

## Teenagers-Fabulous creatures in disguise - November 2003

by Mary Aspinwall, ISHom, PCH



### **Who are you and how did you come to be living in my house?**

Over the past decade as a homeopath I have seen my fair share of teenage clients. Some come of their own accord wanting a magic wand waved over their acne, period pains, or exam nerves. More often, though, they are brought in by an unhappy parent who wants a magic wand waved over their rule-breaking, terrible dress sense, insolence, and idleness! The question is this: are these symptoms a suitable case for treatment? If so who should receive treatment: the teenager, the grown-up, or both?

### **Metamorphosis**

Let's face it—the flies in the ointment of teenage paradise are the grown-ups. In no particular order, parents, teachers, career advisors, ministers of the church, ID checkers, and officers of the law all want to rain on the teenage parade. It's as if they either can't remember what they got up to as teenagers or else they remember all too well!

I myself stand on the very brink of turning into a fly in the ointment. My daughter is almost twelve and is already arguing the merits of hair dye and body piercing and giving me the benefit of her many opinions. She deplores my carnivorous diet and I, nodding sagely, have flashbacks to the days when I fed my own long-suffering parents seaweed rolls and nut cutlets. She questions my lifestyle choices from the point of view of an intelligent being with a fully formed social conscience: "Why have you bought this stuff in plastic packaging?" "Surely we could make room for a second cat from the Animal Refuge?" "Why are you always so busy? When will you ever slow down and smell the roses?" She is right to ask. Somewhere along the line I have lost the plot.

Unfettered teenagers often have admirable priorities. They are passionate about justice, world peace, caring for the environment and free expression. They are passionate with one another.

### **The heat is on**

To everything there is a season and the teenage years are Spring heading at full tilt into Summer. They are all about expansion, experimentation and preparing to fully enter and engage with the world. To this end most teenagers are building up a head of steam and most grown-ups are intent on putting the lid on it. At best this buys the grown-ups a little time, but at the expense of turning the average teenager into something of a pressure cooker!

### **The Circle of Life**

Our teenagers want to be free and we are understandably scared and, dare I say it, a little envious. So we treat our teenagers with the opposite of freedom. The medicine comes in various guises: early bedtimes, curfews, groundings, vetting friends, loads of school work (and telling them their very futures depend upon doing it), and after-school clubs galore. We chauffeur them everywhere for fear their face will end up either on the FBI's most-wanted list or on the side of a milk carton. Yet you know and I know that teenagers will always want to be free, because that is their default setting.

With the trend of having children in our late thirties and even forties, many teenagers will now have parents in their late forties and fifties. This life-stage comes with its own default setting. We are slowing down, cooling off, contracting, and seeking out security and certainty.

To live harmoniously with people who have radically different default settings from our own is always challenging. In Nature, the elements and the seasons all have their parts to play in the Circle of Life and we curtail and suppress any part of that beautiful cycle at our peril.\*

### **A mama's dark secrets**

Last week I paid a long overdue visit to the place where I misspent my youth. I returned to the river I used to stroll by whilst I should have been in church. I mourned the loss of the smoky little café where I used to hang out for hours after school with friends. I drove past the lovely old house where I had my first passionate love affair, the very same place where my friends and I were threatened with arrest for playing the Sex Pistol's "God Save the Queen" at full volume from an open window during a local street party to celebrate Her Majesty's 25th year on the throne. I remembered the unstoppable lust for life I had back then. Ah! Happy Days indeed.

### **These fabulous creatures**

Let us pay homage to these fabulous creatures, teenagers, for not only are they most excellent at lying in bed, they also know how to live with passion and how to put the world to rights. The question is do we know how to let them? Can we in the busy, squirreling Autumn of our lives stand aside and take pleasure in watching the sap rising? If we can't, then should we be surprised when our teenagers become "economical with the truth" and choose not to call upon our hard-won wisdom, gleaned from the many mistakes of our own glory days?

\* I am grateful to Jeremy Sherr and his teacher Joseph Reeves for their teachings on The Circle and the Four Elements for informing my views on this subject.

For those interested in exploring some of the points raised here about raising teenagers I'd like to recommend a new book called *Harlemville*, a photographic record of two years in a New York State Steiner community, and The Teenage Liberation Handbook by Grace Llewelyn.

### **About the author:**

Mary Aspinwall studied at the London College of Homeopathy and is a Dynamis School graduate. She is a Registered member of the Irish Society of Homeopaths. In 1992 she designed the best-selling Helios Double Helix homeopathic medicine kits for home use, foreign travel, and childbirth and wrote *A Basic Guide to Homeopathy*. She now has a large, busy holistic health center in the South West of Ireland, teaches for the Irish School of Homeopathy, and together with her saintly husband runs [www.homeopathyworld.com](http://www.homeopathyworld.com). You can read more of her cases and articles there.