

Shiatsu, Nutrition and a Mental Strategy in the Treatment of ME.

Mike Webster, a Shiatsu practitioner who lives near Dumbarton in Scotland successfully treats M E using a variety of skills to defeat the illness.

The case study for the 1999 summer issue of PROOF magazine was focused on Mike's work, publicising (with permission from the clients), case histories demonstrating the success of his work and his approach to treatment.

Having survived the illness himself, Mike has first hand experience of the devastating effects of ME, the impact it has on the life of the sufferer and the understanding required from family and friends. This experience has allowed him to devise a programme of treatment for each individual involving them in a strategy which removes them from the frustration and stress of being advised to just, 'sit and wait'.

Mike's treatment for ME sufferers is completely individual and falls into three main categories.

1) Shiatsu.

2) Nutrition.

3) Mental strategy.

Shiatsu (literally 'finger pressure')(Treatment is preceded by an in-depth case history)

The severity of the illness and potential recovery time can usually be estimated by gently pressing certain areas of the abdomen. This form of diagnosis is called a **Hara** diagnosis, used mainly by Shiatsu practitioners and is also used as a means of monitoring progress at the beginning of each treatment, which is carried out fully clothed in a warm room, usually on a futon,(thick padded mattress)on the floor.

The hara diagnosis, which was developed by Shisuto Masunaga, a Doctor of Psychology and Shiatsu Master, consists of gently pressing the soft organs within the abdomen. This explores the dynamics of energy within the body and the human energy field which should be in a state of continuous movement, expansion and contraction, transformation.

The continuous movement of expansion and contraction is known as Kyo-Jitsu. Kyo-expanded-Jitsu contracted. In health the exchange is continuous, but in illness, physical/mental a pattern becomes fixed and unmoving, systems within the body try to compensate, and symptoms arise.

As the pattern becomes more long term and fixed, (the natural movement of energy gravitating towards a denser body), symptoms worsen and the body/mind now deteriorates and the illness becomes steadily entrenched! As a general rule, the more 'jitsu' to be found within the hara the greater the potential for early recovery also the hard diagnosis indicates the areas which will be more responsive to treatment.

In ME there appears to be two main energy categories. 'Deficient' and 'Bound up'

The totally deficient client will appear to have no signs of life within the hard, resilience nil! Unnecessary movement of limbs, stretching, rotating has a detrimental effect using up vital energy. A strong treatment would be like trying to move a car away from a standing position in top gear, stalling the car, energetically stalling the client who would be drained and exhausted after the experience.

Sessions are initially short and quite specific with little movement of the client's limbs, and treatments are centred on energetically responsive areas which are recognised by the experienced practitioner.

With Shiatsu, unlike acupuncture, 'Tsubos' or 'acupuncture' points are not limited to those which are to be found neatly numbered and catalogued and placed on charts for all to see, points manifest like hot springs on the body and are readily recognised by the trained practitioner.

The areas which are stimulated, (mainly by thumb pressure) are left alone if they are not immediately responsive, as persistence on the part of the therapist will, in this case, tire the client as will long sessions at this early stage in treatment.

All small pockets of energy which may be classed as 'Jitsu' (or contracted energy), are considered 'good news' and left alone for the time being.

Once there are signs of improvement in the clients condition these pockets of Jitsu will be called upon to play their part in raising the energy levels of the client and assist in the process towards health.

Treating the 'bound up' client is an easier proposition for the therapist. Energy is usually held in tension in the upper body, neck shoulders and back-nothing moving. The approach to treatment is markedly different from the deficient client. The polarity of Kayo-Jitsu is well marked and fixed, energy is not available for use. Freeing this off is the first step to re-establishing the natural flow of expansion and contraction.

Once freed and moving, stimulation of the energetic system is the next step.

Sarah, A college lecturer, had M.E for eight years before treatment and wasn't able to cope with work, the long hours involved with teaching and the preparation. She was also preparing for her Master's degree in Business Studies working long into the night. Time off work with illness put her job on the line so something needed to be done and now!

Sarah's ME was of the deficient type..

Sarah's initial diagnosis of Kidney and Spleen The 'kidney' diagnostic area in psychological terms suggested anxiety, stress and mental depletion, lack of drive and overwork. The diagnostic area of 'spleen' showed lack of support from family and work also an inability to, inability to think clearly or absorb information!

On a more physical level, back pain, poor nutritional absorption, food intolerances (wheat in particular), Lethargy.

Short specific shiatsu treatments stimulated her body into recovery.

Initially, treatments were carried out with the minimum of movement. There were no rotations or stretches for the first few treatments but, gradually over a period of time, as Sarah's energy started to return, treatments although still short became more stimulating, bring her body and mind back to life.

The first signs of recovery are within the mind, a realisation and a feeling that you can do more than you are doing. This is quite different from the feeling that you **have** to do more. This a time for celebration but also one of restraint as the road to recovery opens up in front of you, and your new found energy and motivation pushes you to do more than your body is capable of sustaining. It is a time for conservation.

Nutrition (Individual clinical nutrition profile)

An individually tailored nutritional programme is prepared for the client comprising of dietary changes where required and a supporting programme of nutritional supplementation. Clients are usually lacking, for example,

sufficient amounts of the B vitamins which are needed, amongst a range of important tasks, for the health of the immune system and minerals such as Zinc, and Magnesium which is poorly absorbed in M.E. Not only does this support the work of the shiatsu treatment aiding the rebuilding of the immune system, the body and the mind, but it is also an area where the client can take an active part in their own recovery.

Sarah's nutritional requirements for recovery were simple to diagnose, Amongst other problems which were in evidence, a profile highlighted that her body was unable to convert simple sugars into energy, and low levels were stimulating the release of adrenaline. **S's** diet consisted mainly of bread and wheat products which convert to simple sugars very quickly and cannot be converted into energy which is stored mainly in the liver. A shift to complex carbohydrates in the shape of selected whole vegetable foods, and easily digestible protein, allowed her body to process the foods needed for the recovery of her immune system, whilst supplying the needs of the rest of her body/mind without overburdening it.

Mental strategy

Moving away from the 'rest, wait and see' approach to ME the client is given a tactical approach to combating the illness. As with the nutritional programme, it is something they can **do**, waiting is turned into something positive giving the client a degree of control over the progress of their illness as, with growing confidence they take an active part in facilitating their own recovery.

Sarah's feelings of inadequacy had placed her in a vulnerable position making her take on extra tasks which were pressed upon her, Tasks which she was incapable of completing within her overwhelming work load even in good health, the final straw! Feelings of guilt pushed her further down the path to debilitation and overwhelming lethargy. She had to learn to say NO! This is one of the most difficult areas on the road to recovery as M.E. often strikes those who are most conscientious, keeping going despite how debilitated and ill they feel.

Sarah learned to prioritise and with this came the realisation that she was the one who had to make the choice between recovery and prolonged illness, only she could make decide that she was not able to take on more than she was capable of achieving and therefore only she could say NO! This realisation enabled her to, once again, take charge of her life, taking back control once more, placing one foot before the other on the road to recovery.

Treatments finish with a realistic appraisal of the client's present state of recovery, also any adjustment which may be needed to diet or strategy. It is made perfectly clear to the client from the beginning of treatment that their full commitment and cooperation is required in order that any progress towards recovery is initiated and then maintained.

Diets are expected to be adhered to and the constant battle against using up that 'burst' of energy has to be maintained, at least for the time being. Where lapses occur, progress is monitored by the length of time needed to recover, the shorter, the better!

With continuing progress towards recovery, time between shiatsu treatments is extended with dietary adjustments as required. The strategy is reinforced in order that there is no slipping back, to a once again, unacceptable view of themselves and their illness. Once self empowered and armed with the tools of recovery there is no looking back to the time they felt they would never forget.

Sarah has now left the teaching profession and embarked on the adventure of a lifetime which will tax her physical abilities to the limit, an adventure which would tax the physical capabilities of someone half her age. after six months at sea Sarah is having the time of her life, she has no wish to return to a normal job and her M.E is no longer in evidence. She is once again her own person, living, controlling and enjoying her own life.