

JANE'S FLASH RECOVERY



When nurse Jane Flowers (left) was bedridden for a year with severe ME, she was convinced that she would never get better. Then she

discovered the Lightning Process...

Report ANGELA NEUSTATTER
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Jane Flowers, 50, jumps up from the window seat of her Brighton home, the large family dog she has just walked for two hours beside her, and opens the front door. She makes coffee, chats animatedly and laughs a lot.

Nothing unusual in this, you might think, except that three months earlier Jane was bedridden with such acute ME that she had not been able to go downstairs for the past year. Crossing the landing to the bathroom left her on the point of collapse and taking a shower was out of the question. Her eldest daughter Sally, 17, bed-bathed her and washed her hair. Jane's eyes hurt if she kept them open for more than a few minutes and a raised

noise seemed to tear her head apart.

'I was terrified. I thought I would never get better,' she says. 'The family went into freefall. My 11-year-old daughter Louise asked me if I was going to die. My husband Adam was devastated by what seemed the unlikelihood of my ever being well, or us ever getting back our loving relationship.'

It was in January 2006 that Jane, a highly qualified pain management nurse, and daughter-in-law of the renowned London art gallery owner Angela Flowers, reached the point where she retired to her bed for the next 12 months. She'd had a particularly bad dose of flu and, although she got better enough to

return to work, she was quickly overwhelmed by exhaustion. 'I found that doing anything, even walking around the house, was impossibly hard. My stomach became swollen and painful. I was constantly on the verge of tears.'

The doctor diagnosed ME but, Jane says, 'Nobody really understands the condition, and if you have it badly, there's very little doctors can offer you. I tried antidepressants but they didn't work. Neither did cognitive behavioural therapy or activity management. Special diets did nothing to improve my state and I spent a fortune on vitamins that were supposed to help strengthen my body, but they were useless.'

The roots of the ME had been there, Jane believes, for many years. She suffered postnatal depression when she gave birth to Sally, her daughter by her first marriage. She goes on: 'But then I met Adam, had Louise, took on a stepdaughter and started a new job. Everything felt wonderful and exciting. However, as time went by I began to feel more and more exhausted and that I wasn't able to cope with it all. I became anxious and then insomniac and I was aware of feeling unbearably stressed.'

As she lay in bed, unable to do anything but listen to the radio at gentle volume, Jane heard an item about the Lightning Process, which was initiated in 2000 by Phil Parker, hypnotherapist, osteopath and neurolinguistic programming (NLP) practitioner. Sufferers of ME and a range of other stress-related diseases learn how they can teach the body to behave differently and enable the brain to create new positive neurological pathways.

Jane says, 'Listening to people talking about how they had been helped I felt, for the first time, that this might be something for me. As a medical practitioner I know that the nervous system is not fixed – it can be altered for better or worse. The idea of your brain learning to conjure up positive neuro-chemicals instead of negative stress

hormones made sense. I have always been wary of things that seem too new age, but this had a sound scientific basis.'

Jane contacted Charlotte Farrant, a practitioner willing to come to the house (the Lightning Process is most often done in groups and in residential settings). Farrant, 42, had been an ME sufferer herself for 18 years. She recovered over a period of weeks after doing the Lightning Process with Phil Parker, and was so impressed that she took the training course.

'When I arrived at Jane's home, her husband let me in,' Charlotte says. 'She was upstairs lying in a dark bedroom looking like a corpse. At the end of the three days she was dressed and made up, ready to go on a shopping expedition.' Over the ten hours spread across three days that Charlotte spent with Jane, she addressed the complex physiology that underlies ME and showed how it is possible through body movements, postures and asking key questions to repattern your neurology.

And that, Jane says, is what happened. 'During the first hour of the course I felt my eyes clear. During the second my head cleared and during the last two hours I was able to get up and practise the movements. After Charlotte had gone I had a bath on my own, got dressed and went downstairs to greet my husband and children for the first time in a year.'

'By the end of the third day I was able to go into town for the first time since I retired to bed and spent five wonderful hours there.'

Charlotte says, 'I watched Jane come back to life. She said she was the happiest woman in the world.'

It is the combining of the life-coaching techniques of NLP, self-hypnosis and the powerful impact of osteopathy on muscles and the skeleton that is key, says Phil Parker, who is also principal of the European College of Holistic Medicine. He says: 'This approach is fundamentally different to therapy or treatment because it is not done to people, they do it for

'IT WORKED FOR MY DAUGHTER'



ESTHER RANTZEN, journalist and author: 'My elder daughter

Emily had ME for 14 years. A friend told her about Phil Parker's Lightning Process and though she had steadfastly refused all other complementary treatments, she decided to give this one a go. Although the process, I am told, does not work for everyone with ME, it worked for Emily, and for many other people I have subsequently recommended should try it. Today, Emily has a full-time job and a full social life. My daughter is well again.'

'MY WIFE WAS TRANSFORMED'



AUSTIN HEALEY, *Strictly Come Dancing* and former

England rugby star, whose wife Louise developed ME after the birth of their first child: 'Lou had no energy. I spent a lot of time trying to find ways of making her better, but I didn't get anywhere. Then I read about Esther Rantzen's daughter, who had been helped by Phil Parker. I thought, "Right, I'll give that a crack." But I was sceptical – I thought the people going through the programme were acting. Then I saw the transformation in Lou in just three days. It was like a miracle – I had my old wife back.'

themselves and it is a tool they can use throughout their lives.'

Parker, who works in the UK and the US, specialises in ME and sees people of all ages, from children to pensioners, who may have had it for anything from a few months to 40 years. Some 85 per cent recover enough to lead normal lives, he says. Some report that they're better by the end of their three-day training, for others such as Charlotte, it can take longer.

And then there are the wonder stories. 'I had someone who arrived in a wheelchair because he could stagger just a few yards with a stick,' says Parker. 'After the training he walked 26 miles. A mother who was "lost" to her family not only got better but went on to have twins.'

'But it does require commitment because the process is only as successful as the amount a person puts into it. It is so satisfying because this is an area where modern medicine has very little to offer.'

It is difficult to imagine that Jane, with her long, dark curls brushed to a sheen, stylishly dressed and well made up, is the immobilised wretched person she describes of a few months ago. For her the great joy is that it was not 'a short-term wonder that worked for a few weeks and then had me back where I started'. She felt so much better she even persuaded Adam that they should take on a boisterous rescue dog.

She has started painting and has a busy social life, making up for lost time. But for now she will not go back to work as she sees this as an opportunity to spend more time with her family.

Jane smiles broadly, describing the way she views her transformation. 'It's like a rebirth. I've got a whole new chunk of life which I can enjoy with vigour and I feel wonderfully optimistic about the time ahead.' ☑

For more details of Phil Parker's Lightning Process, tel: 020 8895 4007 or visit lightningprocess.com