

Frequently Asked Questions about Flower Essences

- **What are flower essences?**

Flower essences are liquid extracts used to address profound issues of emotional well-being, soul development, and mind-body health. They are part of an emerging field of subtle energy medicine, which also includes homeopathy, acupuncture, color therapy, therapeutic touch and similar modalities.

- **Where and when did flower essences originate?**

Although flowers have been used for healing for many centuries, flower essences in their modern form were first developed in the 1930's by an English physician, Dr. Edward Bach. He prepared 38 remedies, mostly from English wildflowers. In recent decades companies such as FES have researched new flower essences from other plant species.

- **How are the essences prepared?**

Flower essences are dilute, potentized herbal infusions or decoctions, prepared from wildflowers or pristine garden blossoms. They are made directly in the "laboratory of nature," where the four alchemical elements of earth, water, air and fire are found in harmonious balance. To this is added the fifth "quintessential" element of the sensitive awareness and attunement of the preparer. The fresh, dew-filled blossoms are gathered in the early morning of a clear, sunny day. Floating on the surface of a bowl of water, they are irradiated by the warmth and light of the sun for several hours. This process creates an energetic imprint of the etheric energy pattern of the flower in the water, embodying the healing archetype of that plant. This "mother essence" is preserved with brandy and then further diluted and potentized to form the "stock" which is sold in stores and to practitioners.

- **How do I use flower essences?**

They are typically taken orally from a dropper bottle; the standard dosage is four drops four times daily. You can take the drops directly from stock bottles available in stores; mix them in a glass of water; or make a dosage bottle by mixing several drops with water and brandy (typically ¼ to ½ ounce) in a one ounce dropper bottle. When mixing in a dosage bottle or glass of water, take two drops from each essence selected. There are many others ways of using them, such as in misting sprayers, in a cream base, or in baths.

- **Can I use more than one essence at a time?**

Several flower essences can be taken together, and mixed in a dosage bottle or glass of water. In making a combination, it is important to consider how the essences work together, as well as the appropriateness of each essence in the combination. It is best to limit the number of essences taken at any one time to three to five unless you are working with a skilled practitioner.

- **How do I choose flower essences?**

- **How do I decide which mental or emotional issues are most in need of assistance?**

The best way to get involved in choosing flower essences is to read basic literature on the topic such as *Choosing Flower Essences*, the *Flower Essence Repertory*, and *Flowers That Heal*. The next step is to decide which mental and emotional issues are most important for your health and growth. Based on your choice, you then select the essence or essences which correspond with these issues.

You may also wish to talk with a friend or counselor, or to use an assessment questionnaire or repertory to help you sort through the many possible choices for flower essences. If you are just getting started, choose your most basic and obvious priorities.

- **Will flower essences make me feel better?**

In the long run, working with flower essences will help you to feel more alive and in touch with your goals, values, and creativity. However, the essences do not create euphoria, nor do they banish pain and conflict. They work by stimulating awareness of our conflicts and challenges, and they strengthen our ability to work through the obstacles to our health and growth. Thus, taking flower essences may at times stimulate some *discomfort* and *awareness of pain or conflict*. This is a normal part of the journey towards wellness, and can lead to a much more complete state of health than the suppression of pain, or artificial stimulation of feelings through bio-chemical intervention.

- **What if I don't notice any changes at all? Is every essence equally effective?**

Because flower essences work by a principle of *resonance*, they will be most effective and noticeable when they actually match the core mental or emotional challenges you face. If you are addressing only surface symptoms or fleeting feelings, you may not notice much impact from the flower essences.

- **Do flower essences have physical effects? Can they cure physical illness?**

Flower essences do not work bio-chemically like aspirin does for a headache, but they can affect our experience of our bodies. For example, essences which help release emotional stress may result in less physical tension. Someone who overworks may discover just how tired he or she really is.

Flower essences can help people who suffer from physical illness by addressing the emotional responses to the illness, and by working with the underlying conflicts and tensions that may have contributed to the onset of the illness. However, flower essences are not cures for any specific illness, and are chosen on the basis of mental and emotional issues, rather than specific physical ailments.

- **What if my condition is really serious?**

If you have a serious mental or emotional condition, or a known physical medical problem, you should seek the care or advice of a qualified health practitioner. Many health practitioners now include the flower essences in their health programs, or work with other practitioners who do.

- **How will I know if they are working?**

Unlike chemical drugs which *suppress symptoms*, flower essences are catalysts for emotional change, and work by *stimulating awareness*. Many people report general but discernible differences with essences. They may feel clearer, calmer, or better able to cope. However, in order to note really specific changes with flower essences you will need some way of objectively observing your emotional and mental states. You may wish to keep a journal, discuss your issues regularly with a friend or counselor, or take note of your dreams and other inner events. Often it is the comments of others close to us which first alerts us to changes taking place.

Becoming aware of inner changes may take some practice. With physical experiences, we know how to focus our awareness on a problem or pain. For example, the pain is not just in my leg, but mostly in my foot, or precisely in my left foot; it's a throbbing pain that is worse at night or in cold weather. In a similar way, we can learn to be more precisely aware of our emotions and thoughts by a conscious program of self-observation and reflection.

- **When can I expect to note such changes? How long do essences last?**

A one-ounce (30 ml) dosage bottle is generally used at the rate of four drops, four times daily, and lasts about one month. This is a typical cycle for emotional change, and it is recommended that you use an essence for at least this period of time to fully experience its impact. The remedies often have a subtle beginning, which gradually becomes more obvious. However, a month is only a general suggestion; many people use flower essences for longer or shorter periods of time than this, with good results. An essence or combination should be discontinued when you feel you have completely absorbed or consciously recognized the benefits which were intended from it.

- **Are there any harmful or side effects from flower essences?**

- **Can I overdose or have an allergic reaction?**

Flower essences contain only minute traces of actual physical substance; they are primarily vibrational in nature, as are homeopathic remedies. This means that they are non-toxic and have no direct impact upon the body's biochemistry, as do many pharmaceutical and psychoactive drugs. Therefore, there is no such thing as an overdose from flower essences.

At the same time, it is possible to have discomforting experiences with flower essences. They sometimes stir up disturbing emotions, and there may be initial resistance to this awareness, which can cause inner conflict. This is not an aggravation or side effect, but part of the therapeutic process which can lead to greater health and awareness. However, a poorly chosen selection of essences may be experienced as chaotic rather than healing.

It is also possible to have physical reactions when taking the flower essences, such as fatigue, headaches, or a temporary rash. These experiences are the body's way of responding to the emotional awakening elicited by the flower essences, and usually pass within a day or so. If a person feels that the emotional or physical response to the essences is too strong, the dosage frequency can be decreased or a new essence combination tried.

- **How can I use flower essences if I am alcohol sensitive?**

Flower essences have been used successfully by many persons who are alcohol sensitive or in recovery from alcoholism. By adding two drops of each essence to a glass of water, there will only be a negligible amount of alcohol in the water (less than one hundredth of one percent). You can also mix up a dosage bottle using cider vinegar or vegetable glycerin as a preservative, rather than brandy.

- **Can I take flower essences if I am on medication? Can I use them to get off my medication?**

Because the essences are a vibrational therapy and their impact is not from direct physical or chemical intervention in our bodies, they can be used in conjunction with other therapies, including prescribed medications for both physical and emotional ailments. Many people taking psychiatric drugs are able to taper down or gradually eliminate their medications by using flower essences. It is important for anyone taking prescribed medications to have their condition professionally monitored, and not to attempt to discontinue medication without medical supervision. Flower essences are most effective when used in conjunction with counseling therapies.

- **What is the difference between flower essences and aromatherapy oils?**

The most significant difference is that essential oils have definite aromas; flower essences do not. Essential oils work primarily through the sense of smell and its effect upon the “old brain.” They are highly concentrated chemical substances, many of which are quite poisonous taken internally. Most essential oils are diluted first in a carrier oil before they are applied topically. On the other hand, flower essences are safe and gentle to use whether taken internally or used on the skin.

Essential oils are produced from large quantities of plant material, the flowers, roots, seeds, or bark, depending on the location of the volatile oils in the plant. Steam-distillation is the most common extraction method. With flower essences, only the flowers are used and in a very small quantity. The vibrational imprint of the flower is extracted in water, which is then further diluted. Thus essential oils are a physical extract and flower essences are a subtle energy “extract.”

Flower essences and essential oils are very complimentary to each other in healing work. While both affect the mind-body continuum, they work from opposite pathways. Essential oils enter through the senses to reach the soul, while flower essences impact the subtle energy fields of the soul to affect physical well-being. Flower essences and essential oils combine well in spray bottles and in topical applications, such as in skin cremes and massage oils.

- **How do flower essences and herbal remedies compare?**

Flower essences are herbal preparations made only from the flower of the plant in a way to embody its higher vibrational healing. Herbal preparations can be made from various plant parts, using large quantities of the herb. In tea, tincture or capsule form, they have a strong effect directly on our physical state. While some herbs can be poisonous in their action and through over-dosing, flower essences are safe to use. Flower essences can be safely taken in conjunction with Herbal remedies. The Yarrow Special Formula is an example of a successful herbal and flower essence combination.

- **Are flower essences homeopathic?**

Flower essences and homeopathic remedies are kindred preparations, yet there are important differences. They are similar in that both are based on energetic, rather than biochemical principles, and are physically diluted. Both modalities address the whole person — body and mind— and work with the person’s healing process rather than by suppressing symptoms.

However, flower essences were not developed by the Law of Similars — “Like Cures Like” — which is the basis of homeopathy. Rather they balance and integrate polarities within the individual. Homeopathic practitioners work very precisely with specific pathological symptoms, matching the “proving” of the remedy to the “symptom picture” of the patient. Flower essence practitioners work with archetypal themes of soul development, which are embodied in the subtle qualities of the plants. They work with issues of self-actualization and life destiny issues as well as the pathologies which are blocking soul development.

There are also differences in preparation and usage. Flower essences are made exclusively from the fresh blossoms of plants, whereas homeopathic remedies can be made from a variety of plant parts, or from mineral, animal, or human substances. Unlike most homeopathic remedies, flower essences are not antidoted by substances such as camphor, or strong herbs.

Homeopathic remedies do not interfere with flower essences, and many homeopathic practitioners recommend flower essences for their patients. Some classical homeopaths follow a method for which no other remedies — including flower essences — should be taken during the treatment program.

- **Can flower essences be made from gems, animals or other plant parts?**

Flower essences are made specifically from the fresh blossoms of plants because it is at the time of *flowering* that the plant most clearly expresses the soul qualities which can speak our emotions, attitudes and inner experiences. This intuitive truth is deeply engrained in our culture. When we want to express feelings of sympathy or love, we give a bouquet of flowers. We do not give roots, bark, stones, or animal parts.

Certainly physical remedies can be, and have been made from a wide variety of natural and human-made substances. Similarly in homeopathy, there is a wide range of substances which form the basis for potentized remedies. However, Dr. Edward Bach, who had previously worked with both allopathic and homeopathic medicines, specifically chose the flower to achieve the soul-transformational effects he sought for his new therapy. The method he developed, simulating the effect of the morning dew on the blossom with the bowl of water in the sun, is specific to the properties of flowering plants. No doubt “vibrational remedies” can be made from other substances or energies, but they are not flower essences, and cannot be assumed to have the same properties as flower essences. Further research will need to be done to ascertain the unique properties for these preparations and the preparation method most appropriate to them.

- **How do flower essences work?**

To understand how flower essences work requires a recognition that the human being is more than a physical body, but also incorporates a “body” of life energy, a “body” of sensitivity and feelings, and a spiritual essence or Self. Flower essences are energetic imprints of the life force of plants which interact with these subtle bodies of the human being, and evoke specific qualities within us. We can say that they work in a similar way to inspirational music or art, which carry meaning through the vehicle of sound or light, while the flower essences work through the medium of water.

This principle is known in physics as *resonance*. Just as a piano string will sound when its resonant note is sung, so our own “soul chords” respond to the “soul notes” of the flower essences which we need for our healing and growth. Unlike pharmaceutical drugs or conventional herbal medicines, the impact of the flower essences is not from direct physical or chemical intervention in our bodies. Flower essences work through the various human energy fields, which in turn influence mental, emotional and physical well-being.

Flower essence therapy utilizes a precise understanding that the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the human psyche are reflections of the same cosmic laws inherent in the growth patterns, shapes, colors, fragrances, and vital energies of Nature which are expressed in the flowering plant.

Modern physics has known for nearly a century that matter and consciousness are intertwined. However, medical science still generally works with a nineteenth century model of the human being as a mechanism in a world of machines. We expect that in this new century medical science will develop ways of studying the impact of consciousness on health, and we will learn more about the ways in which flower essences work.

- **How do you know that flower essences have the effects that are claimed?**

Flower essence properties are first developed through a thorough study of the plants from which essences are made. This study includes the plant’s structure and form, growth pattern, color, relationship to the environment, chemical properties, herbal uses, as well as energetic properties which are perceived in the plant. These qualities are then correlated with specific human emotional patterns. These preliminary indications are then tested in clinical settings by health practitioners. Through their reports our knowledge of the properties of the essences can be revised, expanded, or verified.

This clinical study of the use of essences is called “empirical” research, or research based on experience. It is also the method by which homeopathic remedies have been verified during the last two centuries. We have also supplemented this broad research program with narrowly defined, double-blind placebo studies following conventional scientific protocols. For further information on these studies, please contact the Flower Essence Society at 800-736-9222 or www.flowersociety.org.

Not all flower essences companies thoroughly research the properties of their flower essences. Therefore customers and stores need to investigate the standards and procedures used to verify the indications of essences they purchase. The FES flower essences are backed by two decades of professional clinical use and study.

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