



Richard Katz founded the Flower Essence Society in 1979 to research and teach the principles and practices of flower essence therapy. Together with his wife and partner Patricia Kaminski, he has developed the Society into an international network of flower essence practitioners, educators and researchers. Richard is co-author of the best-selling Flower Essence Repertory, now in its fifth edition and translated into six different languages. Richard and Patricia have traveled extensively, giving seminars on Flower Essence Therapy throughout the United States, South America, Europe and Australia. They have developed biodynamic and organic gardens at Terra Flora, outside of Nevada City, and their company, Flower Essence Services, employs eleven people in the preparation and distribution of flower essences and related herbal skin care products. You can find out more about the society at www.flowersociety.org.



Spotlight on ESM Therapies

The Science of Flower Essence Therapy

BY RICHARD KATZ,

CO-DIRECTOR OF THE FLOWER ESSENCE SOCIETY

IN THIS ISSUE, WE FOCUS ON THE ESM PRACTICE OF FLOWER ESSENCE THERAPY. WHILE MUCH OF FLOWER ESSENCE THERAPY IS ATTRIBUTED TO EDWARD BACH, AN EARLY 20TH CENTURY MEDICAL DOCTOR,

RICHARD KATZ AND PATRICIA KAMINSKI HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING THIS TECHNIQUE TO A WIDER CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE.

FLOWER ESSENCE THERAPY OFFERS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF AN ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE MEDICINE. THIS THERAPY USES THE SHAPE, FORM AND ARCHETYPAL NATURE OF FLOWERS TO CREATE A SYSTEM OF HEALING MEDICINES. THESE MEDICINES ARE CREATED NATURALLY, USING A PROCESS THAT CAPTURES THE 'ESSENCE' OF THE FLOWER AND MAKES IT AVAILABLE IN AN EASY-TO-TAKE FORM.

WHEN A PATIENT ENGAGES IN THIS TYPE OF HEALING, THEY ARE FORGING A STRONG LINK BETWEEN THEIR PERSONAL HEALTH AND THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF THE PLANT KINGDOM.

FLOWER ESSENCES DO NOT CONSUME RESOURCES AND ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO ANYONE INTERESTED IN PERSONAL GROWTH AND HEALING.

IN THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE, RICHARD OUTLINES THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THIS POWERFUL ESM MODALITY.

Shooting Stars

Each spring we eagerly await the arrival of the Shooting Stars — not the celestial display that sometimes lights up the night sky — but their terrestrial namesakes among the wildflowers. These wild beauties appear in meadows and forest clearings while the cool moisture of early springs still lingers. In the arctic and alpine regions, they bloom in the “second spring,” just after the summer snow-melt reveals the moist, marshy meadows.

First we see a small rosette of leaves, then a solitary flower stalk shoots skyward, branching into multiple flower buds that nod downward towards the earth. Only then is the true wonder of this species revealed, as the purple-magenta blossoms unfolds their petals and arch them back until they appear to fly upward to the sky, while the protruding stamens and pistil form pointed cones, seemingly hurtling towards earth. A relative of the familiar cyclamen, the Shooting Star (genus: *Dodecatheon*) has no known history of medicinal use. Yet, prepared as flower essence, it has become one of the most significant healers of the human soul.

The Story of Maria

In the summer of 1997, we were leading a flower walk in the Sierra Nevada mountains, as part of the Flower Essence Society Practitioner Training Program. With a panoramic view of the granite, snow-capped mountain peaks in the background, we came to a marshy pond which was surrounded by the fresh, new blossoms of the Shooting Star. When we announced the name of the flower, Dr. Ernesto Bolio, a medical doctor and psychiatrist from Mexico City, was filled with awe and delight. Although he had used Shooting Star flower essence extensively in his practice, he had never before seen the actual flower. Dr. Bolio shared with us the case of Maria, a five-year-old girl with a severe neurological disorder whom he had treated with Shooting Star essence.

When Maria’s parents first brought her to Dr. Bolio, they had little hope for her. She had been diagnosed with Helenox Gastoc Syndrome, for which there was no known cure. She was suffering as many as 200 convulsions per day. She could not talk, walk, or sit down by herself, and had no control over her elimination. Medication given by a neurological specialist reduced her convulsions to about 20 per day. However, her prognosis was continued deterioration and premature death in a few years.

Although no one knew the cause of Maria’s condition, Dr. Bolio noted that her mother had a severe infection during the seventh month of pregnancy, that the delivery had been artificially induced, and was traumatic. He commented, “When I reflected upon Maria’s case, I was struck by how her soul has had to struggle to incarnate in her physical body, from the earliest days of infancy and even before birth. The harsh allopathic drugs administered to her continued to blot out her awareness of the physical dimension. Within Maria’s soul there existed a profound sense of alienation and exclusion. It was hard for her to come into her body and to feel her home on earth; to find a sense of belonging with other human beings.”

Dr. Bolio chose Shooting Star as the most important essence for Maria, for it is indicated for a “profound feeling of alienation, especially not feeling at home on Earth, nor a part of the human family.”¹ Shooting Star was administered in combination with a number of other essences over a fifteen month period.

The results of the flower essence therapy with Maria were dramatic and surprising.

- Her convulsions decreased from 20-40 per day to 1-8 per day.
- She no longer suffered from respiratory ailments, which had been quite severe.
- She was no longer alienated from the world. Previously, she was unable to



Shooting Star Field



Shooting Star

The first experience
of flower essences
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calming or release.



recognize anyone, even her mother. Her eyes stared blankly into space. She became more physically aware and responded whenever her mother, caretakers or a sibling were close to her. Her eyes showed a real presence.

- When first coming for therapy, Maria did not express any emotion. She now displayed many gestures and emotions, including anger or frustration. When Maria's mother talked directly to her, she smiled and her face lit up.
- She was much more awake during the day and ate better. She was no longer a passive, disinterested eater.
- Maria regained the pupillary reflex (contraction of the pupil in the presence of direct light), which she had not demonstrated previously. This indicated that she was now present in her body and responsive to her environment.

How do we know flower essences work?

How is it possible that a few drops of a dilute infusion of wildflowers can have such a profound effect on the health of body and soul? According to the conventional scientific wisdom, nothing should happen. A dosage bottle of flower essences is the second dilution of the mother essence, itself a subtle solar infusion of fresh blossoms in water. The dosage bottle contains approximately 1/62,000th of the original mother essence, not enough even to show up in any chemical analysis.

For conventional science, flower essences are an impossibility. There is “nothing” there—at least nothing that can be measured by conventional means. Thus, according to this reasoning, flower essences must be fake, and results such as reported by Dr. Bolio can only be explained as the result of self-suggestion, the so-called “placebo effect.”

The problem with such an explanation is that it flies in the face of the evidence. Not only do thousands of people report

significant changes with flower essences, but they also are quite effective with infants, animals, and even plants, where self-suggestion is not operative.

For example, a dog was severely injured in its mouth when it “attacked” a running lawn mower. The dog's owner applied a combination of flower essences (Five-Flower Formula™ and Arnica) along with herbal Goldenseal. When the dog was brought to the emergency room the veterinarian was amazed that he was not howling in pain, and that there was so little bleeding. The flower essences had helped the dog maintain calm in the face of severe trauma.

For the past twenty years, the Flower Essence Society has collected hundreds of such reports from health care professionals and home-care users of flower essences from around the world, as well as many in-depth case studies such as the story of Maria presented by Dr. Bolio. Such research has revealed a detailed picture of how flower essences work.

In her book *Flowers that Heal*² Patricia Kaminski, the Director of the Flower Essence Society, presents the results of this research. One of the key findings is that there are various stages of soul healing possible with flower essences, which she calls the “Four R's of Flower Essence Response.”

Stage 1: Release and Relaxation

The first experience of flower essences is often one of calming or release. Dr. Edward Bach's emergency combination (known as Five-Flower Formula™ or Rescue Remedy®) exemplifies this stage. For example, it can be used for a screaming child who has just scraped his or her knee. The panic and upset are far worse than the actual injury, and after several doses of the essence combination, the child is able to sit still and quietly long enough for a bandage to be applied, along with some soothing words.

Another combination frequently used at this level is the Yarrow Special Formula™³,

which helps those who are sensitive to environmental conditions, such as disturbed energy fields or pollution.

The fact that the effects of flower essences at “stage one” are often experienced in the body has made this type of flower essence response a good candidate for conventional scientific research. Dr. Jeffrey Cram, a clinical and research psychologist in Nevada City, California, has recently completed two double-blind, placebo studies with these flower essence combinations.

The first study involves the use of Five-Flower Formula™ by subjects in an induced stress situation—a mental arithmetic exercise. In the test group of 24 subjects, those using the flower remedy were found to have significantly less stress reaction, as measured by electrical activity in the muscles (EMG) at spinal locations corresponding to the heart and throat chakras.

The second study involves Five-Flower Formula™ and Yarrow Special Formula™ with subjects exposed to an intense environmental stimulus—strong, unshielded fluorescent lights. Both EMG (muscular activity) and EEG (brain wave activity) measurements were made. Those taking either flower essence formula showed far less reactivity to the lights as measured by the beta wave brain activity at nine sites clustered around the frontal lobes, and by muscle activity in the heart chakra area.⁴

Stage 2: Realization and Recognition

For many people the relief they experience in the first stage is sufficient, but it is possible to go further. The evidence shows that flower essences help stimulate an *awareness* of the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that are producing stress in our lives.

For example, an elderly woman who had lost her husband became a shut-in, unable to take care of herself or do daily errands. Through the help of the *Mimulus* essence (one of Dr. Bach’s discoveries, indicated for specific fears) she began to realize just how

much fear ruled and limited her life. This made her very uncomfortable, but also led to a desire to change, to escape the “living death” she had created for herself.

In this way, flower essences differ significantly from psychiatric medications, and also from many herbal substitutes. Flower essences do not induce mood alterations by manipulating brain chemistry. Rather they stimulate awareness, and empower us to make changes in our lives.

Stage 3: Reaction, Resistance and Reconciliation

Sometimes the healing journey with flower essences can be a profound descent into the psyche. Many of our stresses derive from long-standing patterns of feeling and behavior, which can have their roots deep into the past. For example, a woman who suffered from severe food allergies and fatigue was given the *Mariposa Lily* essence, which is indicated for problems with mother-child bonding. At first she resisted the idea that she had any issues with her mother. But soon after starting the essences she had a dream in which she was in a submarine, locked in a desperate battle to drown her mother. She came to realize that this was a message from her psyche that she could not ignore; she had to heal her relationship with her mother, from whom she had never felt any nourishment, and with whom she was not on speaking terms. With subsequent flower essence therapy she eventually resolved her food allergies and fatigue. *Mariposa Lily* remained the key essence throughout her therapy.

Stage 4: Renewal and Reconstitution

When flower essence therapy is continued for a sufficient length of time, it is possible to reach the stage where wounds become strengths, as the healing process leads to a new sense of purpose in life. For example, consider the case of the elderly woman who



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Mariposa Lily



Goethe himself considered (and we agree) that his greatest contribution to humanity was his development of a new science of nature perception, in which the human awareness becomes an instrument to discern pattern and meaning in the phenomena of nature.



Mimulus

took *Mimulus* for her fear. Not only was she able to develop the confidence and courage to meet her own needs, but she worked as a volunteer visiting other elderly women who were “shut-ins” as she had once been, helping them to have the courage to live life more fully. Thus, she was able to transform what had been a weakness—her fear and dependence—into a new identity and strength, one which she could use to help others suffering from the same problems.

The Special Soul Message of the Flower

It seems natural that flowers should have a healing power for the human soul. After all, we give bouquets of flowers when we want to express our deepest feelings, whether grieving or joyful. We do not give a basket of roots or stems! While many parts of plants can have healing benefits, flowers speak to the soul.

In homeopathy, various plant parts, as well as many other substances, are used to make remedies. New “vibrational remedies” are also being made from animal, mineral and environmental energies, often borrowing the methodology of flower essences, and frequently categorized with flower essences. So, it is important that we ask, “What is so special about the flower?”

Botanists know that flowers express the unique identity of plant species. But why is this so? One of the most intriguing scientific explanations of the unique properties of flowers is in the book *The Plant Between Sun and Earth*, by George Adams and Olive Whicher⁵. The authors describe how, through a study of projective geometry, we can understand the forces which work through the plant. The earthly forces below create the convex, expanding forms of the root. The more cosmic forces above create concave, enveloping forms of the branches and leaves. The flower “fills” this cosmic space with substance, uniquely imbued with soul qualities, which we perceive in the

subtle textures, colors, fragrances and geometric forms of the plants. (Since this brief summary hardly does justice to their carefully thought-out explanations, readers are encouraged to follow up by reading the book.)

If it is the flower that embodies soul qualities in nature, then how are those qualities transferred to the water in which they are prepared, and to the people who ingest them? Theodor Schwenk⁶, a researcher who extensively studied the properties of water, experimented with water exposed to different astronomical configurations. He then studied the effects of the water on sprouting plants. He found that the water had “absorbed” the cosmic energies and transferred them to the seeds that were being watered, as observed by their different rates of growth. If water can be a vehicle for such subtle energies, it is quite reasonable to envision a similar process in which the solar radiation passes through the fresh blossoms floating on the surface of the water, and “imprints” the flower’s energetic pattern into the water. Kirlian photography has already shown auric-like energy patterns emanating from flower essences.⁷ Yet, much more remains to be discovered. Let us hope that subtle energy research will become the new science of the 21st century.

The Living Language of Nature

Because the flower represents the “soul” identity of a plant, the more we know about the plant, the deeper will be our understanding of the qualities of the flower essences. Plant study is thus one of the major research activities of the Flower Essence Society. This work encompasses a broad range of factors, including the form, color and growth patterns of the plant, its relationship to the environment and other life forms, and its history and medicinal uses. For example, the Shooting Star essence, described at the beginning of this article, embodies a basic polarity in the upward movement of its reflexed petals and downward-pointing stamens and pistil, which

corresponds to the ambivalence of a soul like Maria's which is not sure if it belongs on earth.

One of the most fruitful areas of flower essence plant research has been the Society's study of botanical plant families and their relationship to flower essence qualities. Botanists have grouped plants into families based on their similarities of form, and we have found that this frequently is expressed as related themes in the qualities of the flower essences. This is an extensive study, and only a few brief examples can be described here.

The Sunflower Family (Asteraceae or Compositae) are called "composite" flowers, because each flower head is made up of many individual florets, generally central disk florets, and petal-like ray florets. The composite flower appears as a single flower, but it is in reality a unity of many flowers. Most of the species in this family are sun-loving plants, with sturdy, long-lasting structures. It is not surprising, then, that flower essences from this family deal with themes of spiritual integration, wholeness, integrity and the development of the spiritual Self. For example, the Sunflower essence promotes a radiant sense of one's individuality; Echinacea helps us to feel whole when we are "torn apart" by traumatic circumstances; Shasta Daisy develops our ability to integrate ideas into a unified picture, and for this reason is used extensively by writers and other creative artists.

Such studies are an example of a *qualitative* science, in contrast to the purely *quantitative* measure of conventional science. This holistic approach to science was pioneered by Johann von Goethe nearly two centuries ago. Although more widely known for his poetic and literary creations such as *Faust*, Goethe himself considered (and we agree) that his greatest contribution to humanity was his development of a new science of nature perception, in which the human

awareness becomes an instrument to discern pattern and meaning in the phenomena of nature.⁸ Such work has been taken up more recently by researchers in anthroposophic medicine, such as Wilhelm Pelikan, who made a study of the relationship of botanical families to the plant's medicinal properties.⁹ The Flower Essence Society is applying similar principles to flower essence botanical research.

REFERENCES

- 1 Kaminski, Patricia and Richard Katz, *Flower Essence Repertory*, Flower Essence Society, Nevada City, CA, 1996.
- 2 Kaminski, Patricia, *Flowers that Heal*, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin Ireland, 1998
- 3 Yarrow Special Formula is a combination of Arnica, Echinacea and Yarrow flower essences, with Echinacea and Yarrow tincture, in a sea salt base.
- 4 For more details about Dr. Cram's research, visit the Flower Essence Society web site at www.flowersociety.org.
- 5 Adams, George and Olive, Whicher, *The Plant Between Sun and Earth*, Shamballa, Boulder, CO, 1982
- 6 Schwenk, Theodor, *The Basis of Potentization Research* Mercury Press, Spring Valley, NY, 1988
- 7 See Scheffer, Metchild, *Mastering Bach Flower Remedies*, Healing Arts Press, Rochester, NY, 1996
- 8 See, for example, Naydler, Jeremy, ed., *Goethe on Science: An anthology of Goethe's scientific writings*, Floris Books, Edinburgh, UK, 1996
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Sunflower

Sometimes the
healing journey with
flower essences can
be a profound descent
into the psyche.