

## Building Homeopathic Community

Building a homeopathic community is the most important task facing homeopathy today. During the next year, this column will be dedicated to building and strengthening the homeopathic community and to celebrating this wonderful thing that we call homeopathy. I will be sharing some personal reflections about the NCH's work in forming community and will be inviting other homeopathic organizations to share their vision and purpose.

What is a homeopathic community? The word "community" is derived from the Latin word *communis*, which means "shared". A community is a group of people who share a common interest. This sharing includes similar geography, rules, beliefs, ethics, values, customs, emotional bonds, a sense of obligation to fellow members and a sense of belonging.

Community provides the structure that allows the expression of the spirit (dynamis) of homeopathy. It keeps the creative spark that is homeopathy alive. It provides a resource and a place to renew one's inspiration and love for homeopathy. It keeps homeopathy vital and helps people remain fresh, current and inspired.

The mission of the National Center for Homeopathy is to "grow homeopathy". Building community is central to this mission. The NCH has found success in this effort by bringing homeopathy into local communities through the NCH Study Group Program, by providing a place for the homeopathic community to gather, learn and become inspired during the NCH Annual Conference, and by encouraging great camaraderie among NCH Summer School participants.

What is holding us back and how can we work better together? What currently holds us back in homeopathy is infighting. Infighting is partially responsible for preventing homeopathy from realizing its full potential in the world today. This was a problem in 19th century homeopathy and we must learn from those previous mistakes. Sometimes being in harmony is more important than being right. We can disagree and debate, but we must not put each other down or claim homeopathy for our specific prejudice. Hahnemann warned against prejudice in our case work but also we must be free of prejudice in how we work together and treat each other. We need to learn to focus on what is common rather than what divides us.

In his book *The Different Drummer*, Scott Peck says that "Community is a place where conflict can be resolved without physical or emotional bloodshed and with wisdom as well as grace. A community is a group that fights gracefully". Historically, homeopaths have been rugged individualists. Individualism was required in pioneering a new movement and breaking free of the allopathic tradition. Building community can be difficult in such a group. Today, we can move forward as a profession only by forming a strong vital community.

To move forward, there must be a commitment to nurturing the community and to building bridges. Homeopathy does not belong to one particular group, ideology or faction, but to the entire world community. This is why homeopathy has been called the peoples' medicine. Here are some ideas as to how to grow the peoples' homeopathic community.

**Leadership:** We need a stronger and more diverse leadership. This is needed not just at top levels of organizations, but at all levels. There is a difference between allopathic leadership and homeopathic leadership. Allopathic leadership is centralized and hierarchical, whereas homeopathic leadership is diffused though out an entire organization. Each of us must become a leader, an ambassador in our homeopathic communities. Currently, much of homeopathic leadership is by the same group of individuals serving in multiple positions. To move forward, we need greater diversity.

**Communication:** We need more effective dialog. There is much redundancy in the homeopathic community, where each group continually reinvents the wheel. This will require the establishment of a community-wide resource network.

**Diplomacy:** We must be kind to each other. This requires the skill to forgive and forget, to let something go and move on. This is vital in a community that historically has been torn by dissension.

**Culture:** We need to learn to celebrate what we are and what we do. This includes demarking beginnings and endings and creating awards to celebrate and honor. These are ways of nurturing the community, by embracing and honoring the participants. Ceremonies and

celebrations bring hearts together, fire the imagination and weave the past, present and future together. Ceremonies are how people summon and celebrate the power of the human spirit.

**Shared Vision:** Growth requires vision. We need to work together to develop a common shared vision of homeopathy's future. At the last NCH Annual Conference, a Community Forum was held to address two questions: How can we build the homeopathic community and what are the next steps to strengthen it? Fifteen organizations shared their visions and the NCH will continue to support such forums in the future.

**Standing Together:** In the recent movie *Dinosaur*, a young allosaurus is with a group of dinosaurs trying to reach a place of safety. They are being attacked by carnosaurs and individually are being killed. Finally one carnosaur attacks the whole group. The young dinosaur cries out "Stand together!". They do so and defeat the carnosaur. Let us all stand together. In doing so, we will ensure that homeopathy does not falter and remains strong now and in the future.

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