

The **Positive** Aftermath of My CFS Journey

by Tammara Nix

there are **better** days to come

This is not meant as an article to tell my story, nor is it a testimonial to describe the battle, it's to impart the happy-ever-after outcome of a nine-year journey with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS, also known as ME), so others with the same illness may be open to the anticipation of life without the weight of an unseen affliction.

According to the Associated New Zealand ME Society, up to 20,000 New Zealanders suffer from CFS. While symptoms are many and vary from case to case, there is an underlying disability of burn out; a crippling, uncontrollable exhaustion where you cease to function.

In January 2009, I celebrated my 30th birthday as liberation from my twenties; a goodbye to the years that originally said goodbye to me. It's now a frolic into the new, finally discharged from the confinements of decade number three. There is no going back – I have been symptom free for the past nine months. It's not from luck; I wasn't hand-chosen to wake up and begin a brand new life. Like all things worthwhile, I had to work for my fairytale ending.

At 19, I started body-building, training under the guidance of two heavily competitive men. I endeavoured to be just like them, pushing my body beyond extreme. I would wake up in the morning after a calf muscle workout from the previous day and be unable to stand – my legs were crying. But I forced further. Regime meant an arm workout that afternoon. I could barely undress after the session, my arms frozen with shock from the agony they just went through. After 18 months of deliberate torture and a determined will to succeed, my body began to complain. It was the beginning of a drawn-out end to the dream list of achievements I wished to claim for myself.

I ignored the signs. Despite symptoms of deep-seated tiredness and emotional instability, I continued to swallow myself in a world of intense physical exertion. It's what I did best and nothing was going to take it away from me. But I was won over. Vitality no longer lingered. As if someone had said 'no more', the life force was taken out from under my feet overnight. I could barely walk upon waking one morning and my personally acclaimed willpower wouldn't pull me through.

Suddenly all was impossible as the curtains were drawn on my world of fitness – and my life. Hopes and goals faded fast. Grades at tertiary level dropped from As to Ds, a life-time opportunity to attend a scholarship in America was turned down, and I had no choice but to decline employment offers that would help further my career. I wasn't able to escape my own time warp. Instead my health deteriorated further as I continued to search for answers to getting better.

Symptoms heightened and I wondered if I was losing sanity. My body had mysteriously shutdown but I still looked perfectly healthy. The immeasurable fatigue and deep muscle pain eventually drained the last of my senses and mental ailments soon joined the physical complaints. I began to live in a void, disillusioned by the expressions of an illness nobody could understand or even really cared about. Day to day reality was lost and I was living on my own in a world that felt surreal.

My memory became impaired as I would forget how to speak common words and thread sentences together. I would get embarrassed frequently asking people to repeat what they said because I was too slow to follow, and I would fail to remember the names of friends I saw every week. Regular panic attacks led to strong feelings of insecurity – I was a stranger to myself, aloof and afraid. I used to ponder why I had become so introverted, for I was always the flamboyant individual who strived to achieve.

I became severely depressed and with many moments of complete hopelessness I was close to ending my life. I was living with my face in my hands as my spark had long dwindled and I functioned in an endless daze. I tried to put on a good show for others – I didn't want them to see the shadow I had moved into. Not many would have understood anyway. "You look fine, just get over it", was the phrase I wished to avoid like the plague.

I was lucky to have a general practitioner who was compassionate and tried his best, considering the limited knowledge that existed in the medical field on CFS. But unfortunately referrals were made that hindered my path to finding solutions. I was sent to a private physician who concluded in a report after a 15-minute interview and physical examination "... (Her) visual hallucinations make me wonder whether there is more than depression i.e. some schizophrenic problem ..." I was told there was no physical basis to my complaint. I refused psychotropic



drugs, antidepressants and any visit to a psychiatrist. I had to work hard at trusting my own instincts – I wasn't weird, I didn't need a personality analysis – I just wanted to know the cause.

What kept me going was a wild determination (that probably got me where I was in the first place) to live the day where I was free from this foreign infirmity, no matter how long it took. There was no newly awakened cure and I was told many never recover. But my imagination never ceased to fail as I mused each day over a romantic golden dawn, rescued by a prince with his palliative potion of love. It wasn't an over-rated fantasy I told myself, love was the only thing left to believe in.

Years passed as I tried over a dozen alternative therapies. I was desperate for a break in any of the symptoms. As well as love and support, my parents poured out a lot of money from their pocket to do anything to bring their daughter back. But success was always short-lived – the same ailments would consistently return.

Advised lifestyle change of rest and slow pace never reduced the distressing body sensations. Various hands-on healers relieved anxiety and depression, but these symptoms would manifest again the following week. I had always been a consciously healthy eater so any diet change from suggested food intolerances didn't stop gastro-intestinal problems. Osteopaths who included cranial-sacral work eased the brain-fog, though my concentration still lasted less than a minute. Naturopaths stirred herbal concoctions for a daily supplement

intake, but it produced minimal amounts of new-found energy.

These were just a few of the treatments, all which addressed the symptoms yet never the underlying cause. So I remained at rock bottom.

However, then it came. Just as I was losing faith in ever returning to full health, I was told of a treatment called Mickel Therapy that successfully removed CFS from people's lives. Such a triumph was unfamiliar so I was hesitant to believe the bold statement. But it was the final hope.

I arranged sessions with a Mickel therapist who, had not only conquered their own journey with CFS, but naturally understood how I was feeling. For the first time I had found a treatment that was real; the explanation true in my own experience. There was no scientific theory or spiritual notion – just a practical answer for the cause of my symptoms.

I clearly remember the rush of hungry exuberance I felt during the course of my first visit. "This is it!" I declared, "I've found the cause!" Like an epiphany, the gates of dawn opened and happy-ever-after shined in my eyes. My journey to recovery had begun.

Nine months later the result is invaluable. After years of being markedly depressed, there has been no trial of psychological chaos; not a flickered moment of heaviness since. I've had the energy and frame of mind to travel to the other side of the world twice in the past six months when prior to treatment I was barely unable to leave the front yard. I now practise yoga 12 hours a week with a level of intensity similar to my days of bodybuilding, yet never do I get symptoms of fatigue.

As with any illness you are forced to re-evaluate your life at a deeper level. I've left the challenge behind of wanting to make my mark in the world. There is no more trying. I enjoy doing small things with big love and live with gratitude for simple matters. From a time of dire dejection I ardently enjoy life for everything that it offers.

I'm not ever vulnerable to the idea of CFS ever returning. 🍷

some background information

Dr David Mickel, founder of Mickel Therapy, left his job as a general practitioner to focus on developing a successful treatment for CFS. Over the past four years, Dr Mickel and his colleagues have now seen more than 2000 sufferers* (who were bedbound, in a wheelchair, or confined to the space of their home) regain full health after treatment.

"Mickel Therapy understands symptoms as necessary and useful communication from the body. Mickel Therapy works by listening to and interpreting symptoms rather than by trying to eradicate them," says Dr Mickel.

The treatment proceeds by translating symptoms to find the underlying cause of 'disease' within the body, and then shows those who are ill how to interpret and use this communication to make themselves well.

There is no diet change, supplements, medication or psychological analysis involved – just a practical application for complete recovery. It is a specialised therapy in a classification of its own; acknowledging the empowerment that comes from healing ourselves.

From being a passionately active individual, who was suddenly restricted to the walls of her room, I have come away from the illness with a new light on how to live my life. So I hope through various ways this article reaches many who suffer from CFS. Not for the sake of a story, but to pass on the confidence in better days to come.

Tammara recently travelled to Scotland to train as a Mickel Therapist.

*Mickel Therapy is not restricted to CFS/ME conditions, but also successfully treats Fibromyalgia, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Anxiety, Insomnia and Depression.