

Developing a Love for All Life

*To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.*

—William Blake

One of the things that distinguishes homeopaths is their capacity to love life. This transcends simple curiosity; it involves a deep wonder, appreciation and enjoyment of all that life holds.

Every substance in life holds the capacity to heal, and homeopaths have found the key to unlock this healing capacity. I believe that practicing homeopathy well requires a deep understanding of our patients, our world and ourselves. This includes an exploration of geology, botany, zoology, physiology, pharmacology, psychology, sociology, literature and many other fields of study.

As a result, often see life differently than others. Who but a homeopath would sit with a patient an hour or more and become entranced with the nuances of the patient's bowel habits or be excited to hear that they only sleep with their arms raised above their head? Who but a homeopath will burn the midnight oil studying the subtleties of the Ericaceae plant family or the toxicology of the poison strychnine?

Homeopaths are interested in the small, unique details about their patients' lives. They also often wish to explore the small details of the natural world, those that are frequently overlooked by contemporary science. These subtleties frequently provide the key to a given patient's case. The philosopher Espinoza once said, "God is in the details."

When coming from a place of love and openness, life speaks to you. In the consulting room, homeopaths have the capacity to listen deeply and truly hear their patients' stories. In the natural world, homeopaths have the capacity to listen to the voices of plants, animals and minerals, developing a deep understanding of nature. Life reveals itself to us, if we truly listen.

How do we develop this capacity to love all life? Some would say that we are simply born with it and cannot develop it. I disagree. I believe this capacity *can* be developed and that it is the responsibility of good homeopathic educators to do so.

One key that I have found in this process is the idea of "stalking", a concept that I learned from the writer Annie Dillard in her book, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. Being a homeopath often requires single-minded intensity of a tiger stalking its prey (Dillard explains how she stalked a muskrat – not to kill it but to really see it). Being a homeopath requires much more than detective work. Stalking helps homeopaths be open to a deeper understanding of their patients and of the world around them. This is the homeopath's ultimate goal – a resonance between the patient and a remedy found in the natural world.

The other key in this process is one of enjoyment. It is important to find play in one's work. The homeopathic materia medica is vast; its study can at times be burdensome and the needs of our patients intense. It becomes critical to enjoy oneself on the journey – to take time to laugh, relax and listen. In this regard, the maintenance of a childlike attitude is helpful. For children, playing is a principle means of learning about life in all its complexity and wonder. As adults, enjoying our work opens the heart and allows love to flow into the work and into our lives. Patients are attracted to practitioners who love what they do. And it is when this love flows that we are at our greatest potential as healers.

Todd Rowe, MD (H)