

MY SINCERE hope is that those suffering such debilitating conditions as myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) and fibromyalgia can take heart from my personal experience and move on in their lives.

I had medically diagnosed CFS/ME for many years, with progressively worsening bouts of the illness. Each episode was triggered by a traumatic event (such as a car accident) or illness (glandular fever) and lasted longer each time.

The final bout lasted eight years and at one point I was almost completely bed-bound, able to walk only with support, unable to hold a conversation or even lift my head up, let alone carry on a normal life. My symptoms were very real and physical: extreme exhaustion, severe aches and pains, weakness, numbness, chest palpitations, brain fog, dizziness, sensitivity to light, sound, chemicals and electricity, insomnia, panic attacks, IBS-type symptoms — you name it.

I was a recluse and too ill to work or even look after my family. I just couldn't cope with people going on about it and not understanding (comments such as 'You look well' or 'You just need to get yourself something to do' were unhelpful). I wasn't depressed — I started every morning wanting a better day — and I had all the tests for every possible physical and mental illness. In the end, I was diagnosed with chronic CFS/ME (names that are often interchangeable by the medical profession). Over the years I read books and websites about CFS/ME and saw many doctors and alternative practitioners, most of whom could offer no significant help or even a satisfactory explanation as to why I was so ill.

One alternative practitioner suggested it was 'because I was unfit'. I would have punched him on the nose if I'd had the energy. Many suggested it was 'just' depression; CFS/ME can, understandably, make you feel depressed, but it's not the depression causing the illness. I read about the Lightning Process (LP), but was put off at first by negative views.

I now realise some people have made a career out of CFS/ME 'sufferers'. If everyone got better as quickly as they can after doing LP, they would be out of a job.

Then, two years ago, my nine-year-old son was also diagnosed with CFS/ME. Our lucky break came

A flash of lightning that changed my life



Transformed: Claire Smith and (inset) her son Freddie have recovered from ME

when a consultant paediatrician told us how many of his patients had got better with LP, though NHS protocols forbade him from recommending it. We felt we had nothing to lose and booked with a qualified Lightning Process practitioner in Sussex. At the end of the three-day seminar, my son was transformed from a horizontal invalid, barely able to sit up, with aching joints and no energy, to a normal bright-eyed energetic boy running round the garden

playing football. I, too, experienced an extraordinary recovery. My increased energy levels were remarkable and I felt very different, mentally and physically. The following week we went on holiday, taking bracing walks along the beach and up and down the cliffs for the first time ever; six weeks later, my son went caving in the Lake District. If you had seen us before we did the LP, you would think it was truly a miracle. Two years after learning the process, we

feel marvellous: we enjoy good health and have busy lives.

My son is a happy, active schoolboy who plays football, rugby and cricket, climbs trees, goes out with his mates and doesn't give CFS/ME a second thought.

I'm loving my life as a busy mother, dog owner, school volunteer and holistic therapist. I'm not on any medication or supplements and am eating, sleeping and doing everything completely normally. I still use the Lightning Process training to deal with life's usual up and downs — it is a remarkable tool that you are taught to use whenever you need it. Most important, I have kicked CFS/ME out of my life for good.

As a rational scientist, with a Master's degree in biological sciences, the process makes a lot of sense to me.

Put simply, CFS/ME is a physical illness with a neurological component: the process can retrain the brain to use new neural pathways instead of the old ones that have locked the body into a perpetual state of illness.

These neural pathways make the brain produce chemicals (hormones, enzymes and neurotransmitters) that cause real physical symptoms in the body and so can be changed by the process technique to stop unwanted symptoms.

It's not just mind over matter or positive thinking; there's a very real change in physical symptoms, energy and biochemistry in the body.

There's nothing magical, mystical or secretive about the process. It isn't a 'treatment' done to you nor some 'weird brain-washing'.

It's a specific technique composed of a series of particular words and actions that you learn under supervision from a qualified practitioner over three short days to ensure maximum benefit from the process.

You practise it again and again after the initial training and after that you use it whenever you need to.

CLAIRE SMITH, address supplied.