

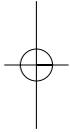


The Child's World

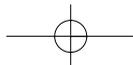
New approaches to the
homeopathic treatment of children

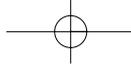
by

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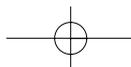
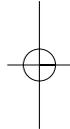
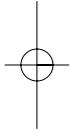




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CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

PART ONE – A SPECIAL TIME OF LIFE

The treatment of children has its distinctive challenges and requires something above and beyond how we approach adults. Childhood is special and demands something special from us. Before attempting to treat children, we should understand what childhood is and what happens to the child during these important years.

What exactly is childhood?

Is it simply a range of ages? Is it a stage delineated by specific growth and development? What is unique about these years? What characterises childhood to make this time of life special and so challenging?

One of the first distinctive characteristics about childhood is that it lasts so long compared to other mammals. As a group, humans have far more capacity, versatility, educability, creativity and flexibility than any other animal. Our increased prowess requires more time for preparation to bring our potential into fruition. As a result, humans have a longer period of dependence, or childhood, than any other species. Childhood comprises an amazing series of stages of development over about 14 years.

Never again in life will there be such growth as there is in childhood. By the end of the first year of life, the child weighs three times as much as at birth. By age two, the brain has tripled in weight. During the first few years, a child gains an average of about 25 cm (10 in) in height each year. Even puberty, with its famed growth spurt, only achieves a maximum of about 10 cm (4 in) per year. Growth is not just in physical size; mental development, language skills and all manner of learning advance with astounding speed. In four scant years the child is transformed from being a totally dependent newborn who is unable to regulate body temperature or focus the eyes to being a verbal, ambulatory, inquisitive, mechanically adept, social individual. Of course, even at this age, the infant child is still dependent and will be so for many years to come but the changes have been dramatic.

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All of this growth and development requires energy. This does not simply refer to adequate food and nutrients. Enough vital energy, or life force, is required. Under ideal conditions the child has all the energy needed for the process of birth, growth, development and living. When there is not enough energy to fuel these natural processes, they slow down or stop and symptoms develop. Childhood illnesses occur when there is a discrepancy between the energy required for growth and the amount available. The causes of an energy shortage have been mentioned in chapter three and will be discussed in later chapters. For now, it is sufficient to say an energy deficit results in specific symptoms, which tell the homeopath exactly where the problem lies. It is his or her job to identify the developmental processes that have stopped and find the right remedy to restore the child's vitality so that health and growth can be recommenced.

A child's miraculous unfolding is orchestrated with awesome perfection. Conception, the experiences in the nine months of intrauterine life, through birth, the first moments after birth and the childhood years all play critical roles in determining what will follow. If any step along this precise cascade of sequential stages is missed, it will upset or delay every single step further down the path. To a large degree these years lay the foundation for health or susceptibility to illness, what kind of symptoms may develop and how a child will experience the entire rest of his life: health or illness, happiness or misery, ease or anxiety. Every homeopath has seen adults whose entire life experience has been shaped from the lack of some important mental or emotional development from childhood. With so much indispensable formative development taking place, true full health in childhood is critically important.

There are many excellent and readily available books on childhood developmental stages. It is not the intention to repeat here what others have described so effectively. However, certain key points and principles that have direct bearing on the homeopathic treatment of children will be discussed.

Child development

When investigating child development, including the physical, mental and emotional aspects of childhood, there is something important to keep in mind. Most of the existing books written, research performed or ideas accepted are based on observations on what are regarded as 'normal' children or what are taken as 'normal' expectations of childhood. These are children whom homeopaths might regard as unhealthy to some degree. The conventional world has no notion of a fully functional healthy state because all their models are dysfunctional. When a malady becomes the rule rather than the exception, or when its presence is widespread, then the dysfunction is accepted as a normal condition.

For example, among most parents it is accepted as normal that pre-school aged children may have from one to five ear infections per year, or experience numerous colds and episodes of congestion. Parents and teachers expect that when children first start school, they will become unwell more often. Tantrums are thought to be normal for two-year-olds. How many parents wait with anxiety and trepidation for the time when their child reaches puberty because it is common knowledge that the teen years are fraught with hostility, rebellion and difficulty? There are many more examples of conditions accepted by the conventional world as normal, whereas in fact these situations are evidence of ill health, or as homeopaths would say, a deficit of vital energy. These symptoms that are widely accepted as inescapable aspects of growing, improve with homeopathic treatment, thereby verifying that they are aspects of illness.

Homeopaths regard pre-natal life, newborns, infants and children by different standards than most others. They do not accept the levels of ill health and symptoms that are so commonly classified as normal and therefore must be tolerated. Remember to keep this in mind while referring to anything written from the allopathic perspective. For those who treat children with homeopathy, it is possible to witness the wonder and miraculous joy of a child growing and evolving in a state of health.

Continual development

Human development is a continuum from the moment of conception throughout our entire life, possibly beyond. Each stage in life is built from and depends upon all that has come before. Nature has orchestrated our continuum of development in an awe-inspiring and complete way. We have everything we need to be born, grow and flourish, being able, as Hahnemann says in the *Organon* 'to freely use this living, healthy instrument for the higher purposes of our existence.'¹

For the complete unfurling of human potential, a person experiences repeated cycles of growth and development throughout his entire life. This cyclic pattern requires three main components: stability, possibilities and energy. A stable, safe environment is required, plus the urge to extend beyond that immediate safe place to explore unknown possibilities plus the energy, resources and confidence with which to accomplish it. The process starts by establishing a stable ground of familiarity from which to launch growth into the mysterious and unexplored. As a person explores, he incorporates the previously mystifying into a broader place of familiar ground. From that new and larger base, he can again venture into the unknown for further exploration and experiences. In health, this kind of growth pattern continues throughout a person's entire life, with each

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stage of life being an extension and expansion of himself into a larger, more varied, more encompassing world.

The American philosopher Mortimer Adler (1902–2001) observed,

*'The purpose of learning is growth, and our minds, unlike our bodies, can continue growing as long as we live.'*²

Here is health in its most fundamental sense; the freedom for a person to become all he can be and to realise his full potential as a human being.

This cyclic developmental pattern occurs many times throughout childhood. Becoming familiar with each component will greatly help achieve understanding on how and why a child becomes ill. It is possible to determine in which age or stage a child is by what he is willing and is unwilling to explore. Understanding starts by investigating each aspect of this process. A person will start with a safe, familiar place that gives comfort and security. Safe is not the most accurate word. Life itself is never completely safe. By its very nature, being alive means being exposed to risks, challenges, hazards, possibilities and unrealised or thwarted potentials. A person is perpetually encountering risky situations; some of great risk, others of low risk. In practical terms, the idea of safe means an environment of relatively low risk. A person will feel at home and this familiarity gives him security, ease and confidence. Safety even encompasses identity as the experience of his own inner strength and capacities supports his sense of identity. He knows who he is and what he can do.

As comfortable and confident as a person feels in a familiar safe place, there is also an innate drive to look outward beyond, to expand and reach for what is beyond the grasp. What's out there? All human development, the advance of civilisation, all progress, invention and discovery has sprung from man's inherent drive to know. What else is outside the bounds of safety? Out beyond are opportunities, challenges, potential and objects of curiosity. Development and growth depend on these possibilities. There is somewhere to go. There is a beckoning destination; the intriguing unknown whetting the appetite for exploration, to find out, to learn. The low risk, safe place, affords a person the stability and confidence from which he can venture into challenges of higher risk, thereby transforming himself into a more fully developed person.

The final ingredient to the triad is energy; the emotional, physical and spiritual power and resources to fuel the movement from safety to challenge. If there is ever any doubt about this drive being a fundamental part of all life, there is evidence of it all around. Even the commonplace reveals this compelling drive. Sprigs of plants grow up through the tiny cracks in a concrete slab. Imagine the vigour and force that obliges the seedling to take on the challenge of growing through concrete. Miraculously it winds its way through a microscopic crevice so it can burst through to the sunlit sky. Acting on the stability of the seed, enough

force allows the growing plant to embrace the challenge of living, eventually pushing aside the concrete.

All people go through this cycle in a continual process of resting with confidence in a safe place, looking beyond to greater possibilities and then gathering the energy and resources to venture forth to meet a new challenge. Finally, the new knowledge and strength is incorporated into the ever-expanding self thus establishing a new safe place on a wider plateau. This template of development is seen many times over in the growing child in a variety of situations and challenges.

American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) said,

*'All the evidence that we have indicates that it is reasonable to assume in practically every human being, and certainly in almost every newborn baby, that there is an active will toward health, an impulse towards growth, or towards the actualisation.'*³

In this and later chapters, the details of this process as it applies to children will be elaborated, showing how important this understanding is to successful treatment.

A person goes from womb to mother to family to community to the world, each stage providing increasing possibilities for reaching the higher purposes of human existence. Many homeopaths have understood that these stages and the developmental challenges they bring, are represented by the elements and the periodic table. Life's progress is revealed from the energy of conception in hydrogen to the return to the quantum energy from which it started, as demonstrated by the overtly physical deterioration of the radioactive elements beyond radon. Each element in between concretises a particular challenge and experience of human growth and development. The array of elements traverses the progressive stages in the same order that a person does. Each stage must be mastered before expanding into the next. A person masters a challenge by facing it with energy, intention and desire until this new arena becomes familiar and safe again. Once safe, he can turn his life force to another challenge, and so goes the process of life and living.

Obviously this is not to say that all people require remedies from the mineral kingdom. Far from it: homeopathy derives remedies from plants, animals, microorganisms, fungi and imponderables. Irrespective of the kind of remedy a person requires, the periodic table's arrangement of the elements teaches a great deal about the normal, expected stages of development, especially about children's growth. This process and the periodic table will be considered as an example of the stages of growth and development throughout the book. Understanding what is normal is critical to be able to identify what is not healthy and therefore requires improvement.

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MOTHER AND CHILD

For decades, it has been standard homeopathic practice in child cases to enquire about the mother and the pregnancy to ascertain if there had been any traumatic events or peculiar symptoms that may have had an impact on the child. Though information was gathered, often it was not quite clear what significance it had or how it may be used to choose a remedy.

The close association, actually an intermingling, of the child and the mother during pregnancy has a profound impact on the state of both. Source-based prescribing utilises information from the mother about her nature, what happened during pregnancy, including any changes, outstanding incidents, traumas, emotionally charged events or distinctive situations. The mother's energy state affects the growing child, even to the point of imprinting her state on the child. Conversely, the child's state may have transmitted to the mother, which is seen as the temporary and out of character symptoms, dreams or desires in the mother during pregnancy. If the mother exhibits new, unusual or distinctively different characteristics during pregnancy, they are important clues to the child's state. The explanation for the stereotypical comment about a pregnant woman suddenly craving pickles, may well be that the foetus wants them!

If, however, the mother's state has not changed during pregnancy, there still can be a link between her state and the infant. It is not the case that all children take on the energy state of their mother. The mother's state as exhibited during pregnancy can be the same as the child if there is a definite link between the symptoms of the child and some aspect of the mother's symptoms. The cases below will demonstrate this very important point.

I do not mean to give fathers short shrift. Both parents are important, each in their own way. The recent trend of more involvement by fathers in the raising of their children is all to the good. Either the mother's state and or the father's state can be present in the child. It can be useful to ask parents which of them the child resembles and in what ways. To use symptoms from a parent's state for the child, there must be a definitive link between the parent and the child through his symptoms or sensations.

Though fathers are now more on the scene, the fact remains that no matter how involved a father is, there is still a special bond between mother and child

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by the simple biologic fact that mothers bear children and nurse them after birth. A woman's physical structure, hormonal, physiologic and psychological mechanisms are designed for it. The child greatly benefits from this close maternal association. When the mother is in a state of health, it is even more true. Conversely, if the mother is not healthy or experiences a trauma or shocking event, the child can be affected. These play a role as to what state the infant will be in and what remedy he requires. The following cases will elucidate these ideas, showing how to put them to practical use.

Case 7.1 The pregnancy reveals the source

The following case presented by Dr. Sunil Anand and reproduced here with kind permission, demonstrates how the mother's state during pregnancy is linked to the state of the infant, and consequently, his correct remedy. The comments and observations during the consultation are those of Dr. Anand.

Patient

The child is an 18-month-old boy with reflux and coeliac disease who was born one month prematurely. He is still very tiny, but quite active. The clothes he wears would fit a younger child of eight to nine months of age. He has wrinkles behind both his ears. His head is flat from the back on one side. It was a difficult pregnancy because the foetus was not fully developing its lungs. The details are explored later in the case at the appropriate point. As expected with a child of this age, the mother reports the entire case. The child comes into the room wearing a jacket.

Consultation

The case begins spontaneously when I ask his mother to remove it.

M: He gets frequent colds. He gets reflux, so he does not want to eat.

Dr: Tell me the symptoms of his reflux.

M: He burps some liquid or food if we lower the Ranitidine.

Comment Ranitidine is a prescription medication for the treatment of gastric reflux. I observe that the child moves all over the place. He did not want to be held in one place. He was also moving around the table in circles.

Dr: Can you demonstrate how he burps?