

American Bald Eagle: *Haliaeetus Leucocephalus*

By Sheryl Conran-Brown



Haliaeetus leucocephalus,
American bald eagle

Trapped between two worlds: the mundane and the spiritual. A woman of Native American ancestry finds her inner freedom through the bald eagle

The presenting symptoms are mid-cycle menstrual migraines and headaches at the onset of menses in a female aged 35. Headaches are worse when she gets angry and also when she bears down to pass a stool. She experiences some breast tenderness before her menses. She hates having periods; the premenstrual state really "drags her down". She is ameliorated when bending her head forward: she gets a "whooshing" sensation in her brain. The headaches started five years ago, after falling from her horse. She fell forward onto her spine, shooting her head forward. Despite her injury she carried on with her normal life. She was not given any treatment for the whiplash. She also suffers from a recurring sinusitis; the catarrh has the odour of putrid vegetation.

The patient is a tall, slim, attractive woman, with dark hair and skin that tans easily. Her eyes are very striking; they are large, brown, shining and piercing. Her colouring and facial features are inherited from her great-great-great-grandmother, who was a Native American Indian, of the Blackfoot tribe. She maintains eye contact, gestures a lot, and is articulate. She is not someone who would be forgotten easily.

She decided, at the age of seven, to become a nurse. She wanted to take care of people. In her early teens, her parents went through a marital crisis; she was 'piggy-in-the-middle', the mediator between her parents. She felt as if she was being pulled apart.

Once she reached puberty, she experienced a sensation of suppression: her parents held her back, purely because she was female. She was not allowed to do the things that her brother was given permission to do; she was given very little praise, and was constantly compared with him. She was very unhappy about her physical appearance as she felt that her thighs were huge and heavy. Her father and brother used to tease her about them unmercifully until she screamed at them, in anger and frustration, to stop. They continued. It has taken her a long time to get over the teasing and to learn to love her body.

She has a lot of issues with her mother who was, and still is, overprotective. She felt she was not allowed to grow up. The family did not listen to

her; she sometimes still feels that people do not hear her clearly. She had to be seen to be a 'good girl' and became the family caretaker: "Good Old J...". She cried when she repeated this phrase. She had to suppress herself in order to conform to what they wanted her to be. The family did not trust her to be able to make her own decisions.

Leaving home to train as a nurse gave her a sense of freedom: she loved it. She was a very good nurse: very empathic to the needs of the patients, and always willing to put on a smiling face, even when she did not feel like doing so.

She is married with one son. On the surface, her marriage is a good one. Her husband is a good, kind man; they have a nice home, no financial worries, and a good lifestyle. She is determined to allow her son the freedom to grow up to be himself. She does not want to constrain him or to have any imposition placed upon who he is. She loved being pregnant, but the birth was traumatic; her son was born by ventouse extraction. She suffered from a rectal/vaginal fissure afterwards that took three surgical attempts to repair. She knew the third attempt would be successful: "I willed myself to get better, I just knew I would."

She became very aware of her own mortality after her son was born. She developed a great fear of dying under the anaesthetic. She was ill afterwards "but I didn't die". The riding accident exacerbated the fear once again. She has totally changed the way she views life, and regards this as the beginning of her spiritual growth. She has looked at herself in minute detail: her thoughts, attitudes and motivations. She is "brutally honest" with herself. She realises that she is on a journey, and is eager to go travelling. She is very keen and determined to achieve whatever it is that she needs to do in life. Her commitment to 'the journey' remains, despite the fear that it could mean she will not be available for her husband and son, or that she will move away from them.

This is a highly emotive time for her, as she has become friendly with, and attracted to, a man she has met on one of the workshops she has been attending. "He's into the spiritual stuff. I feel very positive and good about myself when I'm with him. But I don't want to hurt my husband or lose my son."

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Case Analysis

The main issue for the patient, at this time, is one of suppression of the self. First there was the over-protective suppression of her wants and needs as a child. Later there was the suppression of the self in a desire to fit in with the family's image of how she should be. She took on the family role of carer and followed her mother into a nursing career. Although she has begun to assert the need for her own identity, this need has been tempered by the desire also to take care of her family and those around her. Taking into account these facts, the ailments at ovulation, and at the onset of the menses, the remedy prescription was *Folliculinum* 200 (night, morning, and night).

In between taking the initial case and the first follow-up, I attended a study day and learnt about Rajan Sankaran's method of case taking and analysis. I was eager to try it out, and decided to use the method (which involves paying close attention to the patient's body movements, use of language, and gestures, in order to find the theme or essence of the case - and thus the remedy).

First Follow-Up: One Month After Prescription

She had a period since the last visit, with some breast tenderness a couple of days before her menses. No migraines, headaches or constipation. Felt so much better after her period. She is feeling well physically, but has lots of issues with her husband. He has always been possessive and jealous; she had to shut herself down and to be careful not to pay too much attention to any other men. He is scared by what is happening in her life, the changes she is making, and the direction she is taking and he has become more restrictive and clingy as a result. He treats her "like a labourer on one of his building sites". The marriage is staid and restrictive - "It's a trap". She talks of constraint and constriction: he ties her down. She has a strong desire to escape, to be free, and to be alone. Her husband compares her with her sister-in-law who is seen to be the perfect wife and mother. She hates it and "fights back with fierce criticism". She challenges him to see how she has grown. He says: "You can't just go off, all airy-fairy, to different places."

She is feeling swamped by her roles, especially that of "mother". She wants to escape, "to fly the nest", but she does not know how to take the next step. She realises that she was smothered as a child, hampered by all the rules, and she does not know how to be free. She has been a lot more emotional, sad and crying. She has not felt like herself, has felt all "heady". She needs to find a balance.

Case Analysis

The *Folliculinum* has re-balanced the hormonal cycle, as evidenced by the improvement in the premenstrual physical symptoms. More importantly, she is now able to see, feel, and discuss the real issues that are causing a state of disease in her life. The sense of constraint and the deep, urgent desire for freedom is marked. She needs to be able to be herself. She feels tied down and caught between her old life and the new. The themes and issues of this case are those of the animal kingdom. The issues are ones of acceptance, self-image, survival, and of having to fight to be who she is. The patient is animated, expressive and vivid in her appearance, gestures and speech.

A bird remedy was chosen because of the patient's need for freedom and her need to journey on the spiritual path. She also displays the avian desire for open air, the central pathological focus on the spine, the visual acuity (both physical - the

optician commented on her exceptionally acute vision; and symbolic - she examines herself in minute detail), and her intuitive nature. Bird remedies have issues about freedom, suffocation, openness, being trapped, soaring high and low, and looking after young ones. Often a feeling of vulnerability, especially when young, is noted.

The specific bird remedy chosen was the bald eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*. It has the sensation of being trapped and of existing between two worlds, (the prosaic, mundane and the intuitive spiritual), the sinus obstruction, the neck and back symptoms, and the need to be seen by her family for who she really is. The bald eagle is a potent symbol for the Native American Indian; the patient looks like a Native American Indian and has her ancestors' intuitive abilities.

Prescription: *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* 1M

Second Follow Up: One Month Later

A few days after taking the remedy she became very emotional. She felt very depressed and unsure of herself. She did not know what she wanted, whether to leave her husband or not. "I felt like a bag of poo." She wept copiously and asked for spiritual help. She was very confused about whether she was doing the right thing. A few days later she was helping her son with his homework, and asked him to be aware of the space on the paper. She suddenly became very angry and went upstairs to beat her pillow. She shouted "No!" angrily and beat the bed. She was amazed at how much rage she got rid of and how strong it was. (Whilst she was talking about the anger she made, "talon" motions with her hands.) She thought about what had happened and realised that the space on the paper represented the space and freedom that she was being denied.

She had a long talk with her husband and explained how much she was attracted to the other man and why. She also explained about how trapped she felt within the marriage. Her husband was shocked but he listened to her. They talked at length. It was a very positive conversation; they both got a lot of issues out into the open. Her husband is a very reserved man; it was the first time he had even discussed, in any depth, how he felt, and what was happening for him. She was able to see things from his perspective. She also phoned her friend, explained what had happened, and realised that she needed the space to sort out what she actually wanted. She feels a lot more positive about her marriage and is more settled with her husband, but is still attracted to the other man.

She has had lots of thoughts about trusting herself and her abilities. Not knowing what is happening makes her feel unstable. She is impatient to reach her potential, but realises that she has to allow the process to take its course, to trust this part of her journey. She no longer feels so trapped after talking to her husband. She feels she will leave to go where she needs to be, when she is ready. She is concentrating on completing a college course and feels really positive: it will help her with her career.

She still has lots of issues with her parents. She is angry because they "dump their load on me". She put her foot down with her mother and told her to take responsibility for her own life. She does not want to hear it any more.

Physically she is much happier with herself. Even with her heavy thighs, she is accepting her body as it is. She is not as ravenously hungry as she once was, so her weight is stabilising. She has had some middle-back pain but, on thinking about it, realised that it was linked to the feeling "get off my back". Once she had acknowledged this, the pain went away. Her sleep is good, and she feels good.

Prescription: wait, no remedy prescribed

Third Follow-Up: One Month Later

She is feeling really good in herself, and about herself. She completed a college assignment without any hassle or pressure. She feels really pleased with herself: "I'm getting there." No headaches or physical premenstrual symptoms, however she does feel tired and restricted premenstrually. "Everything becomes a bind; I feel dragged down."

She has been irritated by a friend's behaviour: "She won't look at what is really going on." The situation is a challenge to her beliefs. She has decided to step back from the friendship: "I'm not taking it on." She is learning to say no.

She is surer of who she is and where she is going. She still does not know where she wants to be, but it is not causing her any discomfort, "I'll get there when I get there." She also realises that it is acceptable to feel vulnerable, and acknowledges that she is not good at asking for help when she feels that she cannot cope.

She feels that she has dealt with a lot of issues from her childhood. She is not colluding with her parents' neediness anymore.

She discussed her marriage and cried when she talked about the realisation that she did not love her husband anymore. "I feel so cruel, I don't want to hurt him; this will cripple him." Her friend also unsettles her: "He puts me in a weird space." She feels confused and does not know what to do.

Case Discussion

The patient continues to do well but is feeling unsure again. She uses lots of *Haliaeetus Leucocephalus* terminology: feels bound, in a weird space, cruel. It is interesting to note that the eagle

that supplied the blood for the proving was crippled. The fear of hurting another also came across in the proving information.

Prescription: *Haliaeetus Leucocephalus* 1M

Fourth Follow-Up: One Month Later

The patient feels that she is doing well, although she had had an extremely mixed four weeks. She had spent the first week looking at her husband and coming to terms with how she felt. Admitting that she no longer loved him made her feel vulnerable. She realised that she did not have to, "jump up and leave him" and since then she has seen him in a more positive light. She is seeing him as a person in his own right, rather than in his role as a husband.

She has had major issues with her male friend and has been through "sheer torment". She felt, once again, that she was at a crossroads. She had a good, positive talk with him and feels more relaxed about the situation. She will not make any move until she is sure of what it is she really wants. She has felt the need to slow down and has started to meditate. Rather than over-scrutinising everything, she trusts her "gut instinct".

Her last period was fine, with no pre-menstrual headaches. She accepts her menstrual cycle. She is feeling much better in herself: "It's amazing how things lift out of your system".

Additional Comments

When, after being discharged, the patient was told of the nature of the remedy, she laughed. She came out of the womb, weeks early and screaming with outrage. As a young baby she was ravenously hungry and from a very early age, her mother used to have to pacify her with a whole banana whilst she was in her high chair waiting to be fed. She would open her mouth and screech for food, pausing only to chew and swallow before demanding more. Her mother said that it was like trying to feed a highly demanding baby bird. On a recent visit to the Grand Canyon, an eagle soared overhead whilst she sat crouched, Indian-style on the floor.

The patient continues to do well. She is still with her husband and is training to be an equine therapist. She still watches herself very carefully, but listens to her intuition. She is settled and content with who she is and where she is travelling to in her life.

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