

# A Treatment Story

Emma came to see me over three years ago seeking relief from a host of ongoing medical symptoms. During the period of time we have worked together, she has had quite an eventful and sometimes traumatic life. Acupuncture has been vital to her as a support and as a guide. During Emma's journey, I have seen that when acupuncture is used over an extended period of time, the levels of healing get deeper and deeper. As this deepening happens, new vistas and possibilities can emerge for the client. With Emma, it has been a privilege and a teaching to be present for her changes and transformation.

Emma is an unusual person in many ways. She was extremely lonely as a very young child and, in her loneliness, she developed a close relationship with nature. Perhaps because of her sensitivity, she was able to experience her acupuncture treatments in an unusually clear and profound way. Emma has done no other therapies, either physical or emotional, during the entire time she has been doing acupuncture. This makes this case especially interesting to present. The changes I speaking of here are dramatic. Acupuncture, however, affects each person in unique ways and people change according to their individual styles

In March, 1982, Emma was diagnosed with a severe case of Graves' disease, a dysfunction of the thyroid. Doctors could not regulate her thyroid, so she underwent a thyroidectomy. During the surgery, however, the doctors damaged her parathyroids causing even further complications. For a period of time, her eyes protruded so much that she couldn't close them. She had surgery twice to correct this. When the first surgery was unsuccessful, a second operation had to be performed. Emma's physical appearance changed radically. She also lost 1/3 of her bone density because of this disease. In addition to the physical upheaval of the disease and the trauma caused by the mistakes made by her doctors, Emma felt emotionally overwhelmed.

Except for sore throats as a child, Emma had been remarkably healthy up until the Graves' disease. She had eaten well, and she had taken good care of herself on the physical level. By the time Emma came to see me, she was taking the medication prescribed by her doctors, yet she still was suffering from many of the effects of her illness. Her eyes would still swell when she went through emotional upheavals. She was quite fragile, and got exhausted easily. Her menstrual periods were extremely heavy, often with severe cramping.

Emma had an extremely difficult childhood in ways which will not be discussed in this article.

Suffice it to say that her childhood was profoundly disturbing. Emma turned to nature. She said, "I have been so alone so much of my life. Where I have gone is into nature. The birds have been a gift to me, and the wind is my closest friend. I know the wind so well -- all its different aspects. Rain and fog too are elemental for me."

As an adult, Emma worked for many years as an oncology nurse, but her true passion was learning about plants and animals. Her job in the hospital for many years supported her work in nature. Her passion led her in 1987 to a research station in Ecuador, in the Amazonian rain forest, where she has been going for three to six months of every year for the past six years. She has become a recognized authority about the birds of this area and is writing a book about them. She can identify hundreds of birds by their calls alone, and she spends days in the forest listening, watching, and recording the birds there. Emma truly found her niche in life when she began the bird work in Ecuador. She is happier there than anywhere.

Emma started acupuncture in early 1990, just after her 40th birthday. After eight years of using western medicine, she wanted to try something different. As she began acupuncture, she was open and ready to share her story during the Traditional Diagnosis. I could hear the pain both of her difficult physical situation and also the pain of the deep loneliness that she experienced.

When she came for her first treatment, I put in the needles to drain Aggressive Energy, a condition in which one's energy works against itself rather than flowing in an orderly, constructive manner. It is often a very strong treatment, rebalancing the entire basis of the flow of the energy. For Emma this treatment was practically overwhelming. In her words:

"It was extraordinary, for quite a few days. At first I was so euphoric, I felt like I had drunk a bottle of champagne. Everything was so dramatic and so stark. I was in another dimension. Things were standing out, so clear. Everything was emotional. Then it was like I had been given a sleeping potion. I couldn't lift my arms. I was so tired. I was like floating. After that I slept for two entire days. The next day I was cold all day. My skin felt so sensitive. This morning I feel really great, a burst of energy, feeling how much I love my friends, how much I love Vicki. I was going right off the charts. Then I got a little scared, wondering, if this is so powerful, what was going to happen next?"

Emma's response gave me good information about the work she and I would be doing together.

Her energy was clearly able to move quite easily; it wasn't stuck, frozen, or paralyzed. If anything, her energy showed a volatility, an ability to go up and down in a wide range. Diagnostically, I determined that Emma has Fire as her causative factor. A person with a Fire imbalance will often find her or himself with almost scary high's and then devastating lows, a fire that either is raging out of control, or a fire that almost goes out. The middle ground, the place from which a person can manage life most effectively, is the place where the fire blazes fully and strongly, but is not continuously in danger either of getting destructive or of going out. Balancing her highs and lows has been an ongoing theme in Emma's work with me.

Emma had weekly acupuncture treatments for six months before she returned to Ecuador for the next stage of her work with the birds. During this six months, her symptoms gradually improved. Her energy became steadier. She was less exhausted. There were times when her eyes were distinctly less swollen. Her periods became more normal. We were both pleased with her progress.

The mental and spiritual healing was as important as the physical healing that was taking place. In this period, Emma's and my relationship deepened. As her trust in me grew, and as she grew stronger, she could face more directly some of the pain of her childhood; she could tell me stories of old and deep wounds. When it was time for her to depart, I felt some fear about her going to this far-off place, spending time in the forest, often alone. I sensed her vulnerability and the importance of our new-found connection. Knowing that it was important to maintain our relatedness, I gave her one-half of a beautiful geode. I told her that I would be keeping the other half in my treatment room, so I would be linked to her. She let me know later how important this symbol of my caring was for her. People with Fire as a causative factor have often experienced hurts in their relationships that are difficult to heal. Rebuilding trust is an essential key for successful treatment.

When Emma returned to Maine, after three months in Ecuador, it turned out that my intuitive fear for her had been well founded. She had a horrible story to tell me. After a particularly wonderful time out in the forest by herself, she had returned to the research station feeling very joyous and peaceful. She was singing out loud. She was walking in an open, presumably perfectly safe area when she was accosted, raped, and beaten almost to the point of death. Her attacker pounded her head repeatedly into the ground. He bit her face and her body, trying to actually bite her ear off. After he left her, she crawled nearly a mile for help. She was taken to the nearest hospital. She was unrecognizable with all the damage to her face and head. She had a severe concussion and a broken rib. She lost vision in one eye and suffered nerve damage in

one ear. With acupuncture support and time, the vision now has returned to the eye, and her ear is slowly healing but the damage causes frequent floaters in her eye. She described the man who did this to her as "a crazed man, he was like a demon."

When I first saw Emma after the attack, she was still in a state of disbelief and shock about the horrors that had happened to her. She described the whole thing as surreal. She was in a lot of physical pain, and she could hardly sleep. She was afraid to leave her house. I did a very strong treatment, the Seven Dragons, which is used to bring relief and healing in a situation as incomprehensible as this one. Emma said that she felt totally herself when she woke up the morning after the treatment. This was a major opening for her on her healing journey. Clearly there was also a long way to go. For the next three months, she continued to go up and down. She found herself reliving her whole life, thinking about the sad and difficult relationships she had had with men. She saw the ways she chose men who were incapable of loving her the way she deserved to be loved, and who hurt her badly. At one point Emma described herself: "I'm not putting up with being treated badly by anyone anymore. I feel like I'm crashing through barricades. I feel like an erupting volcano." The fire in her deepest self was finding its way to the surface. She was working on healing herself in many different arenas all at the same time. Acupuncture can be like that, bringing healing at multiple levels in our lives. As we heal a present wound, old wounds also come into focus and have an opportunity to heal.

Sometimes the acupuncture seemed to be facilitating a process that had a life of its own; at those times I did simple treatments to support Emma's changes. At other times I could see a direct relationship between the choice of very specific, strong points which I needled and the response Emma would have. For quite a while after the rape, Emma was plagued with terrifying nightmares. Frequently she would wake up and cry and cry. After one particularly awful bout with excruciating nights, I treated the entry point and the exit point of the Conception Vessel (CV 1 and CV 24). These very powerful points bring healing when our deepest vulnerability has been ravaged, as certainly was the case with Emma. I also did the first point on the Heart meridian, the pathway of the Supreme Controller (I 1). This point, whose name is Utmost Source, can give a feeling of relationship with something larger than our personal lives. This treatment was a turning point for Emma. Her nightmares diminished significantly. The dark terror of the rape began to subside. When I saw her again, she reported, "After the treatment I felt so much calmer, more connected. I felt better than I had felt in weeks."

Amazingly enough, three months after the rape, Emma was able to return to Ecuador to continue gathering information about the birds. She wanted to be in the forest to identify the birds during

every season of the year. Her stay there was very emotional. She found herself needing to be with people; she didn't want to be alone. Because of the hurt Emma had experienced in her childhood, her capacity to trust other people had been damaged. Ironically, in her healing from the rape, she found herself thrust into a time when she had to reach out for support. Her acupuncture treatments were helping her open to the possibility of relationship. This new-found turning to others to help her was another part of her healing.

During the next year, Emma spent half her time in Ecuador and half in the U.S., and she began the difficult work of writing up the information she had been gathering about the birds over the past six years. As part of her passionate nature, and also reflective of her Fire element, she continued to have big high's and big low's. She spoke about this year as being a time of incredible mourning about the past 10 years, the period since the onset of her Graves' disease. The rape had been cataclysmic, shattering her life into a thousand pieces. She experienced her walls falling all around her. As her healing progressed, she was able to see her own life as part of a larger picture and to have a vision of herself being of service to others. Before leaving for one more trip to Ecuador, she said to me: "It gets firmer in me, that I am to live a simple life, so others may simply live; that I am to be aware of the suffering in the world; that I am to see my part, which is substantial; and that I want to be calmer so I can be more effective." Here, Emma shows a new self-respect and confidence which develop further as she faces the next crisis.

In 1992 Emma witnessed terrible destruction to her beloved Ecuador. She found that Petro Ecuador, the state oil company, was systematically invading her beautiful rain forest. They had arrived on the scene to dig test wells to eventually exploit Ecuador's newly discovered black gold. With their helicopters and explosions and chain saws, they cut through the forests. They didn't see the birds. Emma was overwhelmed with pain. Then, one day, things got even worse. She went down to a wonderful pond near the research station. She was talking with a local man when suddenly she heard a huge explosion. The pond had been dynamited, and she saw all its contents erupting into the air like a geyser. Some of the people from the area had resorted to this massive destruction as an easy way to get fish to eat, ruining the area for years to come. With the oil frenzy, some people in the Amazon basin are getting access to dynamite and are using it mindlessly, learning the same disrespect for life that the oil companies exhibit.

Emma could not handle the pain she felt about this. She saw that this destruction was symbolic of what was happening to the whole planet. For her this was the last straw; it was too much for her. She came home with an unshakable pneumonia and a feeling of utter devastation. She told me, "I feel like I've come back from a war zone, from a battle. How these people have suffered,

just from being poor." She described herself as having descended into blackness.

Once again I used the power of the Seven Dragons treatment, responding to the depth of the loss Emma was experiencing. She had been so low for the first few weeks after her return that the relief she felt after the treatment was exhilarating to her. She said,

"This was the most extraordinary week of my whole life. Within an hour after arriving home after the treatment, I was screaming and I didn't know if I would ever stop. My neighbors came in to find out what was wrong. I went through hell. Then, the next day, it was astounding — I felt my spirit come back. It came flooding back. After the treatment, I woke up and realized what had happened to me — my spirit had left me. It was so sad. I cried and cried, thinking how many people have lost their spirits. I couldn't contain myself. I was filled with hope. I was just light. My whole spirit was filling me up. Now, I am so excited about writing about the birds. I realize that a drowning person can't save another drowning person. I can't do my work till I'm healed."

Since that time, Emma's physical and emotional strength have deepened. She says things like, "I'm doing the bird work full speed ahead. I'm exhausted, but happy. I'm like a steam roller. I'm back on the planet. I'm finding my old self that was always there. I'm a gem." Working eight to ten hours a day, she has finished the entire manuscript for her book and is returning to Ecuador soon for final revisions. During this period, Emma also has done important healing work with both her mother and her father. She is no longer so physically or emotionally vulnerable. She feels a stability in herself she has never known.

Emma and will continue to do the acupuncture work. She came to see me to work on the effects of the Graves' disease, yet each step has led her to deeper levels of healing. For some, the process would have been complete after a certain physical healing had been attained. For Emma, more has been gained from her perseverance. The ongoing partnership represented in her work with me still has forward movement. Watching the process unfold has sometimes left me breathless with the rapidity of the change that treatment has brought. Other times, her healing seems to move with difficult slowness. Through it all, I realize what an incredible privilege it has been for me to work with Emma, to be a witness to her healing journey.

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