

# Flower Essence Formulas: Powerful Remedies for Times of Crisis

by Richard Katz

Flower essences were first developed during an earlier time of traumatic economic and social upheaval, the Great Depression of the 1930s. In the face of today's challenges, these potent plant remedies can be important allies as we seek the wisdom, inner strength, emotional equanimity and resolve needed to meet a new world crisis.

## In the Crucible of Crisis: The Origins of Flower Essences



Flower essences originated with Dr. Edward Bach (1886-1936), an English physician, whose work spanned the first third of the twentieth century. Trained at the University Hospital in London as a bacteriologist, Bach began his career at the start of World War One, treating war casualties and victims of the great influenza epidemic of 1918. It was a time of profound world crisis, when the nineteenth century's optimistic assumptions of unending human progress were shattered, as millions died in the trenches and hospital beds. During that time Bach himself nearly died of illness, but he came through the

experience with a renewed sense of life purpose – to find the source of disease and a truly natural and effective way of treating it.

Bach saw first-hand the effects of “shell shock,” what we now call Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. He realized the profound influence of emotional and stress reactions on physical health. He also realized that emotional health is not separate from spirituality, and that issues of moral values, life purpose and destiny are as important, if not more so, than diet, exercise and pathogens in determining human health. Long before the advent of psychosomatic and holistic medicine, Bach was a pioneer in recognizing the crucial spirit-mind-body connection in disease and health.

As Bach would write later in his famous treatise, *Heal Thyself*,

*“Disease is in essence the result of conflict between Soul and Mind, and will never be eradicated except by spiritual and mental effort... No effort which is directed to the body alone can do more than superficially repair damage, and in this there is no cure, since the cause is still operative and may at any moment again demonstrate its presence in another form.”*

During the 1920s, Bach worked with the holistic principles of homeopathy, and developed a highly successful practice as he continued his healing research into the relationship of spirit, mind and body.



*The influenza pandemic of 1918 killed tens of millions of people world-wide, engulfing humanity in a wave of fear as the First World War was ending.*



*Evacuating a “shell-shocked” soldier in World War I*

Meanwhile, as society tried to put the trauma of the War behind, the 1920s were giddy with get-rich-quick scams, including the original Ponzi pyramid scheme, the Florida real estate bubble, overleveraged debt and speculation resulting in a soaring stock market. (Does any of this sound familiar?) When the “Roaring Twenties” came crashing down into global depression during the 1930s, millions of people around the world lost their jobs, and many more lost their hope, plunging into a struggle for mere survival. Fascism and Nazism played on humanity’s desperation, gaining power and influence.

In the midst of these cataclysmic events, in May of 1930, only a few months after the Depression hit England, Dr. Bach closed his prestigious Harley St. practice and laboratory in London, sold or destroyed all of his possessions, and set off with a couple of suitcases to explore the wildflower meadows of England and Wales. Obviously, fear and financial insecurity were not motivating forces for Edward Bach. Bach was following an inner calling, or in the words of another famous Englishman:

*“This above all: to thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”*

*William Shakespeare, Hamlet*

Bach knew from his own experience that finding and following one’s life purpose, one’s calling, was the key to true health and well-being. This became the guiding light for his own life, as well as the key to the flower essence therapy he went on to develop.

Using a simple method of preparation based on the alchemical principles of the four elements of earth, water, air and fire, Bach created subtle essences of wildflowers that have profound effects on the human psyche. Each flower essence addresses a specific psycho-spiritual issue, and acts as a catalyst to awaken the inner soul forces necessary for spirit-mind-body health. Bach died in 1936 after developing 38 flower remedies and his famous emergency combination.



*“Migrant Mother”  
photo by Dorothea Lange, 1936*



*Preparing the  
Heather flower essence*

## Meeting Despair and Fear with Hope and Courage

Although we find no evidence that Bach spoke directly of the social and economic turmoil of his age, it is clear from his remedies that he was offering medicine for a time of fear and despair, themes which represent more than half of his 38 remedies. For example, **Mustard** brings balance and light when our mood turns dark, or when our moods swing between highs and lows. **Pine** encourages self-acceptance when we are overly self-critical, becoming paralyzed with self-blame. To deal with fear, **Mimulus** helps us face life’s challenges with confidence and courage, instead of withdrawing out of fear and anxiety. **Rock Rose** gives inner stability and strength when we are in panic or terror as our lives threaten to unravel.



*Mimulus*



*Rock Rose*



These and other flower essences differ from psycho-pharmaceutical drugs, in that they do not suppress our symptoms of fear or depression. They do not manipulate brain chemistry to make us feel better. Rather, they are natural catalysts that awaken those inner qualities that give us the ability to face our fear and despair. In the words of Bach,

*“They cure, not by attacking the disease, but by flooding our bodies with the beautiful vibrations of our Higher Nature, in the presence of which disease melts as snow in the sunshine.”*

Edward Bach, *Ye Suffer from Yourselves*, 1931

## Dr. Bach’s Emergency Combination

The most famous of Dr. Bach’s discoveries is his emergency combination (available under the brand names of Rescue Remedy® and Five-Flower Formula™). We know that Bach was sensitized to the effects of shock and trauma from his experience treating war casualties. The first version of the emergency formula was developed to aid a shipwrecked sailor brought ashore at the English seaside town of Cromer. It has since become well-known as one of world’s leading natural stress remedies, used for children, animals, and anyone who has experienced a major upset or shock. For many people, it is their first and most dramatic encounter with flower essences, as the effects can be immediate and palpable, bringing a sense of inner calm and presence in such diverse situations as visiting the dentist, or evacuating during a natural disaster.



## Flower Essence Formulas for the Challenges of Our Time

Considering the historical origins of flower essence therapy during an earlier period of world crisis, it is understandable that more and more people are turning to flower essences to help deal with the stress, depression and fear that are the psychological contagions of our era.

Compared to Bach’s time, there is now a vastly expanded repertoire of flower essences from which health practitioners and educated individuals can choose, in order to create custom formulas that can precisely address individual needs. Yet this wider array of possibilities can make entry into the world of flower essences seem more daunting and demanding of study and experience. This is one reason that Dr. Bach’s emergency combination has proven so popular as a general stress remedy. Its best use however, is for a short-term acute crisis. It is not a universal panacea.

To address the needs for accessible flower essence formulas with a wider range of application than Bach’s emergency formula, Patricia Kaminski and Richard Katz have worked with the international network of health practitioners of the *Flower Essence Society* to develop formulas applicable to a broad range of common human conditions. Such formulas have provided a baseline for individual therapy, and have been particularly helpful in responding to crisis situations affecting large populations.

When there are natural or human-caused disasters, we are no longer dealing with individual therapy, but rather with a collective experience and karma. Certainly there is little time or opportunity to make individual flower essence combinations for the large number of people affected by such events as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, wars, economic upheaval and such. Yet, even beyond that very real practical consideration, such events provide an opportunity for a transformational community experience, analogous to the healing crisis an individual may experience in confronting an illness or injury.



*Katrina Hurricane Disaster*

Thus, many of the most powerful and effective flower essence formulas have been forged in the heat of disaster and crisis. The international network of the *Flower Essence Society* has been a vehicle for reaching people in their time of need through donations of these crisis formulas.



### Yarrow Environmental Solution

The first special formula developed by FES was in response to the April, 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster in the Ukraine. As radiation spread across Europe, flower essence practitioners reported a severe disruption in the vital energy of people who may have had no physical symptoms of radiation sickness. FES developed what is now called *Yarrow Environmental Solution (YES)*, a blend originally of Yarrow flower essence in a sea salt base, now with added flower essences and herbal tinctures designed to strengthen the integrity of a person's life energy field ("aura") to withstand noxious environmental energies. It is currently used

for all manner of environmental sensitivity, including travel, fluorescent lighting, pollution, and allergens. For example, the residents of areas of New Orleans devastated by Hurricane Katrina used the YES formula to cope with the toxic conditions they found.

*From a woman whose home was destroyed by the hurricane/flooding and whose family was trying to salvage what they could from the rotting mess: "I try never to go to the house without the YES drops. A couple of times I have forgotten and immediately got the most horrific headache when I started working at the house. I spray it all around me."*



### The Flourish Formulas

During the 1990s and the beginning of this new millennium, FES responded to various emergencies with additional formulas offered to flower essence practitioners. We aided relief workers in natural disasters such as fires, floods, mud slides, earthquakes, hurricanes, and such human-made disasters as the Rwandan genocide and the attacks of September 11, 2001. We also helped therapists attending to the more personal crises and "disasters" of relationship conflicts and abuse, depression, alienation, illness, loss of a loved one, childhood trauma, difficulties with work and accomplishing goals, lack of focus and mental clarity. Based on the success of many health professionals with these formulas, a set of twelve *Flourish* flower essence formulas was released to the public in 2007. These formulas serve the dual purpose of serving as an entry way for those beginning the use of flower essences, as well as a means of aiding large populations in a time of disaster.

### Illuminate: Light shining in the darkness

Depression is epidemic in our culture, cited as the leading cause of disability world-wide by the World Health Organization, and affecting more than 1 in 20 Americans at any one time.

The Illuminate formula was first developed as a response to the winter blues, sometimes known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), when the absence of outer light triggers a loss of connection with one's inner light. It soon proved effective for many situations when the soul is overcome with dark mood – discouraged, despondent, despairing, depressed – and needs to be uplifted with hope for the future.





Flower essences are not “feel-good” drugs, but rather alchemical catalysts for the soul to face suffering by embracing its polarities, and transcending them. Thus, the dark feelings of depression are not banished or repressed, but rather lifted up, so we become more buoyant, more balanced, more capable of coping with life’s challenges with sobriety and determination.

**Fear-Less:** *The courage to face all that life puts in our path*

Depression is a way that we damp down our life force and turn it against ourselves when faced with challenges. If we choose instead to turn our energy outward, we can be lead astray by fear, the second great emotional challenge of Bach’s time and ours.

Anxiety, fear, and panic naturally arise during times of great upheaval. Those emotions also can be exploited as a method of psychological control. Consider that in 1933, the Nazi party in Germany arranged for an arsonist to burn the German parliament building (Reichstag), blamed it on Communists, and used the resulting wave of public panic to gain police-state powers and win the elections a week later. Meanwhile in the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave his inaugural address in which he stated:

***“So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.”***

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, March 4, 1933



An earlier version of Fear-Less formula was offered immediately after attacks of September 11, 2001, to help calm the anxiety which followed this traumatic event. As it became clear that fear was being deliberately promulgated as a psychic contagion, the current formula was developed. Now, as the economic crisis has created a wave of paralyzing fear of the future, the Fear-Less remedy as emerged as the leading Flourish formula. It is useful not only for addressing societal events, but also for the fears of everyday life, such as fear about speaking in public, or sleep-disturbing anxiety.

**Grief Relief:** *Staying whole while suffering loss*

The Grief Relief formula was also developed in the aftermath of the September 11 tragedies to help the many people who had lost family members, friends and colleagues. It was distributed widely to therapists and relief workers because there was not time to give individual treatment to the many who were grieving for the loss of their loved ones. One doctor reported, “Patients have been helped enormously by **Grief Relief** to work through, integrate, and process the grief without having it repressed, but at the same time without it overwhelming them.”

Grief Relief is helpful to deal with any difficult loss, such as divorce, losing a job or a home. It was used during the Katrina Hurricane disaster, and is currently being distributed to volunteers helping the victims of last year’s earthquake in Sichuan, China, which killed nearly 70,000 people and left millions homeless.





### **Post-Trauma Stabilizer: *Rebuilding strength after shock and trauma***

This formula was first developed in response to the horrific genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and proved helpful to overcome the shock, grief, despair and horror of a people terrorized by massacre and torture. One aid worker became unable to talk after witnessing unspeakable cruelty, and she became bed bound with “survivor’s guilt.” With the help of this formula, she was able to regain her health and come to terms with her experience.

Since then, the formula has been used in Ecuador for people terrorized by a volcanic eruption, and for personal trauma such as automobile accidents. The formula contains Dr. Bach’s emergency combination, and

adds other essences for emotional recovery and stabilization.

### **Magenta Self-Healer: *Self-healing potential and physical vitality***

Self-Heal (*Prunella vulgaris*) is the key essence in this combination, helping us to take responsibility for our well-being and energizing our own innate self-healing capacities. The formula consists of a number of magenta-colored flowers, a color that signifies rejuvenation of our life energy and vitality. Magenta Self-Healer is an excellent adjunct to any wellness or recovery program, supporting nutrition, therapeutic body work, counseling and other health modalities.



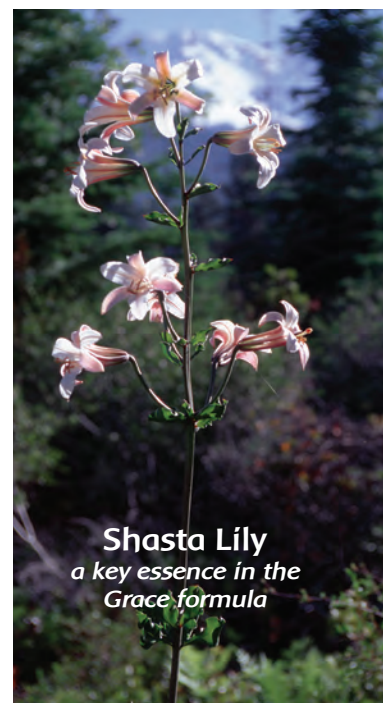
### **Grounding Green: *Connection with Nature that can remedy alienation***

We often look to our personal history and situation for the source of our suffering. In doing so, we can easily overlook the social and ecological dimensions of our distress. We may be aware that our planet Earth is threatened by an ecological crisis resulting in pollution, resource depletion, species extinction and threatening catastrophic climate change. Yet, these concerns often remain abstract ideas if we fail to realize that we are part of the living being of the Earth, of Gaia. Her suffering is ours, even if experienced unconsciously.

Furthermore, in our highly mechanized and urbanized culture, we are mostly disconnected from the Earth and Earth’s rhythms. Thus, we deprive ourselves of the life-sustaining connection with the great web of life. Grounding Green is a combination of essences from green flowers that help bond us with Nature’s healing forces. It helps engender a Nature connection in those who have had little opportunity to experience a natural environment, as well as deepening the Nature relationship of those who wish to champion the natural world, and need to experience the connection more directly in their bodies and souls.

### **Grace: *Nourishing feminine qualities of Soul***

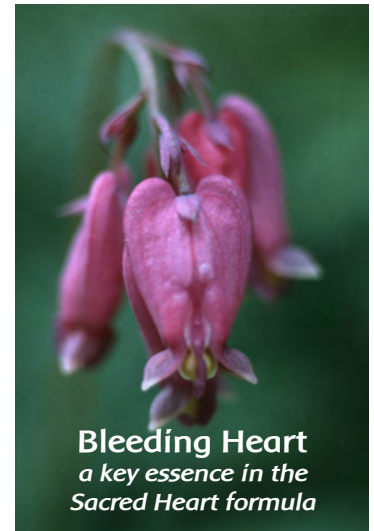
The Grace formula consists of eight flower essences, all from white flowers in the Lily plant family, known for its connection to the feminine archetype. This formula was extensively used by flower essence practitioners for many years to help women recover from abusive relationships, and to support their physical and emotional health. Although primarily used by women, it has also been reported to be helpful for men to become more receptive in their relationships with women, and to the inner feminine (anima) of their own soul life.





### **Sacred Heart: *Healing relationships and broken hearts***

Personal relationships are the source of our greatest emotional fulfillment, and our most challenging emotional tests. Based on several decades of international practitioner experience, a formula consisting of a number of pink flowers, with the addition of Holly, has proven successful in addressing a wide range of emotions related to relationships. It is a balm to the heart when relationships end or are in conflict, and it encourages open-hearted feelings to build rapport and intimacy.



**Bleeding Heart**  
a key essence in the  
Sacred Heart formula

### **Kinder Garden: *Restoring the radiance of childhood***



**Chamomile**  
a key essence in the  
Kinder Garden formula

Children are the most vulnerable members of our society, and they feel most acutely the effects of the stresses and imbalances of our culture. Broken and dysfunctional families, pressures for achievement, poor nutrition, economic stress, over-intellectualized early schooling, abuse and exploitation, all result in our children carrying the burden of our society's ills. Kinder Garden is a blend of flower essences that have proven effective in protecting childhood from such forces. It fosters the innate wellspring of life within children to become the source of their healthy development.

### **Activ-8: *Energizing the will into action***

The Activ-8 formula embodies eight flower essences to catalyze the positive masculine force of the soul (in men and in women). It helps overcome hesitation or apathy, and gives strength and energy to push through delays, obstacles and opposition. In times of crisis, it mobilizes energy that might otherwise be dissipated in anger and frustration, and channels it into constructive action and leadership to make needed changes.

### **Mind-Full: *Mental clarity and focus, even when stressed***

Besides activation of the will, societal and personal crises demand clarity of thought and mental focus. The Mind-Full combination is awakening and clarifying. It is also used extensively by students, writers, teachers and speakers to maximize their mental capacity to meet professional and personal demands.

### **Animal Relief Formula: *Calming & comforting for animals in transition or trauma***

This formula, known informally as ARF, was originally developed by Teresa Wagner, an animal communicator, author and teacher on healing relationships with animals. Out of her volunteer work with animals in rescue shelters, she recognized the value of flower essences to deal with the stress animals experience in the crises that led them to the shelter, and for the extreme conditions of the shelters themselves. Although she found good results using Dr. Bach's emergency formula, she found by adding a number of additional essences specific for animal rescue situations, she obtained even better outcomes. The Animal Relief Formula is now used in many rescue shelters and during natural disasters, as well as in a wide variety of situations where an animal's life is disrupted by illness, relocation, or changes in the caretaker family.



## Flower Essence Formulas and Further Work

Flower essence formulas provide an accessible and effective response to personal and collective crises, and are an excellent way to begin one's experience of flower essence therapy.

For chronic conditions that persist for many years, it is often helpful to use individualized formulas, specifically selected from the larger repertoire of flower essences. Self-selection is possible for a person who is self-motivated and makes the effort to become educated about flower essence therapy. However, even in such cases, it is often helpful to have another person, a friend or professional therapist, make a selection. Also, whenever dealing with clinical levels of mental or physical illness, be sure to consult with an appropriate health professional.

## Crises Then and Now

While acknowledging the parallels between the crises of the 1930s and those of our time, there are also significant differences. Dr. Bach's work was that of a lone pioneer, with a small circle of supporters, in a society that had little understanding of the psychological and spiritual dimensions of health. Although the dominance of allopathic medicine and the pharmaceutical industry remains in our day, there is increasing openness to natural alternatives. Humanistic and transpersonal psychology, as well as various spiritual traditions, have encouraged many people on a path of self-knowledge. There is a strong holistic health movement, and use of flower essences is gaining, particularly in Europe, and in Latin America, where it is part of the health care system in Cuba and Chile.

As economic, social and psychological stresses increase during this time of crisis, flower essences help us not only to cope with the challenges, but to transform them into new opportunities for service and positive change.

## Green Cross Gentian

*Frasera speciosa (Swertia radiata)*

Pictured here in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California, this native wildflower is commonly known as Green Gentian, Monument Plant, or Elkweed. A botanical relative of Dr. Bach's Gentian remedy, for perseverance after setbacks, the Green Cross Gentian essence helps us respond to crises with new inspiration to serve humanity and all life on Earth. It is a component of both the *Grounding Green* and *Post-Trauma Stabilizer* formulas.

**I have Faith for the future of Earth and all her peoples.  
I send healing to the Four Directions of Earth's Body.  
I carry the Cross of Earth despite change and challenge.  
My love for Earth and all humanity fills me with Spirit-Force.**

Affirmations by Patricia Kaminski,  
flower photos by Richard Katz

**Affirm A Flower** photo affirmation cards  
are available from the *Flower Essence Society*

©2009 by the Flower Essence Society  
PO Box 459, Nevada City, CA 95959 USA  
[www.flowersociety.org](http://www.flowersociety.org)

