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*I have struggled in the ocean for over 7 years fearing its power yet being mesmerized by its beauty. It has been a dream of mine for almost 10 years to surf and is what brought me to Hawaii from Chicago but my fear and limited swimming ability have always prevented me from being able to realize this dream. I didn't know how to tread water and water any deeper than chest high terrified me. I also could not venture further out than a few feet from shore before becoming paralyzed with fear and having severe panic attacks.*

*Panic attacks continued to haunt me after learning how to tread water and becoming a fairly proficient pool swimmer. Unexplainably I would choke up and become unable to move if I ventured beyond my comfort zone. Eventually I progressed but not enough where I could ever entertain the idea of surfing or snorkeling. This saddened me greatly. I would stare at my collage of great surfers, go to the contests and watch surf movies and TV shows feeling like I would never know what it was really like and feeling like the greatest failure in the world.*

*It would break my heart as I would watch people come into the swim classes being able to swim less than me or not at all and then progress to become excellent ocean swimmers entering contests and doing well. I had become very depressed and embarrassed by my "problem". I had no reasonable explanation for why I hadn't gotten anywhere and couldn't "get it". It was especially hard for me to feel this way as I am someone with a successful background in competitive running so athletics has always come easily for me-except for this. I wondered if I needed a psychiatrist or a special 12 step program for people like me but I felt completely alone. As far as I knew there was no Water Phobics anonymous. Why was I so scared of something that I loved so much?*

*Recently, JJ instituted an Aqua Phobia program utilizing Flower Essences, designed specifically for individuals like me. I was skeptical that anything could help me at this point but I was willing to try anything. We began slowly and I continued attending class when I could. Each week I was given a little bit of homework in conjunction with the program designed to test and expand my comfort zone. Some of it alone and some with JJ.*

*Long story short it IT WAS WORKING!!! Fast forward and less than a month later I was swimming in deep water and farther away from the shoreline than I had ever done before BY MYSELF!!! All this from the Flower Essence Therapy? I've also been able to increase my distance significantly and my form has improved because the fear isn't causing me to shrivel up in fear. I've even been able to start taking surf lessons again and have been able to stand up. When I fall I'm not freaking out in fear and am enjoying it.*

*I still have a long way to go but I know I will make it now. That's the difference. It's only a matter of time before I will be able to stand up in front of my classmates and be acknowledged for my improvements. Everyone's already amazed at how far I've come. My surf teacher and JJ say that I look and behave like a different person. I'm hanging out in deeper water and when we try something new I'm able to complete the task at hand and grow and not run back to shore or sit on the beach in defeat.*

*One day I will be able to tell other newcomers how I used to be in their place and maybe, MAYBE I'll even get to enter a surf contest or swim competition someday. If nothing else I already feel that I have won and succeeded in so many ways because I am able to enjoy swimming and do what I've always dreamed about which is to swim in Hawaii's beautiful oceans and enjoy mother nature at her best. I feel blessed with a secret potion of Flower*

*like Cinderella who has met the Fairy Godmother and been Essences. Thank you JJ. You have made (and continue to*

Sincerely,

*Stephanie Barksdale*

Faithful and Grateful Student

