, unexpected life events turned that family situation upside down and the girl was sent to another town, near her sister and her sister's husband, both of whom were caring, benign and life-loving people. The girl lived happily and in good health. She died about thirty years later of the same cancer type, when she encountered similar problems in her marriage.

Another man who recently died in a very old age had also been operated for cancer many decades ago. An 'irrelevant detail' I happened to hear about him was that at the time he got cancer as a young man, he was extremely unhappy in his marriage, his wife having got the

name of an 'evil witch' in their environment. It was mentioned about him however that he had decided to divorce, in a time when divorce was not yet socially acceptable.

'Coincidentally', this happened short after he was operated. His second wife, an unusually small and ugly woman, proved to be the personification of mildness and kindness, had much respect for him, and eagerly complied with his quite unconventional professional initiatives and expressions of creativity. They led a gratifying, peaceful home life. Despite the negative medical prognosis, the man lived a long life ever since.

### ***Character changes in cancer***

In certain cases, character changes induced by the typical for cancer psychological state may be quite impressive and much in contrast with the patient's usual personality patterns. When the wife of a man from my environment died of cancer many years ago, there had not been even one person who knew them, who did not say that *she* was a saint and not even one who did not think that *he* had 'killed her'. That man had a very difficult character, the type of the 'spoiled' person who believes that he has only rights and that his wife has only duties. The wife had been affectionate and submissive, always kind, never angry, always there for everyone. Not long before she was found to have cancer, the man appeared uneasy and bored of the marriage; however neither had he any complains and justifications nor the mentality and the cultural background of one who would ever ask for divorce. Instead, he seemed to have started an extramarital affair. At that time, one of his favorite 'jokes' to his wife was: 'If you were to die, you'd better do it soon, while I am still young!' He was a widower very soon, inconsolable for having lost 'an invaluable partner'.

Years later, in his second marriage, he experienced very big problems with his new wife: she was dynamic, despotic, many times irrational, embarrassing and often insulting him in front of friends. After several years of ambivalence and separation attempts, he finally resigned from the thought of divorce, as he was particularly sensitive about the fate of his small daughter, not trusting to leave her alone with her irrational mother and not wanting the child to go through losing a parent, 'like his kids from his first marriage had'. For the first time in his life he had to place himself 'in the sensitive side' and be open to emotional distress and soul pain. He had to endure a situation that was unbearable to him, to which there seemed to be no solution. After a while he became operated for intestinal cancer.

Months later, while I was visiting the family in their town and had a little talk with this man, I was impressed to see how different he was. He seemed so mild, so gentle and so kind, and above all, so very quiet and resigned... 'Well, I'm ok... we are ok... My daughter is doing well, what happens with me is not important... Things won't change... I just accept them. The only thing that I like is to sit here in this veranda... I sit here alone for hours and hours... looking at the sea the whole evening, looking at the trees... just sitting here, that's all'.

I could not but think that he had unconsciously decided to die and that he would most probably succeed to do so. There was about him a silent grief and despair, like when someone is willingly sacrificing the self in order to bear a situation to the end. He was becoming a 'martyr', a 'saint'. I must confess that for a moment, thinking of his previous personality, I wondered if his present condition represented a spiritual progress for him. But then of course I told myself that I was there to help and not to judge anybody's deeds and life choices. I asked him if he would take flower essences, and although he knew nothing about them and never had any appreciation for alternative therapies, he accepted immediately with gratitude – something which was in contrast with his resigned attitude and which seemed to confirm how desperate and helpless he was feeling inside and, like in every cancer case, how much he wanted to be helped, despite his seeming resignation.

About a couple of months later, before I could pass any flower essences to him, he was operated with metastasis. I rushed to the hospital and gave the usual combination of flower essences, including some Red Chestnut for his worry about his little girl. I sure expected

changes but the size and the speed of the results surprised me: Soon after recovering from the operation, I heard that he had 'made his luggage', had moved to another flat and had found another partner!! That man asked for flower essences many times in the next months and years, telling everybody what a great help they were for him. He seemed to have totally recovered his health -and his old character as well, a character that he still has now, about ten years later.

### ***Combining psychotherapy and flower essence therapy with medical treatments***

Concerning conventional treatments for cancer, I do not usually intervene, as I consider my job as one of psychological help and support only. Some people decide to follow exclusively alternative treatments, while most resort to surgery and to the accompanying radio-and/or-chemotherapy. A combination of all the therapies that are available seems to me the wisest choice in most cases so far. Conventional medical treatments will remove a big part of the accumulated damage of tissues, while nutritional, herbal, vitamin etc therapies will give an energy boost to the depleted body and will lend the person strength in the physical level. Flower essences will minimize the side effects of those heavy drugs, assist the body in enduring the difficult process, and cleanse the body from chemical and radiation after effects. But most importantly, flower essences will 'detoxify' and 'fix' the mental-emotional state towards a 'life-choosing' attitude, thus opening the way for the stream of life force to flood the body and help it cure itself, as the soul is being offered the conditions and the 'ground' to return back to life again.

Of course discrimination about choosing the best therapeutic line is sometimes necessary. An example could be the case of an old man who had stomach cancer which had spread to his liver. Soon after cancer was first diagnosed, the illness seemed to proceed very fast. Quite unusually regarding his old age, the man's son was seriously determined to do 'everything possible' for his father. 'Do anything that you know or hear about' he said to me, 'despite the non-existing possibilities for cure - I don't expect cure, I just want to feel that I've done everything that I could for my father'. His father was dismissed from the hospital as a 'hopeless' case, with the prescription to return after about 3 months for re-examination. No chemotherapy was given, as his organism was diagnosed as already too weak to endure any such treatment.

In the weeks that followed the old man received flower essence therapy, homoeopathy, anthroposophical medicine, lots of nutritional supplements and antioxidants, Reiki, hands-on-healing and I don't remember what else - all at the same time! Gradually, his general condition started to improve dramatically in every aspect and his improvement was visible to everyone. Three months passed and the man was admitted to the hospital again. After the appropriate medical tests, his son came to me and said: 'The doctors were astonished to see those tests! They told me: Mr. A, we must take care not to tell even ourselves, because there is a danger to start believing our own eyes: It sounds incredible but the tumors appear to be melting! ...' The man's son did not mention the alternative treatments to them, being sure - not without reason- that they would not pay attention to them. He was asking me now what to do: proceed with chemotherapy as the hospital doctors wanted or refuse it?

That case being one of my first therapeutic experiences with cancer, I did not feel confident enough to advice refusing chemotherapy in that stage of the particular, until recently 'condemned', case. Assuming that the man's organism had proven very strong in fighting the disease, the hospital doctors gave him a really strong dose of chemotherapy to promote his improvement. Apparently this was a too heavy blow to the tender processes that had started taking place in the old man's exhausted physical system. All of a sudden, in a way equally impressive as his astonishing recovery process, his situation worsened gravely and he died in about two week's time!

## ***Skin cancer***

Over the last years I happened to see two patients with skin cancer. They were the only cases with skin cancer that I saw and interestingly, the only cases where no 'psychological background' could be identified, as they refused having experienced any of the emotions described above. Although two cases is a very small number to allow conclusions, the way they both deviated from the 'rule' of the particular emotional profile was striking. They seemed to not be able to perceive or identify any kind of psychological pattern that might have to do with their illness and there seemed to be no way to help them explore their own psychological state to such a direction. No positive changes could be perceived immediately after them taking the flower essence 'formula' for cancer and I had no news from any of them since.

A hypothesis that has passed from my mind was based on the homeopathic principle according to which the skin, being the outer cover of the body -thus the most distant from the mind, viewed as 'the seat of consciousness' - is the 'last resort' of illness while it is being expelled from the body in the process of cure. Similarly, the skin might well represent the most 'far away from consciousness' boundary, having difficulty in successfully conveying messages of stress to the mental-emotional dimension.

## ***Infants and small children***

I have wondered about the cases of infants and little children with cancer. Although not yet mentally developed, children have their own emotional life, which is very rich, as they are in many ways much more sensitive than adults. Children are intuitive and compassionate and they easily detect and psychically identify with emotional problems in the family, though usually not mentally aware of them. But what happens when a new born is diagnosed with cancer? Could we hypothesize that the infant 'experienced' the particular stress of the mother, absorbing immense friction while in the womb?

Some time ago, a friend was telling me of her and her husband's agony and pain about their small child, who was found to have cancer a few months after he was born. There I could tactfully explore the mother's psychological state while she was pregnant and I *did* find a very intense example of the *typical* distressful feelings already described, a situation that had been on during the most part of her pregnancy.

The child went through all the medical therapeutic procedures and also took flower essences for 2-3 months. He is now 8 years old and is doing well.

## ***Improving prognosis in advanced cancer cases***

It seems that flower essence therapy can play a positive role in cases of advanced cancer. I have seen cases who survive longer than it has been medically prognosed about them. A recent example is N. P., another man with right brain tumor, who came to my office in September 2003 with his wife, accompanying their daughter for some school problems. He was unaware of the fact that he had cancer; it was his wife who told me at the door. He was refusing all sorts of help, except his medication which he attributed to a 'rare kind of inflammation in the brain'. His wife had been 'secretly' adding liquid forms of certain herbs and vitamins in his beverages, and when she heard that flower essences might help she did the same with them. A month later, Mrs. P told me that 'recent tests showed that the tumor has shrunk and that his immune system reacted'. 'Doctors are astonished with this positive turn, but I am not' she said bursting into tears. She took flower essences for herself and for her husband for two more months. The last time she complained about his unbearably obstinate and difficult character.

Her next visit was almost an entire year later, in November 2004, when she told me: 'My

husband 'left' in July. He survived for 17 months and his case was written down in the world medical archives, because average survival for this kind of tumor is 6 months. In the hospital (the Cancer Hospital of Athens), the doctors were asking me what else he did besides his medical treatments. I mentioned to them the Milk Thistle herb, the vitamins and the flower essences. They shook their heads and said: 'You see... Love and optimism strengthened his immune system!'

I wonder what might have happened if this family had worked out their problems more thoroughly and consistently.

### ***Terminal cases***

I always give flower essences to people in terminal stages of cancer. Nobody raises the question of cure in those cases. However, the changes that seem to happen in the patients' inner life are wonderful. Relatives usually report that the patients feel 'well inside', peaceful, light and free and that they attribute these feelings to their 'drops', which they keep asking for until the end. Last year, my yoga teacher reported that her father, in the terminal stages of bone cancer and tremendously suffering from pain, really loved 'his drops' and did not stop asking for them since he tried them. She would arrange sending the bottles by plane to him, being from a neighboring country. She described the last days of his life as really peaceful and beautiful from the soul point of view.

I remember how much I was moved by the case of a young man who was in the terminal stages of intestinal cancer. I never saw or talked to that person, just his brother who was a client of mine at that time told me about that 'family problem'. I volunteered to send some essences to that guy, explaining to the brother that although it sounded late to try to affect the physical process of the illness in any way, essences could psychologically support the patient. The man came again several times to get more essences, saying that his brother had felt 'unbelievably well' when he took them. 'For the first time in his life' he said, he felt 'light and happy'!

### ***Educating the patient***

Whenever it is possible (when the patient is physically present, well enough in his/her health and willing to work with psychological issues about the cancer problem), I try to explore together with them the particular difficulties that led to this type of excessive tension. Thus the conflict becomes conscious to the patients, so that they can consider different, healthier ways of dealing with this or with similar stresses, if necessary in the future. I suggest to the patients to repeat some basic essences quite regularly during the critical time period (usually five years after the first cancer episode), to be sensitive to their psychic hygiene and to remain aware of their mental-emotional state, in order to help themselves avoid similar reactions in the future.

In all cases, especially in the initial stage, it is very important to encourage the patients to take the best possible care of themselves, not to raise demands on themselves but to give themselves the right and the 'space' *to really and deeply rest*, making use of every opportunity for a peaceful, pleasurable and relaxed every day life.

### ***'Prevention'***

Although prevention is not a scholarly term when speaking of cancer, I always give some basic flower essence combination whenever I sense the typical psychological difficulties that have been associated with the creation of cancer. Of course, there is no way to know if these flower essences work in a preventative way in these cases. But why not to be mindful and alert when we can?

It may be a coincidence, but none of those people who used the particular flower essences to

break through their deadlocks and to change their mental attitudes has ended up with cancer so far.

### ***‘Cancer phobia’***

The same ‘psychological education’ I use in the cases of people who present a cancer phobia. Many people panic whenever they feel a little pain somewhere in their bodies, thinking that this might be cancer, or feel ‘threatened’ by the ‘danger of inheritance’ when a relative is found to have cancer. Often, they become worried and confused whenever they read an article about how a certain food decreases the possibility for cancer in a particular organ of the body but increases the possibility for the same illness in a different organ and so on.

I have seen that people overcome such phobias when they receive comprehensive information about the inner state that seems to predispose to cancer. I try to explain that cancer does not appear ‘out of the blue’ and to describe in simple words the basic mental-emotional background of cancer, according to the existing psychosomatic research findings. I also present how this has been confirmed through many experiences so far. I tell cancer-phobic people that instead of feeling totally helpless and unprotected, there are simple things which they can do for their emotional hygiene. It is not so difficult once we are aware of these things, as in most cases the self will automatically become alarmed and will take proper care when conditions demand this. Flower essences present a marvelous helper which can easily lead us out of ‘dead ends’. Then it becomes easy to alter our mental attitude and to overcome what seems to be causing distress.

### ***Outcome***

People in early stages of cancer, whom I happened to know, who have used flower essences properly and worked with their personal issues in a decisive, authentic way, have had a positive outcome. I hear that they are well in their health, several years after the occurrence. Since I do not consider myself as a ‘cancer therapist’, I do not conduct a typical, methodologically designed scientific research on the issue. I just try to help when I can and try to know what happened in the course of time if I can.

My experience so far has been that when people become aware of the particular psychological profile associated with cancer and decide to take care of themselves with the help of appropriate flower essences, they do very well. *In all the years of my practice, I have seen no better means for working out such issues than flower essences.* Flower essences very rapidly and effectively cleanse and support the psyche of cancer suffering people while at the same time educate them in how to keep their soul breathing, light and free. They help them learn that it is always possible to set themselves free from passivity, resentment and negativity and to break through the darkness into new eras of opportunities and possibilities. People find out that there is not such a thing as having to die in a ‘spider net’, no matter how difficult things may be. They find that that they can under all circumstances claim their power, dignity, joy and right to live. Thus, they have plenty of life-energy to cope and do not have to be ill again.