

Saying it with flowers

Debashish Sengupta

The generation born in 'globalised' India is gradually replacing the older genre and the doctrines of working and living are also changing. The new tag-lines, 'Play more, win more' and 'Earn more, spend more' have become the reality of this new order. As a result, the world has become more competitive and pressures on work and life are mounting. Consequently, stress has come almost like an uninvited guest into our lives, impacting all of us; and in some cases, the effects have been severe.

Flowers as stress relievers

Though stress is a 'necessary evil' that cannot be eliminated from our lives, it can be minimised to a large extent, which, if not done, could have disastrous consequences. While the ways suggested by social and behavioural scientists to contain stress could have their own relevance and validity, there is an emerging natural stress healing method using flowers and flower extracts. According to Dr Edward Bach (1886-1936), an English physician and one of the pioneers in using flowers to relieve stress, the body can suitably resist disease when it is in a positive emotional state, while negative emotional states weaken the body's immune system, thus making it more difficult to fight diseases. According to Dr Bach's research, emotional states such as stress can directly affect our body functions in adverse ways.

Healing colours

There is an old adage that says "if you cannot say it, say it with flowers". The colour of flowers is said to impact our emotions, thereby inducing relief from stress. Various flowers and their respective colours have been associated with some or the other kind of stress or stress-related conditions.

Essence of Essences

Fragrant oils and other extracts of flowers are also said to be effective in curing stress-related problems. The therapy is based on the principle of giving a feeling of well-being to the affected person by letting negative aspects such as hatred, fear, pessimism take a back-seat and bringing to the fore positive aspects such as love, humility, courage, optimism and equanimity of body and mind. Lavender was, perhaps, one of the first flowers, whose extracts were used for healing.

The Bach flower remedies use secretions and scents to achieve a more relaxed emotional state and minimise stress and anxiety. A variety of flowers are used to achieve different results and assist in alleviating symptoms of particular ailments or afflictions. Flower essences are said to work directly on our emotional/mental states and act like 'super-sponges', adsorbing negative emotional vibrations. The spiritualising impact of such essences is said to reduce stress by shifting our perception.

Limitations and Scope

Research and scientific evidence on the effectiveness of floral colour and essences in treating stress and related symptoms is largely sporadic in nature. The claims made by scientists and practitioners must be based on concrete findings. However, in the absence of consistent and intensive research and clinical trials, this mode of natural stress-therapy has not quite bloomed. Aromatherapy using floral oils and extracts is said to work excellently in acupuncture and massage. The need of the hour is more evidence-based research and concrete, time-proven therapeutic methods.

(The author is with Alliance Business School, Bangalore. blfeedback@thehindu.co.in)
Holistic therapy