

Do Complementary Therapies Like Reflexology Really Work?

Well, as a Reflexologist for over thirteen years you'd expect me to say an unequivocal 'yes' of course they do! I would argue, yes, without a doubt Complementary Therapies do work but I think many people turn to Complementary therapies such as Acupuncture, Reflexology and Massage with conditions they haven't been able to CURE using conventional medicine. They come to the world of complementary medicine looking for that cure. Most times they want it in the form of a pill or potion which is quick, requires no change in lifestyle and doesn't distract from the normal busy life they are leading. Exactly what they were expecting from their G.P.

In common with conventional medicine, natural therapies can provide instant relief, however, as with conventional medicine, seldom provide an instant cure. We don't often hear in public the stories of how allopathic or conventional medicine has caused a problem but we all know that the drugs and treatments offered, more often than not, come with unwelcome side effects.

The hunt for a CURE has led me on a personal journey and taught me some hard lessons. I was diagnosed with M.E. in 1994. It is sometimes referred to as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, and gives symptoms of extreme tiredness, slow recovery from activity, muscle and joint pain, heightened allergic reactions and many more; I've been using both conventional and natural medicine to try to overcome it.

In 1994 Natural Therapies were not very well publicised and I entered into a depressing round of visits to the GP while he tried to deal with each of my symptoms separately. One of my lowest points came when told by my GP that there was nothing he could do to help. The only help on offer was anti-depressants. I had no energy, was riddled with pain and this was making me very unhappy but I wasn't depressed and couldn't see the point in taking them. Being told there was no more help on offer had a profound effect on me. As a fighter by nature I refused to accept this. The same Doctor began shouting at me when I said I wanted to try alternative ways of dealing with the illness. He called the ME specialist a 'charlatan' and said I would be wasting my money.

It was at that time that I began to question the Doctor patient relationship. I really respected him and his opinion. He was well qualified and was earning a good salary on the NHS, paid for by my taxes, yet because I was looking for help not available on the NHS my feelings didn't seem to count. He argued that "all they're doing is listening to you". In some respects he was right because the twenty plus therapists I have since seen have all had one thing in common. They have given me time and space and listened to me. I learned that I had to take responsibility for my own health and well being.

For me this is a key factor in the healing ability of a therapist. Not only should they be qualified to carry out their particular specialism, equally as important is their willingness to really listen and understand what is happening physically and mentally: the wholistic approach. They should be there to offer possible ways forward but work in partnership with us so we come to our own decisions about what is best.

I haven't yet been fortunate to find a cure, some ME sufferers have. I have, however, learned to listen to my body and work with it. We are all unique and most of us are given this precious gift of 'health' when we are born. We inherit all sorts of foibles and traits and are influenced by the environment we grow up in and the nurturing we

receive. Unfortunately accidents occur which we can't control but also there is a huge amount of our precious gift that we have enormous power over. The old cliché that we only realise how much we need something when it's gone, is so true of our health.

That fundamental part of ourselves, our health, deserves to be given a main part in the drama that is our life. We do need to work at keeping well throughout our lives; feeding ourselves spiritually, mentally and physically with nurturing thoughts, fulfilling work, good food, exercise and company. I've realised that staying well is part of our life's journey. It is a fact that some people's journey is more taxing than others. Another very hard lesson I've had to learn is acceptance. Accepting who we are, our strengths and our limitations and forging on ahead and loving the unique individual we are. Good Natural Health therapists recognise this and that is why Natural Therapies work.

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