

# Integrating coaching skills into homeopathic practice

by Jo Permaul MARH



After a career in education and having taken remedies since the age of 13, Jo retrained as a homeopath and graduated from the School of Shamanic Homeopathy in 2014. Following this, Jo took a diploma in holistic life coaching, as she was searching for a robust qualification in coaching that enabled her love of astrology, tarot and spiritual health to be taken seriously. She then coached Well-being Advisors for Weleda, during which time she saw how coaching can inspire action and thoughtfulness in other therapists, and knew then that coaching could be adapted to support her clients. She integrates homeopathy, coaching and intuitive readings into her work and is also an Associate Tutor at Wellness Professionals at Work, where she studied. She now teaches coaching skills and develops courses that are accredited by the Association of Coaching, the NCIP and the CMA.

**I love being a homeopath, it has fascinated me since the age of 13, when I had treatment for eczema. My own journey as a homeopath has been shaped by this fascination with the vital force – what, once we ignite it, do we do with it? What is our true potential and how do we know when we are living it? How do we access those answers within ourselves?**

**I also saw that, when some clients became able to fully embrace and acknowledge this catalysing energy, they were after further support, having built rapport and established a good ‘know, like, trust’ factor with the homeopath. They wanted more than homeopathy, they needed coaching and I wanted to do it properly, so I studied for a qualification – a diploma in holistic life coaching skills. Nothing prepared me for how integrating coaching would explode my business and change me as a person. Combining homeopathy and coaching became a deeper dive into the relationship between mind, body and spirit, looking at how to move forwards with practicable steps, bringing the everyday and ordinary into the extraordinary.**

Dealing with the emotional problem is necessary, but not necessarily sufficient: resolving emotional problems gets rid of emotional disturbance; dealing with practical problems leads to self-actualisation and improvement in the person’s quality of life. Both are important. (Walen et al, 1992)

In March 2020 we entered unusual times. My homeopathy practice was busy, I’d emailed all clients about self-care and immunity, but what I didn’t realise was how much I’d be called upon to support my clients in a coaching capacity. They were looking for practical support and wanted to discuss things with someone outside the household dynamic.

Topics covered included:

- help with how to structure a day
- what to do with a business
- helping other therapists to come up with website ideas
- how to leave a relationship
- where to start with writing a book

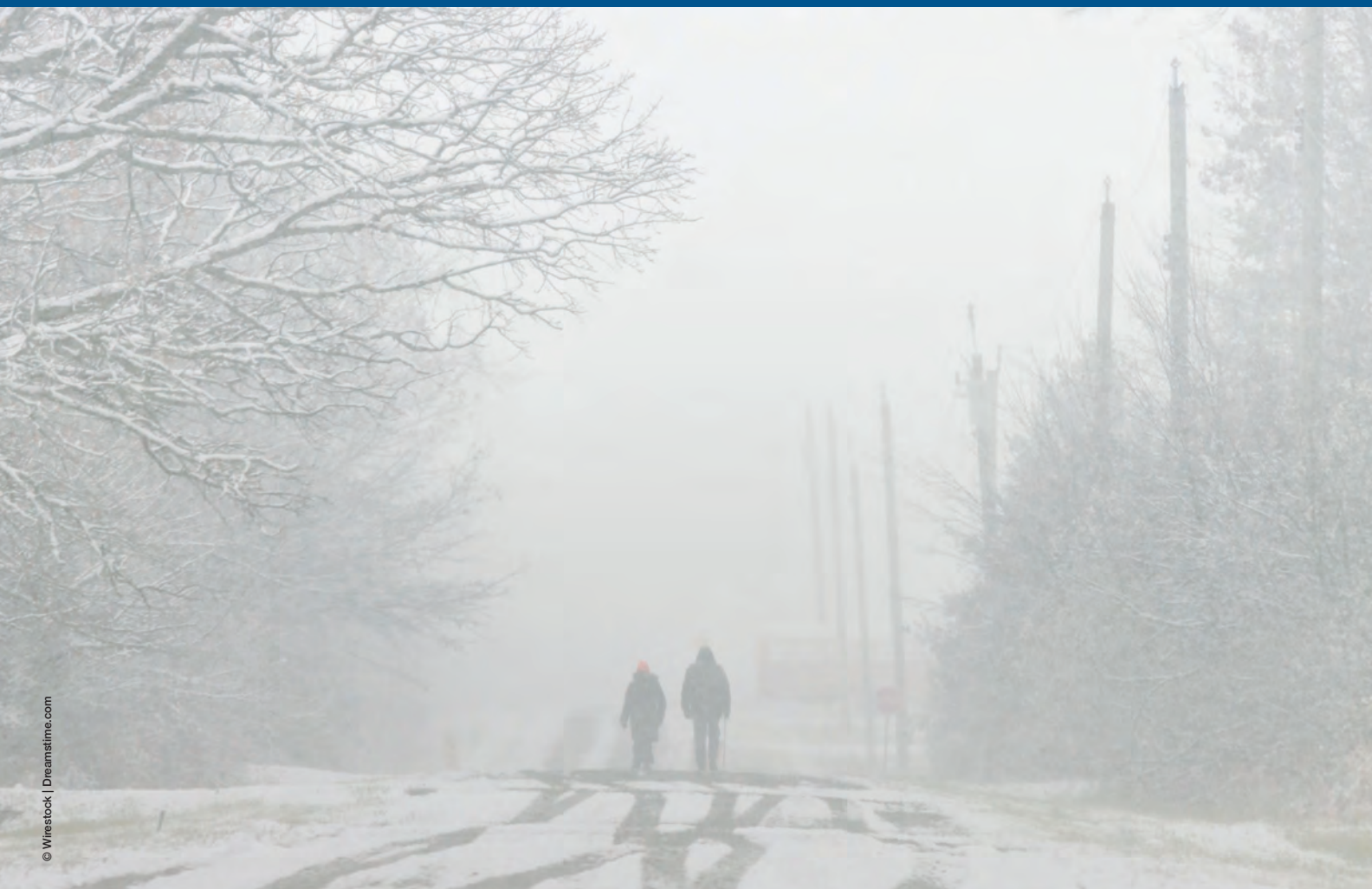
- what avenues of study to take
- how to break through procrastination
- how to improve your mindset.

This was such interesting and fascinating work and complemented my love of variety found within homeopathy. I felt fulfilled as a practitioner, seeing people take remedies and make steps, no matter how large or small, to reaching their own potential.

## What is coaching?

Coaching is having collaborative conversations with impact. It is being able to explore what is on your mind with someone who doesn’t belittle your grand plans, tell you that you are crazy, provide their own agenda or bias, and it is an arena to be yourself. Coaching is held within a safe space and whether for 10 minutes or two hours, the effect of the conversation will have resounding impact.

Coaching is solution-focused. It’s enabling clients to come up with their own answers, to dig deep and explore



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everything that is on their mind in a safe, non-judgemental space in which the coach listens, clarifies and then asks questions designed to stimulate further discussion looking at advantages of actions, potential obstacles or limitations. Rick Ridgeway said: ‘The best journeys in life are those that answer questions you never thought to ask’.

Coaching is acknowledging your own self-responsibility in determining your actions, it is purpose-led, action-oriented, goal-driven, future-based and focuses on where you want to be, ultimately being the best version of yourself. It gets us to challenge our own mindsets, limiting beliefs and pushing ourselves out of our comfort zone, that safe space where we can function but not grow. Coaching allows us to fully access our vital force, our deepest dreams and desires, and then put them into action. It’s an inspiring and uplifting process.

A collaborative coach believes in the ability of the individual to create

ideas, decide for themselves and move their situation forward. (Rosengren, 2009)

Of course, one has to work with someone who is ‘coaching-ready’.

So who might that person be?

- Someone who wants to make changes; someone who wants to get themselves unstuck, out of a place of stagnation.
- Someone with motivation and big dreams, but lacks confidence to put them into practice.
- Someone suffering with overwhelm, anxiety, fear and a history of making mistakes.
- Someone who wants the time and space for themselves; they value themselves but don’t know where to begin. They have a deep knowing they have the capacity to do something bigger, better, brighter and more fulfilling.

In short, a potential client is someone who is unsure where to start and feels overwhelmed: Neenan and Dryden

### **We homeopaths are taking our clients on a journey**

(2013) describe this as the five traps:

- 1 Not being able to take action until you are comfortable.
- 2 Not being able to take action until you have a sense of control.
- 3 Not being able to act differently because you do not feel competent yet.
- 4 Not being able to take new action because you do not feel confident to do so.
- 5 Not being able to do things which seem risky because you lack the courage to do so.

We homeopaths use remedies to aid our clients to feel some or all of the above, so that they are then able to move forwards.

How do you get a client to a place of being coaching-ready? In essence, if a client is dwelling on the past and refusing to make changes they are not coaching-ready. They need support and, in my opinion, remedies or therapy. This is where the combination of homeopathy and coaching can work ▸



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▷ symbiotically; we can take the case and then allow the healing to happen, while letting a client know that if they want to have some coaching it is available when they are ready.

So we are taking them on a journey, from symptom to solution. Your client needs to come from a place of emotional maturity and self-management. If they would benefit from counselling then they are definitely not coaching-ready. Homeopaths may benefit from referring clients to the National Council of Integrative Psychotherapists (NCIP) until they are coaching-ready.

An ideal scenario would be a client who says ‘I accept that x happened, I can’t change it, but I don’t want to live like that anymore; I am ready and open to new and exciting changes’.

### Case studies

#### Case 1 – Ann

Ann is in her mid-sixties and nearing retirement. I have seen her for three years and she has had remedy support for anxiety-induced asthma (*Argentum nitricum* 3M, *Tabacum* 30c, as well as regular *Arsenicum album* in

ascending potencies during COVID), and post-menopausal hot flushes (homeobotanicals F+/ Marina and Emotional blends).

She has been delighted with homeopathy as it has meant she no longer uses an asthma pump. She recognises the triggers for her anxiety and takes a regular blend of homeobotanicals and homeopathic remedies to keep her calm and control her anxiety, responding to *Pulsatilla* 200c+ *Chamomilla* 6x as a combination for acute anxiety.

Her stress is mainly induced by her husband and her ageing mother, who live in other countries, and her inability to be with her loved ones at the drop of a hat. She is hugely fearful of COVID as it would mean she could not travel.

I asked if she would like to do a block of six coaching sessions to help her with strategies for coping with anxiety at this challenging time. During this working relationship we have managed to:

- Explore a retirement strategy that enables her to live part-time in the UK and part-time in South Africa.

**In March 2020 we entered unusual times: Regent Street, London in lockdown**

She has created actionable tasks to tick off to enable her to get to the position she desires. This has included her talking about her ideas for part-time, self-employed work, sounding out an idea for a self-employed business, talking about her fears about caring for her in-laws.

- Delve into the actual financial worries she has about leaving the UK job. We looked at the anxiety-inducing triggers, her limiting beliefs about pensions, working

**We are taking our clients on a journey, from symptom to solution**

hours and why she holds on to the safety net of a job she doesn't want to do at her age.

- Spend two sessions just getting her to come up with coping strategies to help with her own faulty thinking using a cognitive behavioural coaching approach. For example, 'I think of something and then I have this voice saying "you can't do this"'. This can be illustrated by her having the time and space to admit that, since her husband has been in the UK (post-lifting of COVID travel restrictions), she hadn't even been to a café to have a drink with him because she was afraid of COVID/germs. Her homework that week was self-set; she decided that she would go to café and have a drink. In fact, she ended up enjoying herself so much she went to the pub too!

After each session I got a text telling me how much she got out of it, and our homeopathic relationship continued with her knowing we can have an ad hoc coaching session should she need it.

#### **Case 2 – Penny**

Penny is in her late 50s, a mother of young adult children who are both about to flee the nest. She felt the loss of her relationship as a mother with

live-in children. She was desperate to make changes to improve her life but had no one to bounce ideas around with.

She initially booked in for homeopathy, but after a discovery call decided that coaching was a better option for her right now as her frustration lay with having no plans or actions in place, and she felt working towards goals would relieve some of her physical symptoms. She had been recommended by a friend.

**Session 1** – We explored how she was feeling, limiting beliefs and where she would like to be (in a new house, with space for the kids to come home, doing work that inspired her). I used visualisation activities to support her.

**Session 2** – We looked at resources she would need to get her there, explored her financial situation and how her current job could support her to get to where she wanted to be. During this session it became apparent that she actually enjoyed and valued her job. The overwhelm she had felt when unable to discuss the topic with anyone had clouded her judgement.

**Session 3** – We discussed strategies for her to step into her power, such as reclaim the space she has in her current home; get rid of her ex-husband's stuff; create a set of house rules for her children to enable them to see her

as a legitimate house-sharer, not just a mum who picks up the pieces; and re-establish a sense of calm after the chaos of her partner leaving.

**Session 4** – Now calmer times prevail she has been able to explore her feelings about the transition and change management she is undergoing. We explored and looked at journalling techniques to be used as coping strategies.

#### **Case 3 – long-term homeopathic client**

This patient was a woman in her late 60s, a cancer patient. She had avoided any chemo or allopathic care for breast cancer, seeking homeopathy and a range of other alternative therapies to take her through a challenging journey. She wanted to do things completely her way. Her long-term condition required her to constantly evaluate what she could and couldn't do, and coaching was an effective tool for her to evaluate and assess her limitations on both a physical and emotional level. We met for a few sessions of coaching outdoors and would walk through the forest each week using nature as a backdrop for our conversations.

Coaching allowed her the space to be held safely, to offload her worries and be challenged on her thinking. ▷

**Jo and a client would talk while walking through a forest**



▷ She enjoyed the time in which she could plan things she was not able to discuss with her long-term partner, to explore ideas that no-one else would have wanted to explore with her because she was dealing with cancer in a particular way.

Nature enabled a flow of conversation, natural pause points along the way, the use of metaphors such as seasonal changes, and the act of walking and talking meant she could say things without directly looking me in the eye.

I often posted a remedy after the session to help with the emotion explored (*Natrum muriaticum* regularly as well as *Carcinosin*, *Staphysagria* and *Lac humanum*) or she might pick up a Bach Flower remedy on her way home from a local health food shop.

For her the complete luxury of having space to be herself and to speak her truth on a regular basis in a non-judgemental environment was the healing.

**Case 4 – Teenage girl studying for GCSEs**

This young lady had been struggling to focus in class as she was too heavily involved in the drama of being a teenager and the popularity that came with knowing everyone in her year group. Remedies had taken her to a place of knowing that she wanted to do well and that time was running out yet, when it came to practical solutions, she was at loggerheads with parents and disliked teachers and their ‘patronising attitudes’. I’d known her since she was in primary school, having prescribed remedies for the whole family, and had a good rapport with them all.

In coaching sessions we were able to set up a to-do-list for her to complete before arriving at a lesson; tactics for ignoring gossip in lessons and a self-governing reward system if she got her work done. Together we created an after-school revision plan. She also decided to look at the disrespectful

language she used with her parents, which in turn eased relations all round! She integrated remedies such as *Arg nit 200c*, *Lycopodium 30c* and *Rescue Remedy* pastilles in to her revision timetable to help with nerves, and did well as a result.

A remedy catalyses something deep within. How do you work with that?

**Tools coaches can use:**

**Visualisation and imagery** – Great for when a client is unable to imagine future-based goals. Getting them to use guided meditation, visualisation such as thinking where they might be in one year / five years’ time, and to think about the steps they could take to get there.

**Scaling questions** – Asking a client where they rank themselves in terms of satisfaction of a goal. Perhaps if they say they are at a 5 out of 10 we might ask them what is holding them back from being a 10/10 and then explore those options.

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**Transference** – Putting yourself in someone else’s shoes to see the problem from a different perspective. How does the issue shift? What might you need to do now?

**Transactional analysis model** – Looking at whether they use a parent / child or adult voice in the exploration of how they feel or how they respond to a situation; then asking the client to try approaching it from a different perspective.

**Cognitive behavioural coaching** – Reframing limiting or faulty behaviours to more positive outcomes using step-by-step models to break old patterns.

**Lists, goal setting and planning techniques** – Sitting with clients to help them actually plan out how they will get from A to B, getting them to read aloud SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals and then act as an accountability buddy for them so they get done what they want to achieve.

**Drawing, art, creative tasks** – Integrating creativity into a session can bring astounding results and often say much more than words.

**Role play and imaginary conversations spoken out loud** – Many clients will fully immerse themselves in this, enjoying the chance to practise conversations they may have with a boss, a loved one or someone they wish to break up with, giving them confidence.

**Letter-writing and journalling techniques** – Helping your clients find ways to express themselves on paper and to find cathartic release to pent up emotions. A coach can offer a whole range of techniques.

**Miracle questions** – One of my favourite techniques; to imagine a miracle bestows them and then discuss how they got to where they want to be. Great for turning an idea into a reality!

**Motivational interviewing** – A great technique for inspiring support with long-term health conditions.

Miller and Rollnick (2002) described a client-centred, empathic approach to working with people as a ‘fundamental and defining characteristic’ of Motivational Interviewing. Clinicians express this principal through

the skilful use of reflective listening and an attitude of acceptance of the client’s feelings and perspectives. (Rosengren, 2009)

### Types of coaching:

Thinking about what kind of coaching you might like to offer as part of your modalities depends very much on you, your background and your own passions. Courses available include wellness coaching, life coaching, holistic life coaching, resilience coaching, health coaching, transformational coaching, and health coaching; you can also find courses with a religious context, such as Christian coaching. Then there’s the more business-style corporate coaching or career coaching. In short, you can find courses to suit whatever approach you wish to use.

If you are thinking of adding coaching to your bow you might like to consider the following:

- Who are your ideal clients? What might they benefit from?
- Do you want a more general set of skills such as life coaching that you can adapt, or something highly specific such as grief or career coaching?

### Benefits of integrating coaching into your homeopathic practice

- 1 Your client likes you, they trust you, they value your guidance and facilitation and you have a good connection. They remain loyal to you.
- 2 You can create packages, for example a six-week ‘Reduce Anxiety’ package, which can include homeopathy and coaching. The management of long-term health conditions such as anxiety, depression, diabetes, cancer, fibromyalgia or other auto-immune conditions has been shown to dramatically reduce symptoms. You can get paid in a lump sum.
- 3 You can go deeper with your clients. They explore things they may not have even admitted to themselves yet, which can then inform your homeopathic work and remedy selection.
- 4 Your client wants a new outlook and you can provide it.

# Remedies can only do so much. Coaching can only do so much. But together the marriage is powerful

- 5 You can also create group programmes such as ‘A women’s group’ coaching package for menopausal women. This strengthens your niche.

Remedies can only do so much. Coaching can only do so much. But together the marriage is powerful, helping people reach new heights of mental, emotional and physical well-being thus accessing their vital force, true potential and enabling them to embrace change in a hugely positive way that ripples out across the whole family. This is working with future timelines and, in essence, having a profound impact.

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