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**Spectrum of Homeopathy 2010-2, Power
Drugs**

Sample text

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FLYING HIGH AND CRASHING

Smiling until you drop: Ephedra as doping and flu remedy.

AUTHOR | Jürgen Hansel

SUMMARY: In the proving of the medicinal plant *Ephedra sinica*, which contains amphetamines, we can see – alongside the familiar stimulant themes – the common cold symptoms known from folk medicine and the narrowing of the blood vessels caused by ephedrine. A case history shows the homeopathic use in people who survive in extremely difficult circumstances by mobilizing their final reserves of strength and splitting off their feelings.

KEY CONCEPTS: Amphetamine, amputation, burnout, depression, Ephedra, ephedrine, influenza, vasoconstriction

Species of Ephedra (Ephedraceae family) can be found in the Old World from the Amur area through Arabia as far as Portugal, in Africa and the Canaries, as well as in the New World, in areas of the USA, Mexico, and South America. Due to its superficial similarity, Ephedra is frequently confused with species of horsetail or genista. The photograph shows *Ephedra fragilis* on the Mirador de Mal Pas, Mallorca.

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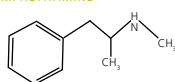
Ephedra is used worldwide and is one of the oldest power drugs known. It was mentioned in the Vedas, the oldest Hindu texts known, and is thought, by some researchers, to be the plant used to make the legendary holy drink soma, which was said to confer supernatural powers. A similar intoxicating drink, called haoma, was used in the ancient Iranian Zoroastrian religion. In Persia, where the haoma cult still persists, the drink is made from pomegranate juice and Ephedra. In the cave of Shanidar in Iraq, in which Neanderthals were buried under flowers and herbs, remains of Ephedra have been found among the burial objects.

FOLK MEDICINE

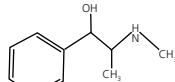
North American Indians drink a tea called popotillo, made from *Ephedra americana*, as a stimulant and as a preparation to go in search of visions or as a folk remedy for various illnesses. This custom is very old and was widespread even among the Aztecs. Indian folk medicine also lists headaches as an indication, for which Mexican indigenous people smoke a mixture of Ephedra and tobacco.

In China, *Ephedra sinica* is known as ma huang (yellow hemp) and has been one of the chief cold medicines for 5000 years. It was also recommended in this connection by the well-known Greek physician Dioscorides. In Western phytotherapy, Ephedra tea or tincture is used for hay fever, urticaria, and other allergic diseases, for

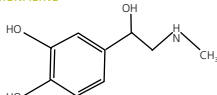
METHAMPHETAMINE



EPHEDRINE



ADRENALINE



Ephedrine is a simple alkaloid with a chemical structure between adrenaline and methamphetamine. The ephedrine lacks the two phenol groups of adrenaline, and the ethanol component of adrenaline is extended by a methyl group to propanol. The chemical name of ephedrine is "1-phenyl-2-methylamino-propanol". The hydroxyl (OH) group is the only difference between methamphetamine ("1-phenyl-2-methylamino-propane") and ephedrine, which is therefore designated as natural amphetamine.

bronchitis, whooping cough, and bronchial asthma, as well as other conditions involving bronchial spasticity. It is also used in circulatory disturbances and collapse with arterial hypotonia.

PHARMACOLOGY

Better known than the plant itself is the main active ingredient, ephedrine, which was discovered in 1885 and first synthesized in 1926. This simple alkaloid has a similar chemical structure to adrenaline and methamphetamine.

¹Editor's note: the common name of Ephedra is joint-pine or joint fir, and also sea grape (from the French "raisin de mer"), although that is also a common name for *Coccoloba uvifera*.

Two spheres of action result from this chemical affinity:

On the one hand, ephedrine works in a sympathomimetic way, like adrenaline, on the smooth muscles, and leads to a narrowing of the blood vessels and to an expansion of the bronchi and pupils. The vasoconstrictive effect of ephedrine is used therapeutically in nose drops, as well as in antihypotonic drugs. The application for diseases of the airways can be explained by its bronchodilatory effect.

On the other hand, ephedrine has an amphetamine-like excitatory effect on the central nervous system, increasing mental receptiveness and the power of thought, with a raised mood level that can reach euphoria. The effect on people who are tired is more pronounced than on those who are fully alert. In this way, decreased performance due to tiredness can be compensated for a few hours. At the same time, the appetite is reduced. Due to the combination of these systemic effects with the sympathetic stimulation, ephedrine is one of the most performance-enhancing drugs: sporting associations invariably put it on the doping blacklist of banned drugs.

HOMEOPATHY

The effects known from folk medicine and pharmacology were also found in a remedy proving conducted in 1997 with *Ephedra sinica*, using 18 provers. With the help of proving symptoms, the pharmacological spectrum of Ephedra's action and its alkaloids can be approximately demonstrated and it can be unambiguously classified as a power drug.

After taking one or more doses of *Ephedra sinica* 30C, more than half of the 18 provers felt psychologically or physically stimulated.

One of the provers unfortunately only experienced this stimulation for a single evening, while others felt the effect, which they experienced as very positive, for more than a week. The good mood ranged from cheerful, relaxed, exhilarated, feeling great, and a little bit euphoric through to high, "as if I'd been smoking grass". In everyday life, this positive feeling engendered an unusual level of carelessness in relation to danger and a certain lack of inhibition,



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MA HUANG, THE YELLOW HEMP OF TCM

麻黄

MA HUANG, the Chinese characters denoting the Ephedra plant in ancient Mandarin. The upper character "ma" means hemp. The lower character "huang" means "yellow". For the calligraphy and the proving remedy, I must thank my old friend and teacher of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Prof. Stephan Pálos, who selected the dried herb from various Chinese pharmacies in Singapore and imported it to Germany.

Herba Ephedrae plays a central role in TCM for treatment of the initial phase of a cold, when the most prominent symptoms are strong shivering, fever without sweating, as well as headaches and pains in the limbs. 2000 years ago, the Chinese doctor Zhang Zhong Jing recommended in his seminal work – *On Cold Damage or Treatise on Cold Injury (Shang Han Lun)*, still reckoned to be important in Chinese medicine to this day – for this symptom picture the "ephedra decoction" ("ma huang tang"), which main ingredient is the herb Ephedra.

In *Huang Di Nei Jing or Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon* – the basic work of TCM from the 4th century B.C., but going back to the legendary yellow emperor (2400 B.C.) – it says: "If it lies in the skin, sweat it out". Herba Ephedrae is one of the strongest sweat-inducing plant medicines. It is used particularly when the illness "lies in the skin"; in other words, when it is still right on the surface of the body.

ADVERT

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POWER DRUGS ; AMPHETAMINES

whether in communication, shopping, or sexuality. One prover even developed signs of kleptomania during the remedy proving. Some experienced a physical and mental surge of energy after taking the proving remedy; they felt able to perform tasks with less effort than previously experienced. They also felt dynamic and full of energy the whole day, very alert, concentrated, and full of stamina at work. This feeling of power extended to delusions of omnipotence, typical of many drug remedies. One example: "I felt like Rambo and wanted to sweep aside all obstacles lying in my path."



Vascular constriction, one of the main effects of ephedrine, could be seen in the remedy proving of *Ephedra sinica* quite clearly in a prover who – for the first time in her life – experienced the typical symptoms of Raynaud's disease, for several days in a row. She wrote on the first day in her proving diary: "I could clearly feel the vascular constriction", and on the next day: "I can feel how the blood vessels are constricting".

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CRASH INTO DEPRESSION

As with most power drugs, however, increased energy, dynamism, and pleasure is only one side of the coin. Sooner or later, most provers also show the flip side of the stimulants: exhaustion, depression, and isolation. The switchover was in most cases abrupt. After several days on cloud nine, talking ceaselessly, making witty

and bright comments, one prover suddenly stopped talking and burst out crying when she was spoken to. This sudden crash is also reflected in various dreams of a floating bed that first gets lifted up on thermal air currents to a great height and then suddenly plunges back to earth, or of a lift that goes out of control, switching from going upwards to racing downwards.

Whereas in the high phase, a feeling of connection noticeably increased the need for mental and bodily communication, after the crash, the provers withdrew from those around them and became silent and dull. They dreamt of situations in which they no longer belonged or were excluded, and a feeling of isolation and abandonment arose; a state we already know from many other drugs.

The most pronounced negative effect of *Ephedra* in this phase was on vitality and physical performance. Ten provers, including some who were not lucky enough to have a high phase, became noticeably tired, very sleepy, exhausted, washed out, or weak and feeble. Everything was very tough, as if in a dream of cycling through sand with maximum effort; in other words, everything was extremely hard work.

INFLUENZA REMEDY

Tiredness and exhaustion were often associated with headaches and pains in the limbs – similar to the initial symptoms of influenza. Six out of eighteen provers reported pain like aching or sore muscles, or a feeling of exhaustion familiar from the common cold. Five provers complained of a strong feeling of coldness. Sore throat, coughing, rhinitis, and smarting eyes were further symptoms. The overall picture corresponds closely to the area of indication for *Ephedra* (ma huang) in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

As already mentioned, ephedrine is also used in Western medicine due to its sympathomimetic effect for infections of the airways, especially in decongestant nose drops. In the remedy proving, one prover directly experienced the vasoconstriction of *Ephedra* by developing symptoms of Raynaud's disease for the first time in her life. She noted: "I can feel how the blood vessels are constricting." I should mention here that neither the prover nor her supervisor knew what substance was being proved, and certainly had no idea of what effects the substance might possibly have.

DREAMS

Along with the dreams of crashing down and isolation, there were strange dreams of amputation and the replacement of body parts. One prover lost both legs and then had them stitched back on. Another dreamt of a glazier who can slice a child's head off and replace it with a new one. In further dreams on the theme of amputation or the loss of body parts, there was no replacement of the lost part: "My vagina and clitoris had come off. I held them in my hand and asked myself whether the uterus was also there." In another dream, a man appeared with a prosthetic penis. In all proving dreams, including those of crashing down from a great height, the feelings of danger and menace appropriate to the situation were absent, and there were no other particular emotions.



Joint pine or sea grape is an inconspicuous shrub, usually less than one meter high, with simple leaves and tiny white flowers from which inedible red, fleshy pseudo-berries develop. Its rod-like branches look similar to horsetail, to which it is not, however, botanically related. *Ephedra* belongs to the class of "Gnetopsida", which has an isolated position in the botanical system. Most members of this formerly richly differentiated group have died out and are only known through the fossil record. The only surviving close relative of *Ephedra* is – along with a species of tropical liane plants called *Gnetum*, which gives the whole class its name – the unique "*Welwitschia mirabilis*" from South Africa. *Ephedra* is of particular interest to botanists because, together with the few other members of its class, it represents the transition between coniferous and flowering plants.

There are approximately 35 species of *Ephedra*, spread across the whole world. As "xerophytes", they prefer dry places in the deserts or steppes, or in the mountainous regions of Tibet or South America. The various species are often named after their place of origin: for example, *Ephedra californica*, *E. nevadensis*, or *E. sinica*. Opinion among botanists about the mother plant is divided: *E. vulgaris* is most frequently cited and some experts believe that the others are all sub-species of this plant.

copyright ; *Ephedra distachya*, photographed by Carsten Niehaus in the Osnabrück botanical gardens / Germany

The reparatorization of the totality of current symptoms is clearly headed by Nux vomica, which is a very frequent differential diagnosis for the stimulants.		nux.v. nat.m. phos. hyc. arn. sulph. calc. bell. chin. gig. lach. acon. emul. pit														
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
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		24	14	13	12	10	14	13	11	11	9	9	8	8	15	
1. Generals – weakness – overwork, due to	(7) 1															
2. Generals – weakness – nervous	(147) 1															
3. Mood – peace – desire for	(39) 1															
4. Mood – society – disinclination – desire for solitude	(88) 1															
5. Mood – fear – business disaster, bankruptcy, of	(21) 1															
6. Sleep – sleeplessness – thoughts – business, of	(4) 1															
7. Chest – palpitations – nervous palpitations	(68) 1															
8. Chill – shivering	(214) 1															
9. Stomach – nausea – continuous	(48) 1															
10. Extremities – cramps – lower legs	(156) 1															
11. Generals – food and drink – alcohol agg.	(187) 1															

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

In my practice, *Ephedra sinica* now belongs to the important acute remedies for colds – a group that includes the remedies *Aconitum*, *Bryonia*, *Gelsemium*, and *Eupatorium perfoliatum*. The strikingly altered mood is characteristic for *Ephedra*. It is indicated for people who are otherwise happy, communicative, extroverted, and full of energy, and who fall into a deep state of melancholy when they have influenza. They withdraw, avoid contact, see everything bleakly, and no longer know themselves. The typical exhaustion found in flu, with headaches and aching limbs, is especially pronounced in these people, as well as shivering and a sensation of cold. They are not just lacking in appetite but are also usually thirstless.

We only gain a deeper understanding of a remedy, beyond its acute effects, by using it successfully in constitutional treatment. Such experience rounds off the snapshot of the remedy proving with the holistic relationship to a person and the time dimension of that person's life experience.

Case History

45-year-old Annette W. first came to my practice in 1992 due to acute influenza. From then on, I treated her at long intervals for various acute illnesses – from impingement syndrome to acute otitis media. During this time, I knew her as a sociable and talkative woman who liked to laugh and crack jokes, and was very active and full of energy. She was, however, always under pressure and in a rush, with little time for visits to the doctor; there was never enough time in these years for a detailed biographical anamnesis. I knew a little of her private life, since I treated her husband in 1995 for a few months, accompanying him at the end of his life with palliative treatment. After his death, she had taken over their joint business and had to work long and hard to keep it going.

A doctor's letter in the summer of 1998 revealed that she had been examined and treated with a talk therapy for 10 days in a clinic. Her complaints were progressive tiredness, exhaustion, and unfi-

ness to work normally. She comes to see me again for a short appointment in December 1998, once more under great time pressure. The presenting complaint is now a skin rash over her entire body, which worsens considerably when she drinks alcohol. She said she is under great stress at work. She has to work a lot because of important debts and is living in fear of bankruptcy. Due to her financial worries, she often cannot sleep and can hardly ever relax. This weakens her and makes her extremely nervous with palpitations. "I'm in a terrible state. I can't go on. I'm at the end of my tether. All I want is to be alone and at peace." She is constantly freezing and always has cold feet. She experiences a mild nausea all the time and occasionally has cramps in the calves. As in the past, she does not have enough time for a thorough biographical anamnesis.

Prescription (after reparatorization of the current symptoms): *Nux vom* LM6, 5 drops daily.

The patient only returns to the practice two months later. Despite continuing problems, she could not find time before. She still has the skin rash, which has been coming and going, improving particularly after a visit to the solarium. In addition, she now complains of pains all over her body: her shoulders, elbows, knees, and back all feel "battered". After getting up in the morning, she can hardly walk upright and her fingers are also stiff; everything aches. She said she is really down and is crying all the time; her state of mind has not improved in the slightest. She is sleeping poorly, always wants to be alone, has completely cut herself off, and is hardly eating anything. The worse thing is that she is freezing – in fact, she is frozen to the bones.

When I asked about her mental state and the feeling of freezing, she began for the first time to tell me about herself and her life in more detail.

"After my husband died of cancer, I couldn't grieve. I had to fight to stay afloat because he'd left me with such large debts. After a year, I started a new relationship. The man was always pressurizing me and emotionally tormenting me. I did everything that this man wanted – including many things that hurt me deeply, and I was

never able to say no. Normally, you would scream or go mad but I didn't do any of that; I just quietly put up with it. He had other relationships and eventually he left me. I couldn't grieve for this either. I tried to throw myself into my work; I had a new job that I enjoyed. But I let them exploit me; I worked all hours for a pittance. I let them get away with everything. They could do what they liked with me and I didn't defend myself, neither in my job nor my private life."

"Somewhere along the line, I realized that I was constantly freezing. Regardless of whether it was warm or cold, I always felt frozen. At the same time, a great sadness welled up in me that was something completely new for me. I never used to get depressed, I was always happy, whatever happened. What's now happening to me is something I haven't known before. I think it's the mourning that I've repressed for so long. I get tearful all the time for no reason. I've withdrawn from my friends and stopped answering the telephone. I again wanted to throw myself into my work to avoid facing it. I worked Saturdays and Sundays, until the tiredness became

worse and worse. First, I put it down to the fact that I hadn't taken a holiday for eight years and that my finances were in such a mess. I thought that was the reason for the sadness and the freezing. Now, I think that the freezing is due to the complete lack of tender loving care in my life."

When I asked her whether she had previously had phases of freezing and tiredness, she said:

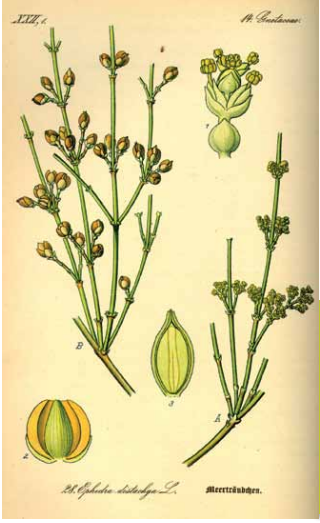
"Whenever I reach a point in my life where I can't take it any more, then I start to feel cold. If no-one was there to help me, to support me, then the shivering started and the feeling of abandonment. As a child, I never got the kind of love from my mother that a child really needs. She hit me all the time – nowadays she would certainly be punished for it. Nevertheless, although I was beaten until I was 18, I always laughed and put on a happy face to the outside world. Whatever happened, I never let anyone see that anything was wrong. I always try to please everyone, to keep my cool, and remain friendly. There are dozens of photos where I'm laughing heartily – I always try to laugh and be happy, even if it hurts. The only person who knew what was happening to me was my grandmother; she gave me the love that my mother never did.

I also got some warmth from my father. Then, at the age of 17, something happened that instantly destroyed my love for my father: an advance made by him to touch certain parts of my body. It didn't go any further, but only because I ran away and hid at my aunt's. A psychologist said to me at the time: 'you can get over that on your own, it just takes time.'

All my life, I've always picked men who hurt me – since I always think my life is only OK when I'm being hit, mentally or physically. If someone was good and nice to me, I couldn't cope with it because I didn't know that feeling of love. Work was always my lifeline. When I was married, my husband forbade me to work, which was like an emotional death sentence for me. When my husband really put me down and attacked me for hours on end, then I started to freeze. Yet, I always had the feeling of being the stronger one in all my relationships. The others pressurized me but they needed me, even though they put me down. I tried to leave my husband ten times, but my husband ran after me, begged me to come back, and put pressure on me: 'please come back, I love you

Mormon tea is made from the stalks, which are rich in ephedrine. The name "Mormon tea" comes from its use in previous times by the members of the Church of the Latter Day Saints (commonly known as the Mormons), who were forbidden to consume alcohol, coffee, and black tea. In the meantime, church members have also been forbidden to drink *Ephedra* tea.

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more than anything'. I always appeared to be a superwoman – why can't anyone see what it's like for me, how broken I am? That's the story of my life: I always have to fight. I've been fighting ever since I was born. First, I had to fight my mother, then my father, but through all this, I myself fell by the wayside."

Case Analysis

My homeopathic experience with *Ephedra* up to this point had been restricted to treating influenza. The combination of flu with a depressive mood had always been an important indication for this remedy. In this case, the main complaint was the depressive mood with the accompanying flu-like symptoms of extreme chilliness, exhaustion, and pains in the limbs. These three symptoms: the feeling of exhaustion in the whole body, the constant shivering, and the depression indicate *Ephedra sinica*. A feeling of cold and pains can also occur in other power drugs during the burnout phase, according to the observations of Andreas Richter.

Ephedra is indicated by the striking contrast between cheerfulness, good mood, talkativeness, sociability, activity, and high energy on the one hand, and sadness, uncommunicativeness, withdrawal, lack of drive and energy on the other hand. The short-term alternation of mood from high to low that we saw in the remedy proving is reproduced in this patient in the contrast between her public persona and her altered depressive mood in private. Her biography indicates that this conflict was always present in a latent form and that the depressive side had to be constantly compensated and hidden. Along with her cheerful, talkative persona, her flight to hyperactivity and excessive amounts of work were also a form of compensation, which is found not just in Ephedra, but also in other stimulants.

Prescription: *Ephedra sinica* 200C.

PROGRESS

Half an hour after taking the pilules, she felt a strong, pleasant warmth rising in her body: "The feeling of warmth first went inwards and then from the inside outwards. I suddenly felt my inner radiance return." In the first dream she can remember after the Ephedra, she is in a big ship on a rough ocean, suddenly there is a waterfall like Niagara and then she finds herself in calm waters, like the river Rhine. During all of this, she feels no fear.

During the next two days, her energy and her mood both improve. After this initial and dramatic improvement, in which the joint pains and the feeling of exhaustion completely disappear, she experiences, a week later, symptoms of influenza with a raging headache, shivering, and high fever; the sadness also returns. After a dose of *Ephedra* 200C, the fever recedes within one hour and the headache improves. She describes the reaction as follows: "I sat in bed with the feeling that I'd just had a rejuvenation treatment, and I felt really great – as if I'd been given a drug." The first thing is that she feels warm again, initially in waves or flushes. Afterwards, she no longer feels chilly but is still prone to tears.

Six weeks later, she reports: "After this bout of flu, my mood improved tremendously. I no longer need to weep. I invite friends around, make phone calls again, and go out. The depression is gone, including the melancholy over my husband's death. This remedy has really helped me to make progress, both physically and emotionally. It's sharpened my senses terrifically. I can meditate again, much longer and more intensively than before. In my dreams, I work through old stuff that's been lying dormant inside me. I'm starting to get things done, which I was afraid to do before. I was finally able to move out of my apartment. I threatened my boss with resignation and when she offered to double my salary, I said: 'OK, that's a start'. Before the remedy, I thought: 'You'd better just take what they give you'. I'm suddenly able to stand up for myself and say what I'm worth. Yes, now I know what I'm worth. Other things have changed too: I hardly drink any more alcohol, now it's green tea or cocoa instead, and I'm losing weight without having to starve myself."

In the ensuing period, she is very stable. Three years later, she succumbs to depression, triggered by a huge financial loss and fears for her livelihood. Like the first time, she once again responds to a dose of *Ephedra sinica*.

DYNAMIC OF THE REMEDY

What is the deep similarity between Annette W. and the remedy *Ephedra sinica*, that it triggers such a profound reaction of the life force? The special thing about this woman, the central theme running through her life story, is her method of coping with exploitative and abusive situations in life. A child who is beaten black and blue by her mother and who nevertheless always laughs; a woman who constantly feels under pressure from her husband and later from her boyfriend, who is tricked and messed around, and who is nevertheless always in a good mood; a woman who always keeps going, lets herself be exploited in her job without defending herself, who throws herself into her work after her husband's death, in order to pay off the massive debts that he leaves her, and cannot even find time to grieve him.

Alongside the energy and stamina with which she continually fights, what is striking is the discrepancy between the extreme burdens she has to bear and her emotional reaction.

While a remedy proving cannot give us biographies but only snapshots, we can still observe that she displays certain reaction patterns, which we can recognize in the themes from the symptoms of the remedy proving. The theme of sexual abuse, for example, was experienced by two provers as a sudden fear of rape in a train compartment and as a dream of incest committed by the father.

The typical emotional reaction displayed by Annette in response to difficulties and burdens is a central theme of the Ephedra proving. A female prover had a tire blow out on her car on the freeway during a snowstorm: "I wasn't in the slightest upset, so that I didn't even recognize myself". Another person had major problems in the family and noted with the same surprise: "I wasn't at all upset."

The provers' dreams showed them reacting with a similar lack of emotion to dangers and difficulties. One prover, who felt very tired and exhausted after taking the remedy, continued nevertheless working at full speed, and wrote of this: "It made no impression on me. I hardly registered it." Another prover initially failed to register the symptoms that appeared after taking the remedy. Only when the symptoms returned for the second or third time did she notice the change in her well-being.

The parallels to the survival strategy of Annette W. are clear enough: hanging on, taking the blows, and simply carrying on, laughing as if nothing has happened, not even registering it. It is a similar pattern to what we see in indigenous people who persevere under the most arduous working and living conditions; to continue their heavy work, they drink Pingo Pingo (Ephedra tea) or chew coca leaves. Like them, Annette can be highly efficient, almost perfectionist, and give the impression of a superwoman, although in fact, she is dissociating from her feelings in order to be able to function. This survival strategy used by the power drugs is explained by the pediatrician Andreas Richter in terms of the earliest phase of life, in which people are not really allowed to be children. It is not unusual for Annette W. to repeatedly seek situations and attachment figures who demand and foster this pattern of behavior. In such situations, she can demonstrate her power, stamina, efficiency, and capacity to suffer. Beneath the impressive surface appearance, however, burnout and depression are lurking.



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WHOLE AGAIN

Christa Gebhardt, Jürgen Hansel
The homeopathic Way of Healing
13 Amazing Stories



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