



Why use Body/ Mind Approaches in ME/ CFS/ FM Recovery?

ME, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia are generally multi-levelled illnesses; with cause and effect on a physical, emotional, mental and spiritual level. To facilitate our healing often requires an awareness of, and working with, all levels of us. I assert this based on my own experience of healing from ME/ CFS, and that of countless others I have worked with, and met, who have found a way through. There are many modern approaches aimed specifically at recovering from ME/ CFS/ FM such as Reverse Therapy/ Mickel Therapy, The Lightning Process, The Optimum Health Clinic's approach and The Perrin Technique. Others that can be applied are Nutritional Therapy, Emotional Freedom Technique, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Reiki/ Natural Healing, Acupuncture, Bowen Technique, Massage and countless other complementary therapies that assist the body in healing itself. Furthermore, developing a spiritual and health practice such as meditation, yoga and/ or chi kung can be very beneficial.

We are whole beings, and what makes up that whole is our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual selves. All these aspects of us work together, and if there is a problem on one level, it will impact on the other levels as well. Often, before a person comes down with the symptoms of Chronic Fatigue, there has been a level of external and internal pressure that has been building up for some time. This may be a combination of factors such as a traumatic past experience, work stress, lifestyle choices and tendencies such as over-achieving, perfectionism or a constant need to be helping others over and above oneself. It could even be a spiritual calling which is out of line with where we actually are in our life, as though the illness forces us to go within and make life changes to become more in line with the truth which we aspire to.

I have had ME/ CFS, and for me it was a combination of various factors which I believe contributed to the illness developing. These were patterns of perfectionism and over-achieving, a traumatic past experience of being attacked and an addiction to 'doing things' while also seeking a spiritual life through Meditation and Buddhism. I now work predominantly with people with ME/ CFS/ FM and see similar patterns with clients, and in friends and colleagues who have been through the illness.

Reverse and Mickel Therapy draw on Hypnosis and NLP for recovery from ME/ CFS/ FM. It developed as one therapy before the two creators of it went separate ways. They propose that the illness is a result of a hyper-active Hypothalamus resulting in the fight or flight response being permanently switched on. To correct this, we need to learn to listen, and respond to, our 'body-mind' instead of our 'head-mind'. For me, Mickel Therapy helped me move through the final stages of my illness by helping me to learn to respond to my emotions, rather than ignoring them. Integrative therapists can draw on the principles of this way of working and integrate it in a more holistic way. For example, this therapy does not address the effects of an over-active mind and does not acknowledge the benefits many people experience from Nutritional intervention.

The Lightning Process is an NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) technique that was developed by Phil Parker and involves a process for calming unhelpful mental patterns and entering a more resourceful healing state. This often gets very good results, however, for some people they improve significantly and then relapse because it has not

necessarily got to core issues beneath the over-active mind. Why are we running all these unhelpful patterns in the first place? There is generally an event, or series of events, that have been experienced traumatically for the individual (may or may not be obvious trauma) and/ or a level of emotional baggage which we are carrying around. These issues have to be cleared from the body/ mind somehow and so it is often important that ways of working with it are used alongside this process.

The Optimum Health Clinic works with an integration of approaches to facilitate change and healing. This includes a process similar to The Lightning Process combined with ways of addressing the emotions and energy system; through other NLP techniques and EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique). EFT has been described as psychological acupuncture without the needles and involves tapping on specific points in the body while tuning into the issue, with verbal assistance to facilitate clearing the effects on the body-mind. They have practitioners based in London who work in this way one-to-one with clients. They also do The 90 Day Programme, which involves an integration of these tools and techniques, and other aspects of recovery from ME/ CFS/ FM in a group setting. I have facilitated on these courses, and organise courses myself in Sheffield.

I trained with the Optimum Health clinic and integrate their approaches with healing and bodywork. I have a passion for sharing information about ways of healing and trust that people will find the practitioner/ therapy that works for them through having a fuller awareness of what is available. Whether that is through me or someone else, I ultimately do not mind, as long as people are finding the keys to unravel their illness, and to move on to where they would like to be.

It is my belief that if anyone really wants to get well and they commit to a path of healing, that wellness can be theirs. Although of course the ultimate healing is to feel spiritually well, to connect more deeply with ourselves, in love and stillness, and to do this one does not require a well body. I also accept that it is often easier if you are young, but if you are older and want to recover, you have to begin to believe it is possible, take some steps to get there and you may well surprise yourself. I am aware that people in their eighties have got better, so really anything is possible. I have worked with a lady in her seventies who has had Fibromyalgia most of her life, and after a while of working together questioned whether or not she still had it.

In summary, we are whole beings, with many dimensions to us. We often need to be aware of all aspects if we want to heal from chronic illness, and the power of the mind-body connection. This is gradually filtering in to be a more mainstream concept. Many people are now finding a way through the mystery that was ME/ CFS/ FM, which therefore now seems less of a mystery, otherwise why would so many people be getting better? I know this may sound controversial, but I really believe there is a way through for most people if you commit and believe it to be possible. However, as I have mentioned, the ultimate healing is getting to a deeper sense of who we are and our purpose in life, which really goes beyond pain and illness; and even death!

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