

Health & wellbeing

Gut instincts

Chronic and long-term illnesses make life a misery for thousands of people in the North-East. Lauren Pyrah speaks to an ME sufferer who says alternative therapy has helped her make a complete recovery

LIKE many 20-year-olds, Megan Moore has a lot to look forward to. Full of energy and enthusiasm, she is off to the University of East Anglia in September to study film, one of her lifelong passions.

Looking at her, it is difficult to believe that only six months ago, she could barely get out of bed after being struck down by debilitating illness myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME).

The illness, which can only be managed and not cured by conventional medicine, is defined as persistent fatigue and other symptoms for a minimum of six months, not caused by ongoing exertion or a medical condition and not relieved by rest.

Megan, from North Yorkshire, says she has been cured of the illness thanks to Mickel Therapy practitioner Maria Whiteley. Maria, who is originally from Leeds and now lives in the Consett area of County Durham, is a former nurse who now practises the alternative treatment.

The brainchild of Scottish GP Dr David Mickel, the therapy is designed to treat a number of illnesses that cannot be cured by conventional medicine, such as ME, as well as fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety, depression and migraines.

Mickel Therapy is based on the premise that these illnesses are caused by the body reacting to stresses and strains caused by the patient doing what is expected of them, rather than what their gut instinct tells them.

The practitioner teaches the patient techniques to help them listen to their primary emotions and instincts, understand and follow them. Once these instincts are acted on, the symptoms will desist.

Megan was diagnosed with ME when she was 16, and had been suffering from the symptoms since she was 15. Although she followed the doctor's advice to take graduated exercise and a good diet, her symptoms persisted to the point where she was attending sixth form college just once a week while studying for her A-levels.

Despite this, Megan achieved the results needed to read classics at Cambridge University. Her symptoms got better over the summer, only to worsen once she started university.

"Looking back on that time now, I realise how ill I was," she says. "I went home a week into the third term. I did very little for a month, just trying to get some energy back. At one time I couldn't physically lift the water jug to pour myself a drink."

Megan's grandmother suggested she try Mickel Therapy after speaking to a nurse about Megan's condition. She found Maria Whiteley through the internet and went for her first appointment in February.

"I was incredibly sceptical about the whole thing at first, to be honest," Megan says. "The fact that we'd heard about the treatment from a nurse helped, but what Maria said to me at my initial appointment made sense, so I wanted to give it a try."

"For example, I used to get a sensation in my shoulders before my symptoms kicked in with force, such as pain or overwhelming fatigue, or brain fog. Maria explained that the shoulders represent responsibility; I was literally taking the weight of the world on my shoulders."

"When Maria explained that symptoms related directly to emotional concerns, and that mine were there to tell me that I wasn't living my own happy, authentic life, it all made sense."

With Maria's help, Megan used a technique called "splitting" to separate what she really wanted to do from what she thought she wanted to do, and realised that although she felt she should go back to Cambridge, she really wanted to go to the University of East Anglia and study film.

She said: "I feel so much better physically now that I understand what my symptoms have been telling me, having come to realise the power I have in the choices I make, and how crucial that is when it comes to health, physically and mentally."

Maria says: "Megan was choosing not to address her intuition in the first instance because



Setting up: the Avery Clinic, in Medomsley, near Consett, where Maria Whiteley works

the culture she was buying into gives so much importance to headspeak, for example, 'I must', and, 'I have to function at a certain level'. She simply wasn't seriously considering how happy she was feeling; she was so concerned with the next thing she had to do, according to the culture she had bought into, until she became ill.

"This is why positive thinking, or any psychological therapy, will at best only help clients manage their headspeak. It will not cure physical symptoms."

"Mickel Therapy takes the view that when we understand and respond to primary emotions as they arise, and understand that they arise in our body consciousness before thought, we see that emotions are vital information, relating to our experience of life, and require an authentic response from us in the form of taking an action."

"Megan knew exactly what changes needed to be made once she allowed her intuition to guide her. She made the decision to leave university, come home and address her circumstances in accordance with what she really felt like doing."

"There's no stopping her now."

■ For more information about Mickel Therapy practitioner Maria Whiteley, visit self-help-mate.co.uk, email info@self-help-mate.co.uk or call 07766-106119.

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