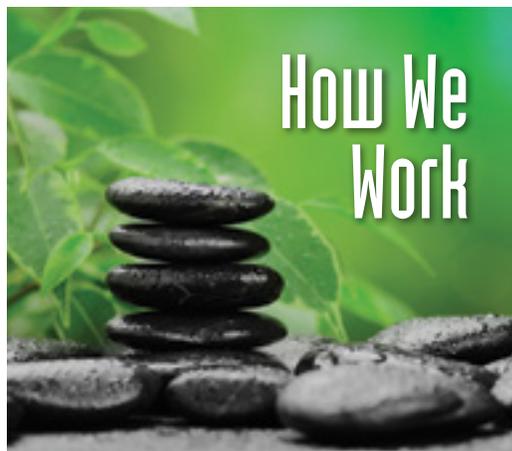


How We Work



Meet Miranda Castro

Underground Heroine of Homeopathy

Told to JUAN HENG, CCH, June 2017



This is the third in a series of interviews with homeopathic practitioners who are expanding the reach of homeopathy by providing integrative care for clients. Get a peek inside the practices of these remarkable individuals who are using homeopathy to improve lives, one at a time. Find out how they work, what motivates them, and how they stay inspired.

Miranda Castro is a world-renowned practitioner, author, teacher, and entrepreneur who has lived and breathed homeopathy for 35 years. She started teaching moms how to take care of their families while practicing in the UK, and it led to *The Complete Homeopathy Handbook*, a bestseller worldwide. She is also author of the much-loved *Homeopathy for Pregnancy, Birth, and Your Baby's First Year* as well as *A Homeopathic Guide to Stress*. She has contributed over 100 articles to *Homeopathy Today* and written numerous national newspaper and magazine articles. Miranda is an exceptional ambassador for homeopathy, sharing her enthusiasm and straight talk at international conferences, online, and on radio and television in the UK and in the US, her home since 1994.

Miranda pioneered a supervision and practice management program for homeopaths in 1986, the first of its kind, and helped put supervision on the homeopathic curriculum. She was an Adjunct Faculty member at Bastyr University from 1996 to 2000. She has been active in the North American Society of Homeopaths (NASH) in many capacities since 1996, including a stint as President. Since 2003, she has been developing and refining COMPASS, a patient-management software, to enable homeopaths to have a paperless office and track their data. In 2009, she developed Miranda Castro's Healing Creams, one for scars, one for joints, and another for stings, which are perfectly compatible with constitutional homeopathy treatment. She practices in Gainesville, Florida. www.mirandacastro.com

Once in a long while, we meet someone who bootstraps herself into a category of her own. Miranda Castro is one such individual. She is a best-selling author of three homeopathy books that have sold almost half a million copies worldwide and are still in print after 30 years. She has made innumerable media and professional presentations, rendered stellar service to the homeopathic profession, and taught extensively and innovatively. She is also a serial entrepreneur. It is not what anyone would expect from a young woman who left school at 15 and never slowed down enough to get a first degree.

"I was very lucky to be able to leave home at 18 and *choose* my own life. I was very lucky to grow up on the cusp [in London, the center of the '60s social revolution], independent, without money—it was possible in those days," Miranda recalls. "I was 8 years old when I knew that I would be a healer. I didn't even know what the word meant. It just came to me."

And so she set about gaining experiences.

"You can't work with human beings without a decent sense of the territory you're



Miranda Castro teaching in Japan eight years ago; pictured with Tarako Yui.

"I was the mother of a young child, and other parents naturally gravitated towards me."

“I made house calls to the poorly children in my tightknit neighborhood in London. I loved working with those children, seeing them grow and transform...”

working in... I worked as a temp secretary in the beginning to see how different companies worked. I met no end of interesting people. I had no end of interesting experiences. I ricocheted from one job to the next. If I didn't like one, I'd do something else. I worked for several years in fashion as a sample machinist. The high fashion designers would sketch their beautiful, crazy, fantastic sketches, the pattern makers would cut a pattern and deliver the sketch with a pile of shards of fabric and a few buttons or a zipper, and I'd make the pile of fabric look like the sketch. I loved that!”

At a certain point, “the penny dropped. It came back to me: now is the time you have to train to do the healing thing.” She was 27 years old. She went to acupuncture school but was never entirely comfortable with needling her patients. “I didn't like that the patients had to come to me for every healing treatment. I couldn't help them to help themselves. They had to keep coming back.”

Growing up in the UK in a family whose primary care doctor was a naturopath, Miranda was already familiar with the notion of enabling the body to heal naturally. She became very good friends with the basic homeopathic remedy kit and the cell salt kit that she had bought from Ainsworths Homeopathic Pharmacy right after leaving home... And then at 28, she had “a ghastly pregnancy.”

“I was incredibly nauseous the whole time. I tried all the remedies for nausea—but none of the usual suspects helped. And then a year after my son Daniel was born, he got whooping cough. I gave him [the homeopathic remedies] *Drosera* and even *Pertussin*. They didn't help either. I took him to a homeopathic doctor who gave him a prescription of six different remedies to be given one after the other. None of them worked. I consulted an anthroposophical homeopath who practiced the Rudolf Steiner way. I visited

a local farmer homeopath who practiced from his kitchen table with a copy of Boericke's *Materia Medica*. Another homeopathic doctor failed to help and I gave up. I decided homeopathy was good for some acute diseases but not for serious or chronic complaints. I consulted a healer. Daniel was very sick by then. She diagnosed food allergies on top of the whooping cough and did distance healing. He responded very well but kept relapsing. She called and said, ‘He has a miasmatic block and you need to see a homeopath.’ I laughed. I told her I'd been to four homeopaths and I was done with homeopathy. She said, ‘But guess what? You haven't been to a professional homeopath. You've just been to people who use homeopathy as an adjunct. You need someone who has had a proper training.’”

So Miranda followed this advice and consulted Peter Chappell.

“Within 24 hours of Peter's first prescription, Daniel stopped vomiting. Within a week, he stopped coughing. I went, ‘Oh, I get it. This works but you have to know what you are doing.’ I was in homeopathy school within a month and I was practicing [professionally] within a couple of years.”

She reflects on her experience trying and failing to find relief for her child's illness through homeopathy initially.

“I wonder how many people have this experience? Nothing happens from homeopathic treatment, and they give up. Then again I wonder, how many people go to an [allopathic] doctor, get a diagnosis and a treatment, and it doesn't work, and they go back, and it doesn't work? Only now, maybe they are also suffering from side effects of medications they're taking. In any case, they keep going back. There's a double standard here. People will go back to their conventional doctors in spite of not getting better, but with



At the April 2017 Joint American Homeopathic Conference in Atlanta: Mitzi Lebensorger, Ellen Goldman, ND, Miranda Castro, FSHom, RSHom(NA).

homeopathy, they're looking for a *magical cure*. I think it is at least partly our fault. We only publish our best cases. What we affectionately call our ‘cured cases.’ We publish them *all over* the internet. I'm responsible too. There's a conscious or unconscious expectation that when you go to a homeopath, you're going to get ‘the’ constitutional remedy and you're going to live happily ever after.”

As a homeopath, Miranda became a La Leche League breastfeeding counselor and a go-to resource within her community.

“I was the mother of a young child, and other parents naturally gravitated towards me. I made house calls to the poorly [i.e., unwell] children in my tightknit neighborhood in London. I loved working with those children, seeing them grow and transform from these sickly people into bouncy little people with rosy cheeks. I became good at it—that became my specialty. I helped set up a free teaching clinic for those who couldn't afford our fees.”

She worked hard, helping parents to help their kids and teaching classes in their living rooms.

“I incorporated a collaborative way of working which involves helping patients to help themselves. I would train them how to use the remedies. If it were a complicated chronic case, I would have them call me. But in simple cases, I educated parents, had them buy a kit, and made sure that the remedies their children needed were in the kit. I wrote up protocols and mini materia medicas to go with the kit. It is so cost effective to be able to train parents to help themselves and their



Teaching in Guadalajara a few years ago; Miranda takes a break to stretch her wings.

families, especially with acute illnesses. Countless children saved from unnecessary emergency room visits, or just plain suffering.

“I taught classes to *many* parents—gifting a free class to the parent who hosted the class. Everyone went home with *Arnica 30c* after the first evening, and a surprising number brought success stories to the next class. After I had taught a number of classes, I wrote a little index of symptoms to go with the materia medica information for the first-aid remedies—a mini repertory, if you will. And I created a blank repertory sheet for them to use with each acute case. And people started doing better with their home prescribing. They were using the symptoms and working up a chart, then coming up with two or three possible remedies and reading about them to make a better decision that covered more of their child’s picture. I included modalities: Does heat or cold make the child feel better or worse? Are they thirsty or not? Restless or not? People did even better. And that’s how I figured out why the first-aid books I had used with Daniel’s whooping cough hadn’t worked. They all involved looking up a complaint and choosing between the three or four remedies listed. Homeopathy doesn’t work like that. And then I said to myself, ‘Oh my gosh, wouldn’t

If the impact of *The Complete Homeopathy Handbook* on parents has been huge, its impact on aspiring professionals has been truly amazing.

it be wonderful to write a first-aid book that mimicked the classical homeopath’s process but scaled way back? This could transform the home prescriber’s remedy selection process!”

It was a skip and a hop to a book proposal. The only problem was that Miranda didn’t know if she could write.

“I got help. My agent got me a contract with a publisher who issued me with an editor to help me write and she agreed to let me keep my speaking voice. We did six revisions. I picked the best remedies for acute complaints and limited the symptoms to those complaints you can safely treat at home, and then I just used Kent’s [*Repertory*] bold-type symptoms and my own experience. There are some remedies missing because I don’t believe in them. Like *Ferrum phos*. I don’t believe in suppressing a fever. To give a remedy at the first sign of a fever is really foolish. Let the fever come out, let the body heal itself. If we just give *Ferrum phos* [to address the fever alone], we’re using it like an aspirin. The fever’s gone, but the symptoms can now rage out of control. Fever is your body’s intelligent way to fight infections. Other remedies are missing from the book because I’d never used them. I later learnt the hard way with some very sick kids that when *Chamomilla* is indicated but doesn’t work, *Kreosotum* can soothe teething pain beautifully (and sometimes accompanying coughs). I wish I could go back and add this brilliant teething remedy to the book.

“People wrote to me, ‘Ah, I read your book. My child had this or that complaint... but I recognized my child’s picture from the general and emotional symptoms you described. Even though another remedy was maybe better indicated for their physical complaint, I gave *this* one because it matched their overall picture better. It has been one year, two years, three years, and he or she hasn’t

been sick since.’ My homeopathic heart is just singing. That’s when homeopathy works best, when you get the whole picture right and it’s like throwing a pebble into a person’s ‘pond’ and it lands close to the center and sends healing ripples to every part of that person. Beautiful!”

If the impact of *The Complete Homeopathy Handbook* on parents has been huge, its impact on aspiring professionals has been truly amazing.

“About ten, fifteen years after the book was published, students from all over the place would come up to me after a lecture I had just given and say, ‘I got your book ten, twelve years ago and I got such incredible results from it I had to train to become a homeopath.’”

Sure enough, it set Miranda up for challenges.

“I dared to set high goals for everything I did afterwards. It made me think, ‘OK, I’ve got this project. How *big* can it be?’ So then I had a lot of failures. Such is life. The book’s still in print, so 30 years on I still get royalties every year. Hey! I should have a celebration next year!”

Indeed, *The Complete Homeopathy Handbook* is the one book that Holistic Moms Network members recommend when they ask one another in forums, “What do you use?” and then pass it to other moms as gifts. Miranda is the Underground Heroine of Homeopathy.

A firm believer in equality and power sharing, Miranda visits delicate, often fraught, questions involving the practitioner-client relationship in almost everything she has written, from many perspectives. Sometimes it is implicit, sometimes, head on. It is always real, poignant, and accessible. These writings range from co-creating healing relationships with patients to nudging homeopaths to become more self-aware as healers.

“The list of things I gave my patients not

to do in my first few years in practice was ridiculous. I started questioning this list when I found out that my patients were lying to me. And I realized I was acting out of a critical parent mode, pointy finger and all. ‘Your remedy didn’t work? Oh, did you have coffee?’ Their eyes would start to swivel. ‘Just one little cup when I was in Italy.’ ‘Oh, no wonder the remedy didn’t work. It’s your fault.’”

She tried “an experiment,” and stopped taking her patients off anything for a year. It led to her paper “The Vexed Question of Antidotes” where she concluded that just as homeopathic remedies act as catalysts for self-healing and do not heal per se, so they cannot be “antidoted” per se. However, the healing response can be interrupted by anything that affects an individual strongly, and these are best avoided during the healing process.

“My life is so much easier now, so much more relaxed, now that I am not telling people not to do this or that, not watching over them, not checking up on them. It’s a conversation. I’m the homeopathic expert, that’s true. But my patients are the co-experts about themselves. They will always know a whole lot more about themselves than I ever will. And so we come together to share expertise. Most everything is negotiable. If they want me to make all the decisions, I’m happy. Really good at it. If they want to participate that’s fine also. Some want a high potency, others want to start with a low potency, no problem. I am even happy to negotiate about remedies. If someone is scared of a particular remedy, we can always start with another, related, remedy.

“Build trust. Build rapport. I see the healing relationship equally as important as the remedies we give... It is a big part of who I am, how I work and what I do. [As homeopaths], we question our patients... we really question them. And my goal has been to question myself to make sure I am as clean and as clear as I can be. We’re all ‘contaminated’ with something. We all bring a wounded healer into the consulting room. It’s not a big deal. I don’t worry about it, but I do teach from a perspective of [coming into self-awareness].”

Her second professional presentation was “Sex in the Consulting Room.”

“Of course there shouldn’t be sex in the consulting room, but at the time I gave the talk in 1990 at the Society of Homeopaths Conference [in the UK], there were more than a handful of teachers and homeopaths in the audience sitting with students or patients with whom they were having intimate relationships. I raised the issue of sexual abuse across the board because at that time, homeopaths were asking [their patients] about sexual issues casually [during the casetaking], with no awareness that this might be an area of trauma or shame or sensitivity, no introduction, just going through the [head-to-toe] checklist, between bowels and perspiration, and asking out of the blue, about masturbation, this and that. A lot of women came to me after my talk and thanked me. Some cried. Some men were angry with me. They didn’t think the status quo should be challenged or questioned. That talk changed the way [homeopathic] casetaking was taught with regard to sexuality and I couldn’t be happier.”

Among teachers of homeopathy, Miranda brings an unusual breadth and depth of reflexivity to her work, weaving in her own experience as patient and practitioner. Partly, it comes out of her decade-long psychotherapy training to better understand human relationships. Partly, she is “out in the world gathering data, interested, looking, listening, living life as full as I can at each and every stage, always making note of unusual situations and making connections... Most of us bring a wounded inner healer to this work. You just have to know it’s there, acknowledge it’s there. It makes things easier when particular patients press our buttons. To know that territory, we need a map. We can’t, with our great big boots, march all over someone’s psyche without some sensibility, some sensitivity to their inner landscape. We have to know how to respond properly, know how to interpret our own responses. It makes us better case takers, better healers, better homeopaths.

“Homeopaths listen in a way that actually no one else does. We are master listeners. We explore the whole terrain, not just the mentals, not just the physicals, not just

“It’s like throwing a pebble into a person’s ‘pond’... and it lands close to the center and sends healing ripples to every part of that person.”

the lifestyle, not just history—and then we bring it all together into one glorious gestalt. Our questions take people into areas that they may never have explored before. We piece all the shards of their fabric into one beautiful garment! Patients frequently make connections sometimes for the first time. If we do a good job perceiving, then that patient also has the felt experience of being perceived—of being seen and heard. And that can be deeply healing in its own right!”

In her fifteenth year in practice, Miranda created her own practice management software, almost as if she was applying her sample machinist’s skills, previously used to stitch together pieces of fabric to realize a fashion designer’s vision, to solve a universal problem in a homeopath’s practice.

“I developed COMPASS for myself to run an efficient office and to be able to track my results. It grew, and other homeopaths who saw it wanted it and became my beta testers. Jim Hoyt, the guy who



Miranda receives the first North American Society of Homeopaths (NASH) Exceptional Service Award and Honorary Lifetime Membership in 2010. Pictured with NCH’s Sharon Stevenson.

“Our questions take people into areas that they may never have explored before. We piece all the shards of their fabric into one beautiful garment!”

did my expert programming, became my business partner.

“Tracking is the heart of COMPASS. I can see at a glance how many of my patients are male, how many are female, how many are in each age group. In my own practice, for example, right now 35% of my patients are male, and they are [mostly] in the 0-9 age group; their chief complaint is autism. [Using COMPASS software] I can communicate with some or all patients, see how well they are doing at a glance, and see master lists of remedies that have been given. And lots more besides.”

Miranda shared how monitoring herself rigorously at every stage and reviewing the patient’s progress at-a-glance with the help of her software reinforces the dynamics of healing that Hahnemann taught. She discovered that most patients experience an aggravation with a curative remedy. If the potency is correct (not too high), that aggravation is mild and short lived. If there’s been suppression in the past, they will tend to have an aggravation.

She also knows how much time she



Miranda Castro’s Shop & Miranda Castro’s COMPASS: exhibitor at the April 2017 JAHC in Atlanta.

spends on each case, in and out of the consulting room. For every hour she spends with a patient, she puts an hour into research, writing, and all the work that goes into the running of a homeopathic practice.

“I used to pay someone for four hours each week to do filing. All my patient’s charts are filed automatically now. Auditing my practice once a year took two whole days. Now it’s down to ten to fifteen minutes using COMPASS, and files don’t get lost [as paper files occasionally did].”

Miranda calls herself a “jobbing homeopath,” a humble term for someone who is paid for specific jobs, not a salary.

“I’ve been in practice for 35 years, and I seem to be attracting more difficult cases. I have to work pretty hard to be certain. I go through a logical analysis process so that I can track exactly where I may have gone wrong if a remedy doesn’t work. If patients say they’re doing well or better, I always ask, ‘To what do you attribute your feeling better? Did homeopathy help or not?’ We have to give them a chance to say, ‘Not.’ People go to acupuncturists and other healers while being treated with homeopathy. Or they fall in love, which is a very potent healer. They won’t tell us if we don’t ask.

“Through the audit part of COMPASS, I learnt that more people were doing better than I thought. To be able to learn all this adds to the joy of being a homeopathic healer.”

Miranda developed a line of healing creams—for scars, for muscle and joint pains, and for bug bites and stings—the less critical complaints that bother people but may not always be helped by a deep-acting, constitutional remedy. She drew on her vast repertoire of skills as an entrepreneur, CEO, homeopath, scholar, and partner in healing, and spent five years to bring them to market. The creams support patients gently while not



Miranda Castro cooking with granddaughter Amelia in the UK.

interfering with the action of constitutional homeopathic treatment and not suppressing symptoms. It is an example of the kind of flexible, strategic thinking and street smarts that Miranda employs to advantage.

She has crammed so much into her life and career that she decided to “cruise” a little these past few years and teach and travel and write less. She is still practicing, and she admits that she has been gardening.

“I’m a mad bricklayer. I love to lay brick patios and pathways! I live to be productive—that’s why the gym is so unappealing. You could say I’m now taking an untidy pile of bricks and pavers and pebbles and making a nice little patio here, a pathway there! Gardening—especially edible gardening—and path-laying are very satisfying for me and brilliant exercise.”

In the spirit of a true heroine, Miranda declared:

“I do know that homeopathy will never die. It’s too good. It’s too big. It’s too beautiful. And it will survive. Whether it thrives or not, I will never stop loving it. I know that’s too corny but here’s what—I’ve lived and loved homeopathy my whole life. That’s it. Until death do us part!”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Juan Heng, PhD, CCH, decided to enroll in homeopathy school when she saw her son, who was diagnosed with autism at the age of three, improve dramatically with homeopathic treatment. She brings a tenacious optimism, a skeptic’s mind, and an open heart to her practice in New

York City and Long Island. Her dream is to collaborate with holistic healers of different modalities to help clients. Her website is: www.homeopathystudio.com