

# Look beyond Rescue Remedy to build overall emotional resilience

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## *Bach Flowers more than just Rescue Remedy*

Many of us have heard of 'Rescue Remedy' and use it on a regular basis without really knowing what it is. Frequently I see people - ok, women mostly - pull it from their desk drawer or purse to spray themselves, or share with their colleagues and loved ones when emotional stress is high. Everyone is in need of a bit of emotional support from time-to-time, and Rescue Remedy is a beautiful, gentle, simple way to receive and give that care.

People don't realise though, that Rescue Remedy is not the only emotional support we can give ourselves through flower essences. Rescue Remedy is a specific combination of five Bach Flower Essences and is intended for the immediate or acute effects of emotional shock, trauma and grief – the unanticipated jolts to our everyday lives. Quite often, though, Rescue Remedy is taken for chronic or on-going emotional situation which it wasn't intended to treat, mainly because of its popularity, easy over-the-counter availability, or just simply because we don't know what else to use.

Bach Flower Essences, all 38 of them, provide a wide range of emotional care for many different situations. They can provide support and build emotional resilience during times of stress and conflict. They can stimulate emotional healing after distress and loss. They can also ease life transformations and help us move away from past behaviours and old ways of thinking. Various Bach Flower Essences can help recovery from prolonged grief, melancholy and depressed spirits, nervousness and anticipation restlessness, low adaptation to changing circumstances, self-esteem issues – the list of emotional support they can provide when specifically tailored, goes on.

A friend was in very low spirits following the break-up of his marriage. Although the break-up was anticipated and not a shock, the final split hit my friend hard. One day he confided to me that he just wasn't enjoying life any more – something very out of character for him. I offered a tailored Bach Flower combination, which he accepted. Several days later, my friend remarked that he had noticed himself laughing with work colleagues earlier that day. This was said with some sense of happiness and relief - although my friend's grief process was not yet complete, he had re-found himself and the specifically chosen Bach Flower Essences I had tailored had lightened his emotional load.

Another friend had tailored combinations made up for herself and her two children following her separation – not forgetting the children were separated from their father, too. Bach Flower Essence's gentle action is excellent for children, especially in such difficult emotional situations.



## A brief history of Bach Flower Essences

The first flower essences were discovered by Dr Edward Bach in the 1930's. Bach was a well-established medical consultant, homeopath and bacteriologist, who gave up his lucrative position in London when he became convinced that no harmful substance – even in infinitesimal doses of a homeopathic remedy – should play a part in the healing process. Bach was also convinced that long-term emotional stresses – anger, fear, worry, grief – affected one's long-term physical and mental health. Medical studies have since shown Bach to be correct in his understanding that our mental, emotional and physical aspects are all interconnected.

Upon moving to first the Welsh, and then Oxfordshire countryside, Bach found a way to capture the gentle emotional healing properties of nature, specifically from the dew (or water) that had been in contact with 38 local flowers, herbs and trees. Some call it 'vibrational medicine', simply a way to communicate the phenomena that can be experienced, but not fully understood.

Flower Essences are sometimes considered to be homeopathic because they are extremely dilute, but this is a misnomer, as they are not made according to the homeopathic preparation processes (see my *Understanding Homeopathy: A brief look at its practical application*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), nor are they prescribed according to homeopathic principles (see my *Understanding Homeopathy: A brief look at its history, philosophy and theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition).

Similar to homeopathy, Bach Flower Essences are controversial in that a non-material dose of an agent to cause a therapeutic effect is outside the current accepted medical paradigms. Research studies have been done to test the efficacy of Bach Flower Essences (for a general review, see [www.bachcentre.com/centre/research.pdf](http://www.bachcentre.com/centre/research.pdf)). Like all alternative therapies, some studies show positive results while other studies show negative results (see [www.smw.ch/content/smw-2010-13079/](http://www.smw.ch/content/smw-2010-13079/)). What conclusions one makes from formal research rely largely on the quality of the studies conducted and the right tests being done for the scientific questions being asked. For the general public, however, 'proof is in the pudding' and the relief they feel from an appropriately tailored essence combination is simply good enough for them.

## The Bach Flower system

Bach Flower Essences can be used singly or in any combinations of up to six essences. The combinations are tailored for the individual and the situation. The essence or essence combination needed may change over time as individual's emotional state changes through the healing process.

The system for prescribing Bach Flowers is simple and straight-forward, which anyone can use for themselves. This is exactly what Bach wanted - a way for individuals to take control of their own health, well-being and self-actualisation. However, sometimes advice from an experienced essence user or trained professional can be helpful when beginning to choose the best essence or essence combination. Most health shops in New Zealand carry Bach Flower Essences and can make up specific combinations on request. Alternatively, you can contact a health professional who offers dispensing and prescribing services, such as myself.

The 38 essences are divided into seven groups for easier selection. These include:

**Face your fears:** Aspen, Cherry Plum, Mimulus and Rock Rose.

**Know your own mind:** Cerato, Gentian, Hornbeam, Scleranthus and Wild Oat.

**Live the day:** Chestnut Bud, Clematis, Honeysuckle, Mustard, Olive, White Chestnut and Wild Rose.

**Reach out to others:** Heather, Impatiens and Water Violet.

**Stand your ground:** Agrimony, Centaury, Holly and Walnut.

**Find hope and joy:** Crab Apple, Elm, Gorse, Larch, Oak, Pine, Sweet Chestnut, Star of Bethlehem and Willow.

**Live and let live:** Beech, Chicory, Red Chestnut, Rock Water, Vervain and Vine.

**Rescue Remedy** is a combination of the five flower essences: Cherry Plum, Clematis, Impatiens, Rock Rose and Star of Bethlehem.

A reference book that provides more in depth descriptions of each essence, which I have found particularly useful, is:

Wildwood, C (1992). *Flower Remedies: Natural Healing with Flower Essences*. Dorset, UK: Element Books Limited.

You can also use my [Bach Flower Essence Self-Prescriber](#) at the end of this article.

Since animals can also benefit from the use of Bach Flower Essences to alleviate emotional distress or problem behaviours, a useful reference book is:

Graham, H and Vlamis, G (1999). *Bach Flower Remedies for Animals*. Tallahassee, Florida, USA: Findhorn Press.

### **Who can use Bach Flower Essences**

Bach Flower Essences may be safely used by everyone, including children, pregnant women and the elderly. Bach Flower Essences are non-addictive and may be used as frequently as necessary to relieve mental and emotional symptoms. They can be used on their own or in conjunction with any other health practice as they will not interfere with conventional medication, homeopathic remedies or physical therapies, nor are they contra-indicated with any herbal product.

Bach Flower Essences cannot substitute for conventional medication or other therapies where the root cause of the emotional state is a medical condition or physical pathology. However, they can help support other treatments by speeding up the healing process and/or reducing the amount of stress, trauma, medication, therapeutics or counselling needed.

### **Other types of flower essences**

Bach Flower Essences were the first flower essences to be developed. Since then, more flower (and animal) essences have been discovered and systemised. To name three in particular, there are First Light Essences from New Zealand native and introduced flora ([www.nzfloweressences.co.nz](http://www.nzfloweressences.co.nz)), Australian Bush Flowers also from native flora ([www.ausflowers.com.au](http://www.ausflowers.com.au)) and Bailey Essences that include other UK grown flora ([www.baileyessences.com](http://www.baileyessences.com)). Many of these essence systems focus on spiritual well-being, as well as and in connection to, emotional and mental well-being.

Also of note is the Flower Essence Society ([www.flowersociety.org](http://www.flowersociety.org)) which is an international non-for-profit organisation dedicated to communication, training and research about the therapeutic use of various flower essence systems.

## Bach Flower Essences Self-prescriber Check List

**How to use this self-prescriber:** Read through all the descriptions below with the presenting complaint in mind. Because mental/emotional states are usually complex with a number of aspects, choose 3-6 essences that together try to address what needs to be resolved. Discuss with an experienced user or knowledgeable health professional if you are uncertain or cannot limit your choices to 6 or fewer.

Descriptions or statements to think about	Indicated essence	
You have a tendency to hide problems behind a cheerful exterior. You the life and soul of the party, but secretly crying on the inside.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Agrimony</b>
You are anxious but can't say why. Your fears are vague, but feel real nevertheless. You feel almost haunted and begin to panic for no reason.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Aspen</b>
You have a tendency to be rather critical of people and things around you. With such high standards, you find it difficult to accept others as they are and to find beauty in the world. It is really hard to find true contentment.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Beech</b>
You can't easily say "no" to other people. In a bid to please those around you, quite often you end up being taken advantage of and are prone to neglecting your own personal priorities and needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Centaury</b>
You know what you want to do but doubt your own judgment. You find it difficult to make any decisions without asking other people's opinion first.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Cerato</b>
You feel you are on the edge and about to lose control. Your fear is more to do with the fact that your mind feels over-strained to the point of being close to giving way (e.g. extreme temper or nervous breakdown)	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Cherry Plum</b>
You make the same mistakes over and over – never learning from them. You are hitting the same barriers over and over. You are forgetful.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Chestnut Bud</b>
Your love for your family makes it hard to let them go, almost to the point where you might become a little overbearing and possessive. Giving your love unconditionally can be very hard. You want others to be grateful for all you've done for them. You need love and attention so much that you become demanding and manipulative.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Chicory</b>
You are in a dream world or you spend much of your time with your head in the clouds. You lack concentration, believing that the future will be so much better than in the present. This state may have been brought about because of emotional or physical shock (e.g. trauma, difficult birth, abuse).	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Clematis</b>
You feel unclean or dislike something about yourself. You obsess over perceived physical defects (however big or small) or personal cleanliness. Or you may feel disgusted by natural body function (e.g. menstruation, sex or defecation) or dirty things (e.g. worms and bugs).	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Crab Apple</b>
You feel overwhelmed by your many responsibilities. Although you are a highly capable individual, you sometimes become overwhelmed with tasks at hand and doubt your ability to complete them. You have temporary feelings of inadequacy.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Elm</b>
You feel let down after a setback. Circumstances have caused you to become somewhat discouraged in life. Any setbacks make you feel doubtful and disheartened. This is the first stage of hopelessness.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Gentian</b>
You feel weighed down by feelings of hopelessness and you find it hard to see light at the end of the tunnel. You've lost faith in your abilities and you're exhausted from long hardship or illness and just want to give up. However, you can be persuaded to continue to try. You're inner wisdom (although faint) tells you that things are not completely beyond hope.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Gorse</b>
Your talkativeness leads to loneliness. You find yourself seeking the company of anyone (and everyone) just for someone to talk to. You are unhappy being alone and are prone to cornering people into lengthy one-sided conversations. Inside you are afraid of being alone and will do anything to avoid it.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Heather</b>
You feel wounded or attacked by others. Because you feel you are suffering -- a victim -- you want revenge. At times you feel suspicious, jealous or spiteful even when often these thoughts are completely unnecessary.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Holly</b>
Your mind is on the past rather the present and unable to enjoy what's going on around you. You reminisce and dwell on memories, believing that you will never be as happy as you were then. You are nostalgic or homesick.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Honeysuckle</b>
You put things off, feeling tired at the thought of starting work. That 'Monday morning feeling' makes you weary and unable to face up to the day's problems and responsibilities. You lack the enthusiasm to make any necessary changes in your life. It is the thought of what is ahead (more than physical exhaustion) that is the problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Hornbeam</b>
You feel impatient with the slow pace of people or things. You often prefer to work alone because you get frustrated when people or things aren't done to your speed or to your satisfaction. You hate the thought of wasting time and easily show it to others. Agitation may also come about from physical or emotional trauma.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Impatiens</b>
You lack any confidence in your skills. You do not consider yourself as good or as capable as those around you. You expect failure and so don't even make an attempt to succeed.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Larch</b>
You feel shy or anxious about something specific (e.g. tomorrow's speech, flying, thunder, spiders...). You know exactly what makes you anxious or afraid.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Mimulus</b>
You feel down in the dumps and don't know why. Quite out of the blue you feel as if a dark cloud has descended upon you. During this time, you find it impossible to be happy or cheerful. You may even feel suicidal.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Mustard</b>
You are a strong person who struggles on past the limits of strength. By character you are brave, strong and reliable. However, sometimes you push yourself too much or too hard and become over-tired. Instead of slowing down, you try to work through it which can often leave you even more exhausted and verging on depression.	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Oak</b>

*(Continue on next page)*

(Continued from previous )

Descriptions or statements to think about (continue)	Indicated essence	
You have suffered complete mental or physical exhaustion – so much so that you can hardly make any effort. This state may have been brought about by long illness, difficult labours or prolonged grief.	○	<b>Olive</b>
You have a habit of blaming yourself unnecessarily for things. You may even claim responsibility for mistakes which aren't yours. Even when you are successful, you think you could have done better and are never content.	○	<b>Pine</b>
You habitually feel anxious about somebody else's safety – often unnecessarily for no real reason.	○	<b>Red Chestnut</b>
You feel an extreme fear and panic about something. You are feeling acute, sheer terror.	○	<b>Rock Rose</b>
You drive yourself hard trying to set an example. You are very strict in your way of living and deny yourself many of the joys and pleasures of life because you consider it might interfere with work or your self-imposed high standards.	○	<b>Rock Water</b>
You can't make your mind up between two things. You see the pro's and con's of both and cannot come to a final decision. Or perhaps your moods are very changeable. You quickly swing between highs and lows or suddenly strike out at others without warning.	○	<b>Scleranthus</b>
You are suffering from the after-effects of a shock or from grief. These shocks may be mental or physical (e.g. results of accidents, bad news, bereavement or sudden disappointments). You may have delayed reactions or post-traumatic stress.	○	<b>Star of Bethlehem</b>
You feel despair when there is no hope left. You feel highly distressed. A sense of hopelessness makes you think that you could be close to breaking down. This state may follow bereavement.	○	<b>Sweet Chestnut</b>
Your enthusiasm or hyper-anxiety leads you to burn yourself out. You have very fixed principles and ideas. With great enthusiasm you try to convert those around you to your way of thinking.	○	<b>Vervain</b>
Sometimes you are a tyrant when you want to lead. You are very confident in your abilities and often think that it would be to the benefit of others if they were to do as you do.	○	<b>Vine</b>
Other people's ideas knock you off course. Although you have very definite ideals and ambitions of your own, quite often these are affected by the influences of others. Alternatively, you may be feeling very unsettled at times of change – new job, loss of a loved one. You have difficulty accepting change and moving on. [This essence can also be used to strengthen one's psyche or aura.]	○	<b>Walnut</b>
You like your own company but sometimes feel lonely. In general you prefer to be alone. You are sometimes perceived as aloof, you tend to leave people alone and like to go your own way.	○	<b>Water Violet</b>
Your mind is running over the same thing – constantly filled with thoughts, ideas and arguments which you wish weren't there. You find it hard to concentrate or sleep with this mental turmoil. You feel exhausted.	○	<b>White Chestnut</b>
You want to do something worthwhile but can't find your vocation. You have the skills and ambition to pursue a very fulfilling career, but you just cannot decide which direction to take. No occupation appeals above any other. You are not indecisive in other aspects of your life.	○	<b>Wild Oat</b>
You can't really be bothered. You find that you simply don't care much about what's going on around you. You're resigned to whatever happens and surrender to the struggle of life without complaint or real joy.	○	<b>Wild Rose</b>
You feel resentful and sorry for yourself. After suffering adversity or misfortune, you are now full of resentment. You have a tendency to feel sorry for yourself and might complain a lot or even hold your complaints inside. You begrudge the happiness and good fortune of others.	○	<b>Willow</b>

#### Flower Essence comparisons

<b>Aspen vs Mimulus vs Rock Rose</b>	The fears for Aspen are vague and unknown. Fears for Mimulus are specific and known. Rock Rose experiences sheer terror.
<b>Beech vs Vervain vs Vine</b>	Beech dominates because she is intolerant and critical. Vervain is a forceful fanatic who needs to convert. Vine needs to dominate full-stop.
<b>Cerato vs Scleranthus vs Wild Oat</b>	Cerato must find the answer from outside herself. Scleranthus will search for the answer from within. Wild Oat is uncertain only about her life's mission.
<b>Cherry Plum vs Mustard vs Sweet Chestnut</b>	Cherry Plum and Sweet Chestnut's depressions are triggered by life-shattering events, but Cherry Plum is more likely to be suicidal, whereas Sweet Chestnut tries to hide her distress from others (like Agrimony). Mustard's depression comes and goes like a black cloud with unknown triggers.
<b>Clematis vs Honeysuckle vs Walnut</b>	Clematis dreams of the future. Honeysuckle dreams of the past. Walnut wants to move away from the past, but finds it difficult to do so.
<b>Elm vs Hornbean vs Oak</b>	Elm's exhaustion is more temporary while Oak has experience prolonged stress and complete burn out. Hornbean's exhaustion is only from the thought of effort.
<b>Gentian vs Gorse vs Wild Rose vs Sweet Chestnut</b>	Gentian is the 1 <sup>st</sup> stage of hopelessness before despondency sets in. Gorse is the 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage where despondency is evident. Sweet Chestnut is the 3 <sup>rd</sup> stage there is utter despair. Wild Rose is the 4 <sup>th</sup> stage where depression and apathy have taken hold.
<b>Holly vs Walnut</b>	Holly is more apt to act out or express her feelings of being victimised than Walnut, who suffers in silence.