



# Major Moves & Transitions: How to Survive & Thrive or ... Alien Spouse and the Story of the Human Thumb

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THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE READ SOME OF MY PAST ARTICLES IN *HOMEOPATHY TODAY* MAY remember that I have been living in both Ireland and Spain the past twelve years. Last November, my family and I got caught up in the media's wild enthusiasm for *The Secret*—as seen on *Oprah*! This is a book that should come with a clear warning: “*READING THIS MAY CHANGE YOUR LIFE!*”



Just in case you've been living in a cave the last few years, *The Secret* is based on the Law of Attraction. The idea, in a nutshell, is that by clearly visualizing what you want in life, you can manifest it. Or as one of the book's contributing writers says, it's like “ordering from the cosmic catalogue and confidently awaiting delivery.”

## Going for it

We decided to give it a go. We held a family meeting during which each of us—my husband, our 9-year-old son, our 16-year-old daughter, and I—had the chance to say what we would ideally like in our lives. We even selected some images to represent these ideas and stuck them on our fridge door.

We mostly felt our lives were pretty good but needed a bit of fine tuning. We

loved living in Ireland because of the great sense of community there, but the almost daily rainfall left us with more than a touch of cabin fever. We loved the outdoor life we were able to live in southern Spain's near perfect climate, but because we were in a holiday/vacation town, the sense of community wasn't there.

So we started to visualize a vibrant community with lovely weather, an outdoor lifestyle, great educational choices, art, live music, comedy, theatre, culture, organic food, and people who wanted eco-friendly lives with holistic healthcare—and that, dear reader, is how we ended up in Ojai, California.

## Paradise found

We searched carefully for our perfect spot via the internet, and Ojai certainly looked promising. My husband did a solo reconnaissance mission in February and gave it three thumbs up. Luckily, after moving here in July, we all agreed that it is a very special place. A bit like dying and going to heaven...in fact, it was filmed as heaven (Shangri-la) in the 1937 Frank Capra movie, *Lost Horizon*.

So what makes it so heavenly? First, it is jaw-droppingly beautiful. Second, the people are laid back, savvy, and friendly. The owners of the house we are renting even organized a potluck supper so we could meet our new neighbors.

In just four short weeks we have managed to find a lovely home with fruit trees and a vegetable garden. We even have the offer of three chickens. It is darn near a *Little House on the Prairie* scenario, except we can walk to town. I have also signed the lease on a little downtown office with a

patio garden. The children are settling in to college and school. We all have groovy high-handlebar bicycles, which are like riding on armchairs. We have discovered the joys of thrift shops and garage sales. At the Salvation Army car lot, we even found an old cheap and cheerful convertible that runs like a dream. We are there, ready, and waiting to do our bit to recycle/re-use other people's discarded treasures!

### Not so fast...

So far so good, but everything I've written till now lacks any sense of pathology or drama. It's great to *be* a happy camper, but *my* it is tedious to read about one! Think smug Christmas round robin letters as in: "and then our numbers came up in the lottery *AGAIN*, which was nice..."

So let's turn up the angst a bit. Let's turn back the clock to the undeniable horrors of moving house and country. The packing that continues for weeks on end. The mortifying yard sale—what was I thinking ... how could I ever have needed this much trash in my life? The selling of

a full medical exam; a chest x-ray; seemingly endless filling out of forms; and deep scrutiny of my bottom line to ensure I will not become a burden on the US taxpayer.

OK, I confess, it's not exactly Ellis Island, but it is still pretty hard being interviewed, in full view of a room full of other hopefuls, about every detail of your life. Having been married to a US citizen for over 20 years and never having been in the US for more than a few weeks' holiday, I was obviously a shoo-in compared to the beautiful Chinese woman in the next booth who met the American love of her life in an internet chat room.

### Relieved and ready to celebrate

You can imagine then, that when I finally got my visa two weeks before we were due to immigrate, it was a huge weight off our minds to know I would not be standing at Dublin airport waving off the three bona fide US citizens in our family with a tear-



lungs, and I was halfway down the stairs before I knew where I was. I was hotly pursued by my husband, daughter, and most of the restaurant staff.

### Lots of blood & curdling screams

A large, heavy fire door had closed suddenly, due to a freak air current, trapping Gabriel's thumb. Once we got the door open and his thumb extricated, there was a lot of blood. And the screams showed no signs of abating. The manager, understandably nervous because of Ireland's sue-happy culture, offered to call an ambulance, but I thought we could deal with it.

I sent my husband sprinting back to our hotel to get our homeopathic first-aid kit. A kindly chef brought a large bucket of ice. There was quite a deep gash right across the pad of Gabriel's thumb and the nail was so loose it looked as if he would lose it. I knew the kit would be at least 15 minutes coming and silently berated myself for not having it with me. (I have had it with me pretty much constantly ever since, à la "locking the stable door after the horse has bolted.")

### Homeopathy without the remedies

My technique for nasty injuries is never to say anything along the lines of "Shush!" or "Don't cry!" or "It doesn't hurt *that* much." I think of these kinds of comments as antipathic—that is, trying to fix a problem by giving its opposite. I go for the homeopathic approach instead, so I give

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your worldly goods for a song. Lives squashed into one large suitcase and a carry-on. Worst of all, let's talk about what it means to be an alien spouse...

### Getting the third degree

My beloved husband and children are all US citizens with passports and Social Security numbers. They officially exist. I am potential trouble and so I have to be screened very carefully. Police reports from every country I have lived in (three);

stained hanky. So we decided to celebrate by going to lunch at a rather lovely restaurant near the embassy in Dublin.

We chose something delicious off the menu and the waitress brought our drinks. Our son Gabriel went to visit the restroom while the rest of us sat at the table breathing happy sighs of relief—and that was when all hell broke loose. We heard the most horrific, blood-curdling, and relentless screams coming from the downstairs restroom. Gabriel has fine



more of the same, with comments like, “Oh you poor thing” or “What a terrible thing to have happen” or “That must really, really hurt”—until often the victim is the one reassuring me that it really isn’t as bad as all that!

This, however, was not one of those times. Gabriel looked up at me and cried, “I never thought *anything* could hurt this much!” This was my thought exactly, when I was giving birth to him (and earlier his sister), and this helped me to hit on the idea of doing breathing with him, as if he were in labor. This really helped a lot, and he was able to stop screaming, much to the relief of the restaurant staff and other diners!

The chef who had brought the ice returned with a high-energy glucose drink, which turned out to be very helpful as Gabriel was shaking and his teeth were chattering from shock. Also, he is never normally allowed to drink such sweet things so it cheered him up immensely, to be breaking the rules with my blessing.

### The magic box arrives

Gabriel has huge confidence in homeopathy (it has always served him well), and just telling him the homeopathic remedies were on their way really soothed him. He knew there would be an end to the pain soon. Enter the heroic, heavy-breathing father bearing the magic blue box.

In these emergency/first-aid instances of mechanical damage caused by external factors, it is fine to throw in lots of homeopathic remedies pretty much at once. So I gave Gabriel quite a cocktail:

- *Arnica* 30c to reduce the shock, swelling, and bruising
- *Hypericum* 30c because fingers, thumbs, and toes are so nerve-rich that injuries there will nearly always lead to shooting pain along the nerves
- *Ledum* 30c because I have found it excellent where there is injury to nails
- *Calendula* 30c to help the cut heal quickly, with much reduced risk of infection.

The results were pretty miraculous. Gabriel was able to return to the table and have lunch, and he was even able to laugh about his misfortune. The staff started



## Homesickness

An acquaintance of mine had moved from the US to the UK and was suffering with a hard, dry, painful cough. In the midst of a coughing spell, he would feel the need to hold his chest to try to keep it still, since any movement was painful. He felt more irritable than usual and was thirsty for cold water. These are all classic *Bryonia* symptoms (see description bottom right), but even more telling was that this cough had come on just after his transatlantic move, and he confessed to being extremely homesick. One of *Bryonia*’s keynote symptoms is “wants to go home.” A dose or two of *Bryonia* made a great improvement in this man’s cough, as well as his mindset, and he began to adjust to his new life in a new land.

breathing easily again and when it came time to pay the bill, they insisted the lunch was on them (we asked Gabriel if he could maybe make a career out of this!).

I gave Gabriel additional doses of *Arnica* 30c and *Ledum* 30c whenever he complained that the pain had returned, and that would ease his symptoms for awhile. At one point, the pain became very hot and throbbing so I switched to *Bel-ladonna* 30c until that aspect eased off. He rested for a couple of hours watching cartoons and stayed in good humor. We were even able to go out to dinner with the money we’d saved at lunchtime!

### Even the nail is saved

By the next day, Gabriel was completely pain-free and needed no more remedies. He enjoyed a very full and busy day without complaint. Within two weeks, the deep gash had healed so completely that

there was not a trace of it to be seen. Best of all, the nail, which had been entirely black from the trapped blood underneath, is now two-thirds clear and shows no signs of dropping off, although originally it looked as if it surely would.

Shortly after the accident, I remember thinking of all the factors that would have predisposed Gabriel to be susceptible at that moment. I think he just didn’t have the heightened awareness of himself and his surroundings to avoid that accident with the fire door. We were all exhausted, both emotionally and physically from the process of packing up our lives and saying farewells to dear friends. There had been quite a build-up to the very early morning embassy interview that day, and everyone was on tenterhooks. This was followed by a massive feeling of relief when all went well. In that respect, Gabriel’s accident is similar to the way people often become ill *after* coming through a stressful time, rarely when they are in the thick of it.

### Remedies for major moves

Generally, I think very few people escape major moves like the one we have just experienced totally unscathed, so let’s take a look at some helpful homeopathic remedies for those of you on the move.

***Arnica*.** With so much potential for physical injury during the moving process, it’s great to have this first class, first-aid remedy on standby. It will speed healing and ease pain in most any kind of injury or trauma, as well as decrease shock. It will also give you second wind when exhaustion overcomes you, the deadline looms, and you are still not packed. Remember it for the exhaustion of jetlag, too.

***Coffea*.** Think of this remedy for that over-stimulated, over-excited state of mind that can result from any big change or move, and lead to anxiety, sleeplessness, or nervous exhaustion. Ideas and thoughts (even happy ones) race through your head and don’t allow sleep. You may be hypersensitive to pain, touch, smells, sounds, and light.

***Bryonia*.** This remedy is often helpful in cases of homesickness, especially if the person has other classic *Bryonia* symp-

toms such as irritability, feeling worse when disturbed, complaints that are worse from the slightest motion, dry mouth and lips, great thirst for cold drinks, and complaints that are better when firm pressure is applied.

**Cocculus.** Motion sickness, jetlag, and insomnia can often be helped by this remedy. People needing it may feel nauseated and dizzy in cars, boats, and planes, especially when looking out the window at moving objects. Loss of sleep and worry (e.g., from travel or moving or caring for a loved one) may lead to weakness, nervous exhaustion, dizziness, and insomnia. The person may feel trembly, numb, or “hollow,” and their symptoms get worse in fresh air.

**Tabacum.** This remedy will help extreme motion sickness, when there is constant nausea and vomiting at the least bit of movement. The person may be pale, in a cold sweat, with a sinking feeling in the pit of the stomach. They may have a lot of saliva and want to spit. Unlike those needing *Cocculus*, however, these folks feel better in fresh air.

**Bellis perennis.** This remedy, a “relative” of *Arnica* (they are both prepared from plants in the daisy family), is good for what they used to call in the old days “railway spine”—when your tail bone (coccyx) feels crushed from too much sitting, for example, on long haul flights.

## Remember the Golden Rules

In homeopathy there are three golden rules for successful prescribing:

- Match the symptoms carefully to the best homeopathic (most similar) medicine you can find.
- Take one pill. If you feel better, there is no need to repeat unless the same symptoms return.
- For home prescribing, stick to 30c or lower potencies.

It can be helpful for strains, sprains, and muscle aches from either repetitive motions or staying in one position too long.

**Ignatia.** The child or adult needing this remedy may feel grief and loss over the move and yearn desperately for their old home. They have contradictory, volatile symptoms, and sometimes don’t know whether to laugh or cry. They may be

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unable to sleep at night, weeping into their pillow with self-pity or complete disbelief. Watch for a tendency to twitch, feel faint, yawn, sigh, or hiccup frequently. A classic *Ignatia* symptom is a sensation of a lump in the throat that feels better from swallowing.

**Pulsatilla.** Sweet-natured children who suffer from the emotional upset or excitement of a move may need this remedy; they cling to their familiar territory and don’t want to leave it or their parents. They are highly vulnerable to tearfulness and wandering abdominal pains, and are worse from overheated or stuffy rooms, overeating, and eating fatty foods.

### More possibilities

Of course there are many other remedies that might be needed when one makes such a large transition as moving households. New jobs, new schools, new friends, new home—and the consequent losses that will be felt over the old jobs, schools, friends, and home—can all create stress. An older person who worries about the future, is fussy, and likes everything in its

place may be particularly upset by the chaos of a move; they might need *Arsenicum* to see them through.

A child brooding over the loss of a best friend but keeping it all inside might be helped by *Natrum muriaticum*. When the responsible adult of the family, who is trying to keep the family on track and make a million decisions under the stress of the move, suddenly finds it all too much and

becomes indecisive, anxious, and allergic to his family duties, he may benefit from a dose of *Lycopodium*.

And those are just a few of the possible situations and remedies that might apply. That’s why having your family home remedy kit with you to address simple health issues that come up during a move is so important! It’s also best to have a few good self-care books on hand. For the emotional troubles of transitions, as mentioned above, a consultation with a homeopathic professional is a good idea. Another great resource is Miranda Castro’s book, *Homeopathic Guide to Stress*, which gives many insights into the emotional and physical kinds of stress that may occur during a move and much good advice.

### Not just for scouts

If you are relocating or going on an extended trip, I would highly recommend having a homeopathic kit on hand throughout the hurly burly of it. I learned the hard way in that Dublin restroom that being prepared is not just for Girl Scouts!

Happy Trails!



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Aspinwall is a Registered Homeopath who since 1995 has worked extensively in Europe. In the early 1990s she designed a series of homeopathic kits that became bestsellers. She offers free online training (and her more extensive distance learning Multimedia Homeopathy Beginners Course) at her website [www.homeopathyworld.com](http://www.homeopathyworld.com). Now, for the first time, Mary is in the US and would be happy to work with you, either in person in Ojai, CA, or via phone and e-mail. Her U.S. website is [www.ojaihaven.com](http://www.ojaihaven.com).