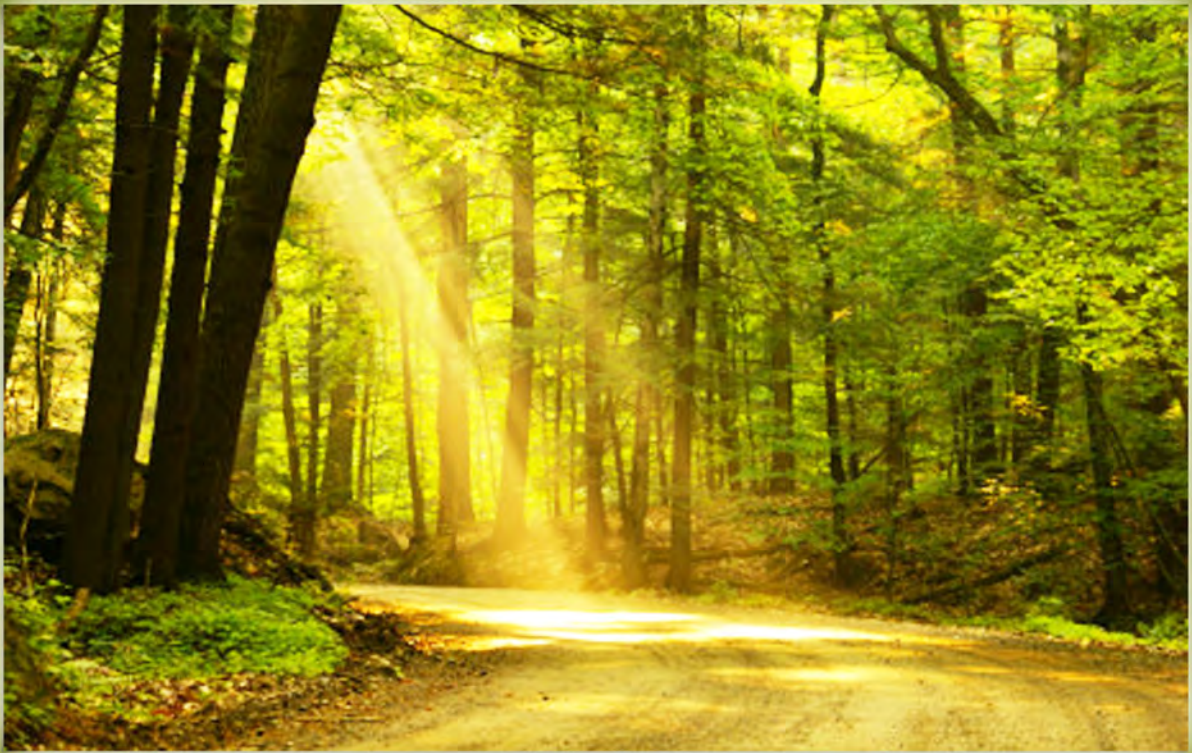


THE 5 STEPS TO HEALTH



MANAGING M.E. / CFS BY
UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSE

DR C J BOWEN

Introduction:

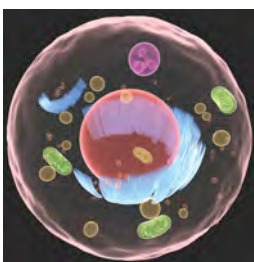
It is estimated that over 250,000 people in the UK are currently experiencing the full-blown symptoms of a condition known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or Myalgic Encephalomyelitis. In America this figure is likely to be well over 1 million. Every year, thousands of individuals around the world, from all walks of life, suddenly (*and sometimes not-so-suddenly*) find their life and lifestyle choices radically changed by development of an increasingly recognizable yet diverse range of symptoms. Until recently, there has been very little true understanding around the causes and best way to manage this complex and often debilitating condition. Now, however, an expanding wealth of resources and information is being made available and individuals are realising the importance of taking responsibility for their own health and recovery.

As a conventionally-trained medical doctor, now additionally qualified in various alternative therapies as well, having experienced many years of severe M.E. / CFS symptoms myself – and now leading a fully functioning, healthy, active and happy life, I offer this e-book as a self-help guide to gaining a greater understanding of what is actually going on inside your body and how you can best regain your health and achieve all you desire in your life.

The aim of this book is to assist and empower you on your own recovery journey, by offering explanations and tools which you can explore further and utilise in order to define your own personalised treatment plan – to both manage your symptoms on a day-to-day basis as well as address the root causes of the condition to bring about a more speedy and effective return to health.



I believe Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (M.E.) or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) is caused by system overload, through a toxic environment (bacteria, parasites, heavy metals etc) and stressful life experiences (physical, mental and emotional) – leading to a process inside the body



named *accelerated oxidative injury*. This means that *free radicals*, which are damaging particles formed both outside and within the body, cause damage to enzymes and structures within cells. This then causes a deficit of oxygen at a cellular level and prevents the energy-production-process within the cells from working efficiently. There is increasing evidence from

numerous researchers proving that, at the cellular level within the body, this is the underlying process going on in many diseases.

When occurring in cells throughout the body this *oxidative injury* (also called *oxidative stress*) can cause the multitude of systemic symptoms such as fatigue, brain-fog, pain, loss of temperature control etc that we have all come to know (but definitely not love!)



Since everyone's experience of M.E. / CFS is unique, those with M.E. / CFS need an individualised, holistic (meaning 'whole-body', 'whole-life') approach of treatment, implementing changes and therapies in five key areas. Just as a jigsaw requires all the pieces to be in place for you to enjoy and understand the complete picture, so there are several different aspects of health that need to be addressed and 'put into place' in order for individuals with M.E. / CFS to enjoy complete and optimum health. Often, people will try a single treatment strategy and not find it helpful – yet when combined with other measures, the same treatment – with an 'integrative approach', produces a much more beneficial response – completing the jigsaw much more readily!

The general management plan I have designed, based on my own recovery and dozens of people I have worked with since then, can be adapted for each individual – it is known as the *Five Steps to Health*.

The objective of *Five Steps to Health* is to empower individuals with M.E, by providing them with knowledge and tools to help them on their personal quest for better health as and when they feel able. Since the main contributing factors to the illness do vary between individuals – and the visible effects of the condition also vary, some aspects of the Recovery Protocol will be more relevant and significant than others – if you can be supervised by a knowledgeable practitioner whilst undertaking the *Five Steps* Protocol, they will be able to assist you in focusing on the most relevant areas for your personal recovery.



5 Steps to Health

The five key areas addressed in Five Steps to Health are as follows:

1. **DETOXIFICATION** – Detoxification of the whole body and decongestion of the lymphatic system, including treatment of underlying infections and management of heavy metal poisoning.
2. **OXYGENATION** – Improving levels and effectiveness of oxygen reaching every cell in the body, improving all metabolic processes.
3. **DIET AND SUPPLEMENTATION** – Ensuring optimal nutrition for the recovering individual, avoiding overload of unhelpful food and drink and making the process as enjoyable and unrestrictive as possible!
4. **RECONDITIONING OF BODY** – Gently regaining any lost flexibility and strength of the body and creating a positive routine which prevents exacerbation of symptoms and maintains functioning of the physical body.
5. **RECONDITIONING OF MIND** – Recognition of the mental and emotional effects of chronic illness on an individual and addressing those effects to bring about a new way of being in the world which will support the optimum health of body, mind and spirit.



M.E. or CFS or PVFS?

There has been much debate over recent years about the differences between Fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and similar disorders. It is believed that the conditions known as Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS), Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (M.E.) and Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome (PVFS) are all variants within the same spectrum of disease. Individuals with these conditions may suffer to differing extents with differing symptoms, but the underlying disease process is the same for each and therefore a similar treatment protocol can be effective in each. The different names seem to reflect the most significant symptoms present at the time of diagnosis and/or the field of expertise of the diagnosing physician. For ease of writing, the term *M.E. / CFS* will be used throughout this text to denote each of the above conditions and any combination of them.

How does M.E. / CFS Develop?

There is significant evidence to suggest that individuals with M.E. / CFS Complex have lower-than-normal levels of oxygen, both within their blood transport system and actually within their cells. Studies have also shown that oxygen therapies and other forms of treatment which aim to increase levels of oxygen levels in cells have a positive effect on M.E. / CFS patients. Since oxygen is the most important nutrient for the body (humans can survive weeks without food, days without water, but only minutes without oxygen), and it is necessary for nearly all the body's processes, it is perhaps unsurprising that a basic lack of it can produce such a debilitating, systemic disease.

It is thought that the underlying cause of all M.E. / CFS is an extreme lack of oxygen within the body's cells. Many factors come together to cause damage to cells and stop them from working properly. This means that less oxygen actually gets to the cells, and what does get into cells, is not used efficiently (*is not 'metabolised' well*). The consequence of this is that cells cannot produce energy properly. Energy production within cells is essential for our bodies to function normally. When this cell-damage and reduction in energy production occurs in cells throughout

the body, the individual suffers symptoms affecting many parts of the body, including extreme fatigue, pain and brain-fog (major symptoms of ME / CFS). A feedback loop then exists; conditions are created that further lower levels of oxygen within cells and further impair the processes within cells. This prevents the body healing itself and perpetuates the chronic M.E. / CFS condition.

If the damage to cells can be reversed and further damage prevented, M.E. / CFS can be controllable and the body will be able to better heal itself.

Genetic Predisposition

A genetic predisposition exists in M.E. / CFS patients, which causes cells to be more readily damaged by free radical injury. This does **not** mean M.E. / CFS is an inherited condition, but that genetics play some part in predisposing an individual to an M.E. / CFS experience. Just as inheriting a high level of intelligence from our parents does not mean we will automatically become a lawyer or a rocket scientist; we do not inherit any genes from our parents that mean we will definitely develop M.E. / CFS. Although a higher basic intelligence perhaps makes it easier or more possible to us to become a rocket scientist, many other factors such as environment, ambition, personality and finances all have to come together in the right way for a career in rocket science to be achieved. In a similar way, the genetic predisposition for M.E. / CFS may exist in many people; it is only when combined with a multitude of other factors that the condition will actually develop. If these other factors can be prevented or avoided, perhaps so can M.E. / CFS.

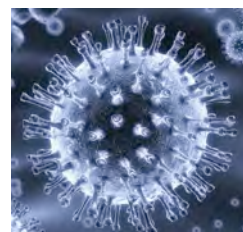


As previously discussed, it's the cell damage caused by *Free radicals* that brings about the symptoms experienced in M.E. / CFS. A *free radical* is an unstable molecule, often a form of oxygen, which reacts very easily with other molecules and 'steals' their electrons (sub-atomic components). Inside the body, certain reactions involving free radicals are essential for production of energy within our cells. However, if not controlled, free radicals (also called 'oxidants') can cause damage and breakdown of essential structures within the body, such as enzymes and cell membranes (the walls around cells, which keep everything inside the cell inside and keep everything else outside!). This damage is termed oxidative injury or oxidative damage.

In health, the body neutralizes and removes free radicals, avoiding damage to the body. However, in some individuals, the genetic predisposition and excessive environmental exposure, cause a build up of free radicals within your cells.

Throughout our lives we are subject to high numbers of free radicals - both those produced *within* the body, as well as those taken in from *outside* the body.

Free radicals produced within the body may be by-products of normal chemical and biological (metabolic) reactions within our cells, or they may be toxins and waste products produced by microbes (bugs such as bacteria, yeasts and viruses), which inhabit our gut.



Free radicals taken in from outside the body are generally man-made toxins and include those in cigarette smoke, food additives, pesticides, certain medications and stimulants such as caffeine and narcotics (to name but a few!). In health, damage by free radicals is prevented by *anti-oxidants*. These are substances that are capable of neutralising the 'oxidants' (free radicals). They may be enzymes, vitamins or other organic molecules. In essence, they absorb the free radical's extra energy and return it to a normal state without harming the system.

In addition to high levels of oxidants, today's society breeds a culture with poor anti-oxidant activity. A diet low in foods full of nutrients and high in refined or processed foods is the norm. This leads to low levels of anti-oxidants and allows levels of free radicals within the body to climb.

When there is a build up of free radicals within the body, or a lack of anti-oxidant activity, the free radical reactions start to take over the body – these reactions use up lots of oxygen – meaning there's less oxygen available for other, vital biological processes – as well as causing damage to lots of cell structures (thereby stopping the cells from working properly). This then creates a *pre-disease state* of M.E. / CFS; an individual is effectively functioning normally, without obvious symptoms, but all their body's resources (especially oxygen and their anti-oxidant supply) are stretched to the limit; so much so that it only takes a small amount of extra stress in terms of need for oxygen or energy for the body to

stop functioning normally and exhibit the signs and symptoms we attribute to M.E. / CFS.

Trigger Events

Considering the number of people with M.E. / CFS Complex who report a sudden onset to their symptoms, it seems likely that in the majority of cases a specific trigger event can be identified. This is effectively “*the straw that breaks the camel’s back*” with regard to extra strain placed on an already struggling system.

Many different ‘trigger events’ exist (see some examples below) but basically a trigger event is something which puts additional strain on the individual and their body, when the individual is already starting to struggle to function ‘normally’ (even if very subtly!).

The trigger event may either cause an increased demand on the body’s system, or may increase the number of free radicals inside the body’s cells to overwhelming levels. Either way, the consequence is a significant change in the individual’s life – they (sometimes very suddenly) go from being ‘healthy’ or at least ‘Ok’, to experiencing the often-dramatic and debilitating symptoms of M.E. / CFS.

Examples of trigger events that increase energy demands on the body:

- ✚ PHYSICAL TRAUMA such as accidents, surgery, developing other medical conditions such as Rheumatoid Arthritis.
- ✚ EMOTIONAL TRAUMA such as bereavement, divorce, relationship breakdown.

Examples of trigger events that cause extra-increased toxin levels:

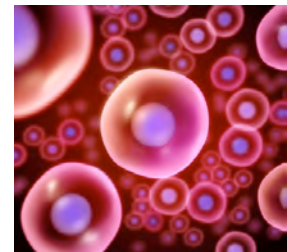
- ✚ BACTERIAL INFECTION
- ✚ VIRAL INFECTION
- ✚ VACCINATION (e.g. Hepatitis B)

Explanation of M.E. / CFS Symptoms

As a result of the reduced oxygen levels and the cell damage caused by the overload of free radicals, the inner (physical) world of individuals with M.E. / CFS starts to change and deteriorate quite rapidly.

Since the 'normal' biological processes – called *metabolic processes* – of the body are so restricted, with lots of cell structures being damaged broken up, the amount of cellular waste material to be eliminated from the body increases dramatically. However, since the waste-removal-systems and processes are also affected by the M.E. / CFS condition, the waste products and toxins are not removed efficiently and build up even further within the cells throughout the body. As you can imagine, this is bad news all round, as it not only means you have increasing levels of damaging toxins within the body, building up and up, but also, this build up actually has an effect on the functioning of the body even more – preventing cells from working efficiently – which prevents organs from working efficiently – which has a knock on effect to the entire health and well-being of the individual involved!

As a result of the lack of oxygen, toxin damage and consequent inhospitable, unhealthy body environment described above, cells within M.E. / CFS individuals undergo a transformation. They become more simple, 'primitive' structures. These cells are able to survive in the more acidic conditions created by M.E. / CFS, but they



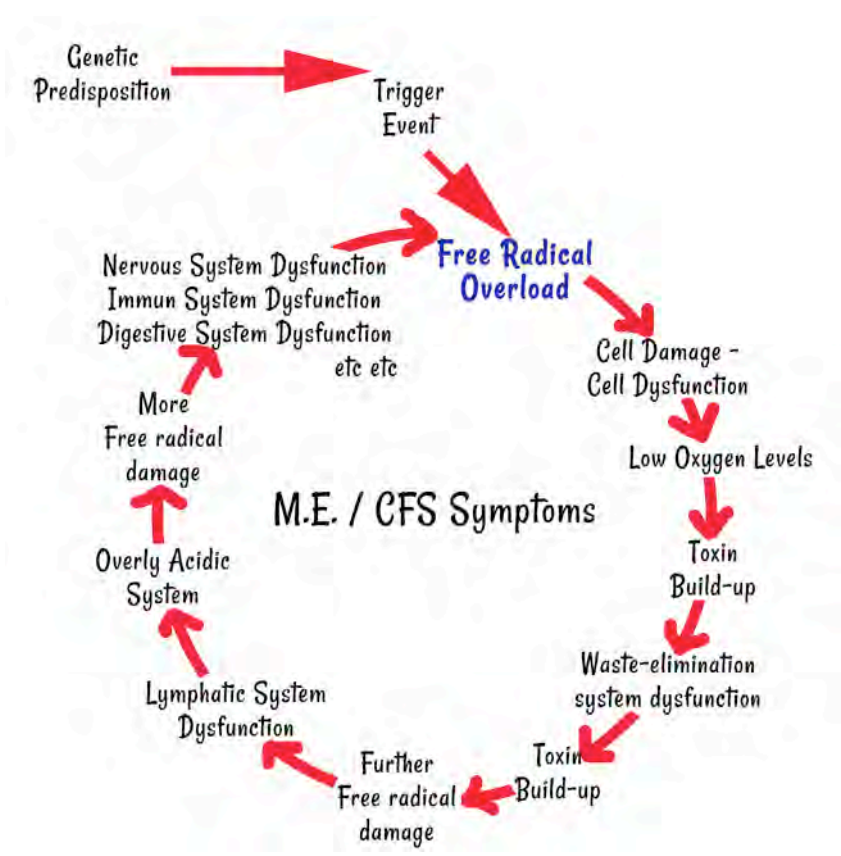
can only manage very simple biological reactions (which do not require oxygen) and they produce relatively small amounts of energy (compared to normal, healthy cells). Effectively, cells of the body change their method of energy production from *respiration* to *fermentation*. When this happens to cells all over the body, the overall production of energy is markedly decreased (*does this make sense of certain 'fatigue symptoms..?!'*), major symptoms are produced and without addressing the problem, an individual has little hope of functioning normally within the world.

To explain the symptoms that result from this over-oxidised, oxygen-deficient system, several disease processes must be described. Firstly in the blood circulatory system: red blood cells, white blood cells and the walls of blood vessels become damaged by the free radicals, to form

microscopic blood clots and generally “sticky” blood. Although this doesn’t seem to produce heart attacks and strokes as it may sound like, the overall effect is that blood has some difficulty flowing to tissues around the body, so less oxygen is delivered to muscles and other cells – thereby decreasing efficiency and functioning of the cells even more!

It’s not only the blood circulatory system that is affected in this way. The lymphatic system is a complex system of vessels and nodes that collect and neutralise foreign particles such as bacteria and toxins in the body. The Lymph system is the ‘detox transport system’ of the body! Just as free radical injury affects cells and structures within the *blood* circulatory system, it also affects cells and structures within the *lymphatic* circulatory system, producing collections of stagnant toxins within muscles, tendons, and ligaments. These collections are believed to form the very painful, tender “trigger points” often found in M.E. / CFS.

Below is a simple diagram demonstrating how the development of M.E. / CFS – following a trigger event, becomes a negative feedback loop, in which the effects of the free radical damage simply create conditions which then perpetuate and exacerbate all the negative, symptom-producing conditions within the body:



Free radical injury also has significant effects on cells within the nervous system. This has numerous consequences for the individual, including development of problems controlling blood sugar (*ever experienced real 'crashes' in energy a while after eating something sweet?*), adrenaline levels, clear thinking and pain.

The processes above all combine to cause a state of chronic dehydration and high levels of acidity. This not only directly causes symptoms (such as dry mouth, dry skin, hair loss and brittle nails), but also further reduces oxygen delivery to cells and increases the free radical injury, thereby forming a vicious cycle of damage (*see diagram above*).

Put very simply, the previously described mechanism of free radical cell damage causes the following (*amongst other effects*):

- Affected cells in the central nervous system cause brain-fog, memory loss and problems with hormone regulation.
- Affected cells in the autonomic nervous system cause disruption to digestion, the urinary system and the production and secretion of hormones such as adrenaline and insulin (which controls blood sugar levels).
- By affecting cells in the tissues, body wide, disabling fatigue can be caused.
- By affecting cells in muscles, lymphatic system and other tissues, pain can be caused.
- By affecting cells in the skin, cold sensitivity and skin changes, as well as nail changes can be caused.
- By affecting cells in the bowel, irritable bowel syndrome symptoms and poor absorption of nutrients occurs.
- By affecting cells in the liver, the body's detoxification process is affected and toxin-build-up is increased further.

Perpetuating Factors

As hinted at on the previous page, once someone's body is in this state of 'excessive oxidative injury', lack of oxygen and high acidity levels, abnormal biological processes initiated aggravate one another, creating a positive feedback loop (positive only in the "cumulative" rather than

“good” sense!). For example, the effects of immune dysfunction due to the free radical damage, results in overgrowth of yeast and other bacteria in the gut – causing their own set of symptoms, as well as producing even more free radicals and worsening the whole situation.

The following are a couple of further examples which exacerbate the M.E. / CFS symptom complex, and may inhibit healing:

- ❖ SEASONAL VARIATION: more than half of individuals diagnosed with M.E. / CFS experience a worsening of their symptoms during Winter months. This seems due to reduced levels of oxygen in the atmosphere, inability to produce Vitamin within the body during Winter months and potentially increased levels of pollution in Winter (as we all use cars more, burn more fossil fuels to generate energy and so on).
- ❖ EXCESSIVE PHYSICAL EXERCISE, MENTAL EXERTION AND EMOTIONAL EXERTION: All these require increased energy production, causing increased metabolic (biological) processes. These extra demands placed on an already-overstretched system result in either an inability to finish the physical or mental task at hand, or the individual manages to complete the task, but afterwards then causes a “shut down” of the body (*and often mental*) system in order to make up the energy stores that have been totally depleted This describes the ‘post-exertional exhaustion’ characteristic of M.E. / CFS.

Any chronic disease can cause additional difficulties for the individual. M.E. / CFS is no exception to this and the following issues must also be addressed in order to regain full health. Not only can these factors affect the overall well-being of the individual; they may also exacerbate symptoms:

- Immobility, due to pain / fatigue etc. Amongst other symptoms, this can add to constipation, deconditioning of muscles and joints etc.
- Deconditioning of muscles and joints through lack of use (often despite an individual’s best efforts).
- Psychological distress; depression / anxiety etc due to physical pain, cognitive impairment, as well as the loss of health, independence, employment, relationships etc.
- Social effects; isolation secondary to poor health limiting social activities and

psychological effects causing demotivation with regard to maintaining social contacts.

- Nutritional deficiency; this can be caused by digestive problems (the irritable bowel syndrome symptoms often a part of M.E. / CFS) as well as poor or inappropriate dietary intake.
- Sleep disturbance. This has previously been cited as the *cause* of ME / CFS. It now seems more likely that as in many chronic conditions (especially those in which pain is a significant feature), the sleep disturbance is a *consequence* or *symptom* of the condition, caused by the above factors.

Having read all of the above and gaining a greater understanding of the 'negative cycle' that one enters into with the development of M.E. / CFS, you could be forgiven for feeling a sense of hopelessness about how the cycle can ever be broken and real health returned. Yet it is true! It IS entirely possible to break the negative cycle, to stop the build up of toxins and free radical damage and gently bring the body back into balance, back into health and keep it there! Enter the *Five Steps to Health!*

Evidence for the Five Steps Theory

A lot of scientific studies have been done focusing on M.E. / CFS and oxygen. The majority of studies provide strong evidence for the theory you've just read about (*that M.E. / CFS symptoms are produced because of damage by free radicals and low levels of anti-oxidants*). Other research has been carried out which demonstrates abnormally low levels and poor use of oxygen within cells of individuals with M.E. / CFS. Results of these studies have shown that compared with healthy people, individuals with M.E. / CFS generally have a smaller volume of blood circulating through their veins, lower levels of oxygen in their blood, less efficient red blood cells (*the cells responsible for oxygen transport*), lower levels of oxygen within their tissues, and decreased blood flow (*and therefore decreased oxygen delivery*) to many parts of the body, including the brain (obviously quite an important organ!)

For details of the studies cited in this book, please contact the author.

Aims of Treatment

Symptomatic treatment can be useful in any medical condition. However, addressing the underlying cause of a disease will have a much greater impact and obviously a more sustained effect on patients' health. This means reversing the underlying problem as well as preventing further occurrence. With any chronic disease, it is also important to address other life issues that have resulted from the actual experience of being ill (such as those described above).

Taking into account the underlying problems in M.E. / CFS, the main aims of treatment are to normalise metabolism within cells, promote repair of cellular structures and elimination of toxins and prevent further free radical damage. More simply, these aims can be stated as follows:

- Remove toxins and prevent further build up
- Improve oxygen delivery to cells
- Improve oxygen utilisation within cells
- Increase anti-oxidant defences
- Counteract negative biological, mental and emotional effects of chronic disease

It is imperative to carry out all the above in a controlled manner so that full health can be achieved, without causing a relapse in the condition by placing demands which are too great on the individual's over-burdened body system.

Based on the above aims, using personal experience and research carried out by various investigators, the following Management Plan has been compiled:

1. Detoxification
2. Oxygenation
3. Diet & Supplementation
4. Body Reconditioning
5. Mind Reconditioning

Detoxification

'Detoxification' has become quite a buzzword these days. There are many *detoxing diets* around, as well as various pieces of equipment and therapies, which claim to *detoxify* the body. In the world we live in today, full of environmental pollution, food additives and strong medications, it seems like a good idea for everyone to attempt effective *detox* occasionally, but for individuals with M.E. / CFS it is essential. However, it is equally essential that any detoxification process is carried out appropriately for the individual; when dealing with a system as fragile as in those with M.E. / CFS, it may be possible to detox too rapidly or powerfully, placing too much strain on the body, leading to a worsening of symptoms rather than the positive effects one would hope for. It is important to take account of this when following the suggestions made in this book, or by any 'detox expert'. Ideally, any treatment programme is supervised by an experienced, empathetic practitioner. In the absence of this, the patient themselves must take responsibility for the speed and intensity of treatment. With M.E. / CFS it's always best to start off at the minimum and build up gradually; this applies to bodywork therapies, medications, supplements and any other treatments. Writing this, I do recognise that this goes completely against the grain with the stereotypical personality profile of the (conscientious and perfectionist-type) individuals who develop M.E. / CFS, who would generally prefer to try things one hundred percent immediately!

Many individuals with M.E. / CFS, when tested, are found to be harbouring 'latent infections' – also known as *stealth organisms*, such as viruses, bacteria and parasites. Heavy metal poisoning, such as with mercury and lead, is also very common in those patients studied with M.E. / CFS. Various organisations such as private hospitals and research laboratories can offer testing for these infectious agents and toxic agents. However, testing can prove very expensive and not always offer a specific method of treatment for the identified bug or toxin. The '*specific treatment*' for such infections is often drug-based, with numerous side effects and the possibility of exacerbating M.E. / CFS symptoms considerably by using it.

Testing can also be very expensive. Although the information gained from results may be useful in guiding specific aspects of treatment, the same overall picture of a '*toxic body*' comes up again and again when assessing individuals with M.E. / CFS and a persistent,

gentle, guided *detox* of the system consistently produces positive results as part of a holistic treatment programme.

The lymphatic system (as described previously) is a complex system of vessels and nodes that collect and neutralise the foreign protein or ingested bacteria in the body (the *detox* transport system of the body). In the majority of individuals with M.E. / CFS, toxic waste (oxidants, stagnant lymph etc) builds up within their lymphatic system. Stimulating lymphatic flow expedites removal of toxins. It also disperses and eliminates trigger points: the toxic and painful accumulations of toxins (stagnant lymph and blood products) within tissues. Gentle exercise such as brisk walking, rebounding (controlled 'bouncing' on a small trampette), Far Infra Red Saunas, lymphatic massage and dry skin brushing all stimulate the lymphatic system and aid decongestion (detoxification).

Of course, for some individuals with M.E. / CFS, 'brisk walking' or 'rebounding' are simply out of the question – for now – that's why a range of detoxification methods are suggested here; to find the most appropriate for your level of mobility, health and circumstances.

Far Infra Red Therapy

The health benefits of saunas have been acknowledged since Roman times, when the restorative and health promotional effects were utilised by all classes in society, particularly by military personnel, who had to maintain peak levels of fitness. Traditionally saunas have been used to reduce pain, improve mental clarity and promote longevity. Recently, however, in the '*age of detox*', the hyperthermic effects (raising the core body temperature) of saunas, especially Far Infra Red Saunas (FIRS), have been studied and shown to provide a relatively simple and highly effective method of detoxification of heavy metals and organic toxins such as pesticides, stimulating the circulation and helping the body heal and prevent further disease. It's now recognized that you don't actually have to get really hot in order to undergo a very effective detox in a Far Infra Red Sauna; the wavelength of the infra red rays emitted, penetrate the body (invisibly and completely painlessly) even at lower (warm and comfortable rather than really hot!) temperatures to bring about the elimination of toxins as well as offering a lovely energising and pain-relieving effect. You certainly don't have to be a great 'sweater' in order to feel the health-enhancing benefits of FIRS!

Check out the Resources section at the back of the book to find out more info!

Lymphatic Massage



Like many individuals with M.E. / CFS, the idea of body massage may fill you with horror! For those with the additional symptoms of Fibromyalgia; seemingly irrational and unexplainable pains and sensitivities throughout the body, any significant pressure on the skin or muscles can be excruciating – as well as exacerbating of other symptoms as the pain reaction takes up a lot of the already-very-low energy stores! However, although other treatments may be needed first, in order to bring you to a place where you can tolerate a light massage, there really is benefit in receiving professional, careful bodywork.

Massage specifically aimed at drainage within the lymphatic system activates *inhibitory cells* whose function is to diminish the sensation of pain. Furthermore, it's believed that lymph drainage has benefits on the immune system by increasing the activity of *macrophages* (white blood cells which ingest foreign nasties in the body), and stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system – which causes the feelings of calmness and relaxation. This means that the *right kind* of massage can improve lymphatic function, thereby assisting the body's healing, detoxification, and pain relief!

The Perrin Technique

The *Perrin Technique* is a massage-based treatment developed by an Osteopath to treat patients with M.E. / CFS, by stimulating the lymphatic system around the head, neck, chest and back particularly, in order to let the lymphatic system flow more smoothly, eliminating toxins and allowing the sympathetic nervous system (responsible for many actions within the body!) to work more normally again.

Skin Brushing

If the Perrin Technique doesn't appeal to you, or you prefer to start off with a gentle self-treatment at home, *skin brushing* can be an effective aid to detoxification. The skin is the largest organ in the body and it's believed that a quarter of our daily bodily detoxification occurs via the skin. Dry skin brushing tones the immune and circulatory systems. It can reduce the duration of infection and



accelerate the clearing of toxins by stimulating the lymphatic system. If skin hypersensitivity is a problem for you, skin brushing needs to be carried out very carefully and gently so as to be tolerated. Ideally this exercise is carried out a few times a week, but only if and when tolerable. Always try and brush *towards the heart* and avoid any areas which are sensitive or have skin problems.

All that you need to effectively carry out dry skin brushing is a soft, dry, skin brush. Preferably a brush with natural bristles is used, although this is not essential.

Caution: If you are severely unwell, even dry skin brushing may be *too much* for your system. If your practitioner advises against it, or you experience increased M.E. fatigue and symptoms following the initial practice, please refrain until your system is more stable.

The Sun Ancon Chi Machine

This is a device which enables the user to undertake aerobic exercise without doing anything more than lying on the floor, resting their legs on a portable machine. The side-to-side oscillations of the ankle rest on top of the Chi Machine cause the legs, trunk, arms and head to move in what is known as the 'body inherent eight'. In other words, like a fish or snake.

Doctor Shizuo Inoue, Chairman of the Japanese Oxygen Health Association, wanted to find a way to make the human body oxygen-efficient without the need for time consuming meditation or strenuous exercise, which consumes excess oxygen generated with movement. In the early 1950's, he theorised that Japanese Koi carp were always healthy and well toned due to the perpetual movement of their spines. With a team of engineers and physiologists he then designed a device that produced a precise rate of oscillation within a well-defined range of motion, which raised both blood oxygen and levels of energy of the patient.

Clinical trial results show that the Sun Ancon is proven to improve lymphatic drainage, reduce body fat and body weight and also provide pain relief. As long as a regime with the Sun Ancon machine is built up slowly, it can be an excellent addition to a detoxification programme for individuals with M.E. / CFS.

Other methods of detoxification

Of course, this is far from an exhaustive list of detoxification methods available for

individuals with M.E. / CFS. Those listed here, however, are those I have found most powerful, beneficial and manageable (i.e. no significant healing crises!) in my own recovery as well as working with my patients. Many other methods of detoxification and lymphatic decongestion are also available fairly easily these days. Simply gather unbiased information and use your intuition in order to find the most appropriate methods to employ in your own personal recovery.

A couple of other (*gentle – i.e. M.E. / CFS - friendly*) ways to encourage detoxification include the following:

Bowen Therapy: A holistic body therapy, which uses gentle manipulation of muscles and soft tissues to stimulate release of tension and stress, helping the body to use its own resources to detox and heal.

Reflexology: This is a method of stimulating certain pressure points in the feet and sometimes in the hands. Stimulating these pressure points is believed to result in a reflex action in the corresponding area of the body. With controlled thumb and finger techniques, the entire body can be encouraged to relax and repair itself. The theory is that reflexology enables the release of blockages within the individual; physical, mental and emotional. This aids the overall detoxification and healing process. As with many other therapies described here, reflexology can have very powerful effects and it's important to be treated by a sympathetic and experienced practitioner, who will accurately assess how far to take your treatment and when you've '*had enough*'!

Oxygenation

Oxygen therapies include treatments with ozone (O₃; an activated form of Oxygen), hyperbaric (high pressure) oxygen and hydrogen peroxide. Oxygen therapies have been shown to help individuals with M.E. / CFS in various ways. Since oxygenation deprivation is now believed to be a major factor in the development of the condition, this is perhaps not surprising. Although of course, other factors usually need to be addressed as well in order to achieve a 'jigsaw' of full health!

According to Frank Shallenberger, M.D, author of *The Principles and Applications of Ozone Therapy*, oxygen therapies affect the human body in many positive ways, including the following:

1. They stimulate the production of white blood cells, which are necessary to fight infection.
2. They increase the delivery of oxygen from the blood to the cells.
3. They increase red blood cell membrane flexibility and effectiveness.
4. They increase the production of interferon and tumour necrosis factor, which the body uses to fight infections.
5. They increase the efficiency of the anti-oxidant enzyme system, which removes excess free radicals in the body.

Traditional oxygen therapies can be difficult to access, unpleasant to apply (e.g. hydrogen peroxide drinks) and long term costs of treatment can be high. These therapies also have the disadvantage of potentially giving the individual *too much* oxygen. This can then cause production of *further* free radicals, causing *greater* free radical damage, thus undoing any beneficial effect the treatment initially had.

Activated Oxygen Therapy

Five Steps to Health, therefore, recommends use of a different type of oxygen therapy; use of an Airnergy+ device that provides *activated oxygen therapy*. Have you ever wondered why walking through woodland after a rainstorm can evoke such a great feeling of well-being? The "connecting with nature" and distance from the hustle and bustle of ordinary life may

well be a factor. However, another factor may be that oxygen is entering your body in a more energised, *activated* state, due to the effects of sunlight on leaves covered with raindrops. This is the basis for *activated oxygen therapy (Airnergy+)*, which provides the body with extra-energised or '*activated*' air, boosting oxygen delivery and improving the process of energy production in cells.

Airnergy+ devices are available to use at Airnergy practitioners' clinics, or you can purchase a device for your own home. Although costing a significant initial outlay, running costs (therefore long-term costs) are low. Very simply, the individual inhales activated air through a tube (nasal cannula) connected to this Singlet Oxygen Energy Device. The device pulls in environmental air through an air filter, and in an "activation chamber" energises it with Singlet Oxygen energy. This energised air is then passed through a humidifier and transported to the individual's nostrils. No 'extra' oxygen is breathed in, but the effects of the activated oxygen prove very powerful. For more information on Airnergy+ check out the Resources section at the back of this book.

Breathing Exercises

A much cheaper and simpler way of improving oxygenation is to regularly practise breathing exercises, which retrain the respiratory system to maximise the intake of oxygen from the air and optimise absorption into the lungs. Because of our lifestyle, most of us use little more than 10% of our lung capacity and as a result we are susceptible to all kinds of health problems. Breathing techniques such as deep breathing exercises help to service the other 90% of our lungs.

Of course, sustained effort is required and the effects may not be as noticeable or dramatic as when using an *activated oxygen device*. However, there is a plethora of breathing exercises out there; in yogic traditions these exercises (or *pranayama*) are an important part of daily routines to maintain physical and mental health. For people who are interested in exploring breathing exercises further, the internet provides numerous resources, as do all good bookshops and libraries.

Due to fatigue and pain, individuals with M.E. / CFS often develop poor breathing patterns. They may take very shallow breaths and often enter a state of hyperventilation. In order to maximise the amount of oxygen breathed in (and the amount of carbon dioxide breathed out) it is important to regulate breathing; taking deep and slow breaths. This can be

achieved to some extent by relaxation therapies such as hypnosis, meditation and breathing exercises. *See the Resources section for more information.*

Why breathe through your nose?

When you breathe through your mouth, you only inflate the top area of the lungs, which is connected to the sympathetic nerve fibres (that activate the fight or flight response). When you breathe through the nose, you're inflating the entire lung and lower lobes that connect more to the parasympathetic nervous system. This helps to calm the body and slows the heart rate.

Diet and Supplementation

This dietary advice is not compiled with any particular dietary or nutritional qualifications. It is compiled as a result of personal research and experience and based on the previously discussed theory of M.E. / CFS being caused by accelerated oxidative injury. The most significant aim of the diet is to increase the body's natural anti-oxidant defences and to prevent build-up (i.e. excessive ingestion) of foodstuffs that contain or cause production of damaging free radicals.

It is important in life to get a balance between behaving in the most "sensible" way, which will supposedly prolong a healthy life, and actually *enjoying* the current life we have. The following dietary guidelines, therefore, are provided as just that; guidelines. The aim of which is to help you achieve and maintain full health. However, if all components of Five Steps to Health are being implemented (and the reasons for each aspect are understood and accepted), it seems unlikely that occasional ingestion of the "Avoid these..." foods (such as chocolate and biscuits!) will result in significant negative effects. If this appears not to be the case, then listen to your body; by now you are the best expert on your own body and your own health; if there are some foods that definitely seem to worsen your condition, avoid them!

In 1993 a review was undertaken of several diet therapies recommended for individuals with M.E. / CFS (Morris and Stare, 1993). Various dietary regimes were evaluated on the basis of nutritional adequacy and scientific rationale. The diet therapies examined included 'Royal Jelly', 'Elimination',



'Avoidance' and 'Rotation' diets. So far, claims that any specific dietary regime is beneficial in M.E. / CFS are anecdotal and have not been substantiated by scientific research. For example, the above report concluded that rotation diets are often not balanced and do not meet current recommended dietary intake levels. They also reasoned that diet strategies that call for the strict avoidance of food additives, preservatives, sweeteners, and other ingredients are not supported by available evidence and are not practical for all patients with M.E. / CFS. The authors recommended that a diet plan for patients with M.E. / CFS should be based on sound nutritional principles and common sense. They suggested that "until the results of studies demonstrating the benefits of particular diet therapies in the

management of M.E. / CFS are available, individuals are advised to eat a varied diet selected from among and within the basic food groups to ensure an adequate nutrient intake and to reach and maintain a reasonable body weight” (Morris and Stare, 1993).

It is suggested that individuals implementing the *Five Steps to Health* keep this advice in mind. However, in today’s society of fad diets and contradictory nutritional advice, the following general aims and recommendations are provided in order to assist you in optimising your nutrition and digestion in general. It is also highly recommended to undergo some form of metabolic typing or similar nutritional assessment through an experienced nutritionalist or Ayurvedic practitioner, in order to establish your own specific dietary requirements, in addition to the general guidelines laid out here.

Main Points:

- ❑ Eat regularly; don’t miss meals and do snack when you need to.
(just choose snacks carefully!)
- ❑ Eat lots of Fruit and Vegetables *(especially vegetables!)*
- ❑ Water Water Water – Ensure an adequate intake, always!
- ❑ Eat Organic Produce wherever possible.
- ❑ Eat low levels of refined sugars *(e.g. sweets, cakes, biscuits, jams)!*
- ❑ Avoid alcohol, caffeine and other stimulants!
- ❑ Avoid artificial sweeteners and foods high in additives and colourings!
- ❑ Avoid foods that seem to affect YOU badly!

As you may already be aware, M.E. / CFS often affects hormonal regulation within the body and this can include the control of blood glucose levels. A *reactive hypoglycaemia* condition can develop. This means that although blood sugar levels do not drop to ‘dangerously’ low levels, as in Diabetics after insulin injection, but within a short while of ingesting food, the body has ‘over-reacted’ and caused blood sugar levels to drop to the levels you would expect after having had no food or drink for many hours. This can cause excessive fatigue very easily, as well as brain-fog and other symptoms. The necessary aim in treating this particular condition is to regulate blood sugar levels, to keep them stable, without the big (symptom-causing) dips that hypoglycaemia causes (hypo = low, glycaemia = blood sugar). It is therefore necessary to eat very regularly (even if only a few mouthfuls at times)

perhaps even every couple of hours initially. The aim is to eat (something appropriate) every time M.E. / CFS symptoms start to worsen during the day. This may be an exacerbation of fatigue, pain, brain-fog or other symptoms.

Taking chromium as a supplement can also be helpful to stabilise blood sugar levels. It is also important to try and stick to foods with a low glycaemic index (this means those foods which are converted into energy more slowly than others, so giving you a more sustained release of energy). In time, as health improves, the symptoms of hypoglycaemia should diminish and individuals become less reliant on regular eating. However, while your system is still trying to overcome the enormous pressure it is under from the oxidative stress, it makes sense to help it out by giving it enough fuel regularly – without overloading your digestive system with lots to digest all in one go! Think cows and sheep grazing rather than a lion devouring an entire deer in one go...

Supplements

When your body is deficient in certain nutrients, or requires more nutrients than usual in order to maintain 'normal function', dietary supplements (usually in the form of tablets, capsules or drops) can be extremely helpful in supplying the necessary



vitamins and minerals. However, many people with M.E. / CFS find they are unable to tolerate supplements; they actually feel worse taking them. It may be that if this is the case, the body is so 'toxic'

(with metabolic processes slow or blocked), that the system is unable to absorb and assimilate (i.e. use) the nutrients effectively - and taking supplements simply adds to the toxic load – causing further problems and not doing any good (*and often costing considerable money!*)

It may be that it is necessary for someone to attain a certain level of health – get their own detoxification system working better, before the majority of supplements will be helpful (particularly with regard to those which are taken in through the digestive system; tablets and capsules rather than others such as drops under the tongue or injections). Currently there is no documented evidence to support this suggestion, but individuals with M.E / CFS may wish to reflect on this idea and decide to focus specifically on detoxifying their system. For example with a Far Infra Red therapy programme and accompanying antioxidant, alkalising diet, *prior* to beginning or

restarting a supplement regime.

Once someone is able to properly absorb and assimilate nutrients, the following are recommended as useful general supplements for people aiming to recover from M.E / CFS (*although ideally some form of specialist assessment will be carried out to determine which nutrients the individual particularly needs*):

 **Multi-mineral, Multi-vitamin**

particularly containing:

- **Zinc**
- **Vitamin E**
- **Vitamin B complex**

 **Vitamin C**

 **Magnesium**

 **Co-Enzyme Q10**

 **Vitamin D**

There are many brands of supplements available for purchase today. They vary considerably in packaging, price, and in actual formulation. Not all vitamins and supplements are created equally. There are currently no standards that require the ingredients in the bottle match what is written on the label. The following are also factors to consider when deciding on a supplement brand:

- Ingredients for the supplements should be from organic sources whenever possible.
- Nutrients should be tested for toxic substances and any kind of contamination.
- No artificial ingredients should be used in manufacturing.
- Look for hypoallergenic products if you have sensitivity problems. Avoid those which contain wheat, yeast and corn.
- Look for an expiration date and make sure the product is fresh. If there is no expiration date on the label, buy something else.

Also keep in mind that when it comes to a supplement, cheaper often means poorer quality. Unfortunately this means that in order to ingest a supplement that is actually going to have a positive effect, and avoid any negative effects caused by contamination or inappropriate “bulking” agents, greater expense may be required. This basically means that the cheapest kind of supplements – made from ‘synthetic’ agents rather than fresh foods or other natural sources, may do *more harm than good* and really should be avoided.

Other Optimum Nutrition Tips for M.E. / CFS

- ❖ Oats are one of the best sources of slow-release energy. If reactive hypoglycaemia symptoms are a particular problem for you, oats may help! Oat porridge at the start of the day can help give sustained energy for most of the morning. However, some individuals find that reducing consumption of ALL grains initially can help their symptoms. See what works for you.
- ❖ Try and eat a heaped tablespoon of either mixed seeds (such as flax / linseeds / sesame and pumpkin seeds) or cold-pressed flax oil daily. This will give you a good dose of essential omega 3 and omega 6 oils and will aid digestion, helping to prevent constipation. The seeds or oil can be mixed into your breakfast (after soaking in good quality water overnight),

sprinkled over salads or mixed into soups or sauces (after cooking has been completed; heating damages the good stuff inside the seeds). Occasionally people may find they are intolerant of seeds; it is thought that seeds may sometimes catch in pockets in the gut lining and cause problems. In this case, avoiding seeds and choosing oil alternatives is a preferable alternative.

- ❖ Where possible, eat fruit and vegetables raw, or lightly steam them, in order to retain as many of the natural beneficial enzymes and other nutrients within the food. Steaming is believed to produce virtually no free radicals at all, but cooking to high temperatures in conventional or microwave ovens is thought to considerably decrease the nutritional value of food. There is also increasing evidence that microwaves may cause further health problems than simply destroying nutrients in food. If digestion problems are significant, it may be better to avoid raw vegetables. Lightly steaming instead starts to break down the cell walls within the vegetables, making them easier to digest (without losing too many nutrients) and can make a big difference to how well someone tolerates their greens!
- ❖ Chewing food very well (*“drinking your solids and chewing your liquids”*) starts off the digestion process well, by helping digestive enzymes do their work. It’s also important to take small bites when eating, as properly chewed food expands considerably, and if a larger bite has been taken, at least part of the food will have to be swallowed before appropriate mixing with salivary secretions (those containing the important enzymes).
- ❖ Wheat contains gluten, a protein that many people find hard to digest and which can cause bloating and wind and exacerbate other symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome. This is a mild sensitivity rather than a true gluten allergy (coeliac disease), but some individuals with M.E. / CFS find a wheat free diet greatly improves their digestive symptoms. If you are going to try a totally wheat free diet, give it at least one month before deciding whether or not it is making a difference. Most supermarkets now provide a *Free From* range of gluten free goods, including bread, cakes, biscuits, flour and many more.
- ❖ As health improves and the underlying problem within the body is corrected, the intolerance to wheat may be greatly reduced. As an alternative to wheat products, try rye bread, pasta made from quinoa (pronounced keen-waa) or millet, soba (buckwheat)

noodles and muesli or porridge made from millet flakes rather than wheat-based (high sugar) breakfast cereals.

- ❖ Similar to the wheat intolerance, many people have intolerance to lactose ('milk sugar'). Some individuals may find that avoiding dairy products such as milk, cheese, butter and cream, can reduce symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, as well as improving congested sinuses or a persistent stuffy nose. Organic goat's or sheep's milk products may be tolerated better, but if following the path of dairy avoidance, it is preferable to cut out all dairy for at least a month to observe any effect. Possible alternatives to dairy products are rice, almond or sesame milk (available from most health food shops) and hummus, tahini or guacamole instead of butter or cheese.

Body Reconditioning

The aim of *Body Reconditioning* in the context of *Five Steps to Health* is to achieve appropriate periods of rest and activity or exercise to enable effective healing and strengthening of the body at a suitable rate that prevents recurrent relapse.

Any individual with a chronic disease is likely to require body reconditioning as part of their treatment, since lack of use renders muscles and joints less able to cope with the demands of living. It is important to start any reconditioning programme very gently, as overworking muscles and joints can result in further damage. The aims of body reconditioning in the context of this M.E. / CFS protocol, are to regain and maintain ranges of movements at all joints, strengthen the body's major muscle groups, and gradually increase stamina and physical activity levels to approach those of full health. Balance and co-ordination may also be issues that need addressing in some individuals.

Many M.E. / CFS individuals will have been told by traditional physicians that "*graded exercise regimes*" are the best treatment approach for this condition. Unfortunately, these regimes are often poorly understood and their implementation often ineffectual or damaging, as enthusiastic or unsympathetic practitioners (and desperate patients) attempt to increase activity levels too quickly. Although the strategies suggested here promote a form of graded activity, it may be different from that tried previously by M.E. / CFS individuals. A combination of personalised pacing (balancing rest and activity levels so that optimum activity levels are achieved without overspending energy and requiring excessive rest afterwards) and an individualised exercise programme are advocated.

The true interpretation of 'graded exercise' is all about a baseline. No matter what state M.E. / CFS has caused an individual to get into, there is still a daily baseline of exercise (activity is perhaps a more helpful word) that they can achieve, even on a *bad* day. This may be a 1km walk around a park, or it may be the straightening and flexing of fingers on one hand. More likely, it is somewhere in between these two examples. It is up to the individual concerned (preferably with the guidance of an understanding health care provider) to identify this baseline exercise, and then stick to it. Although the activities of daily living are still carried out, no further exercise is attempted on *good* days. As health stabilises and

improves, this base-line activity is very slowly increased, ensuring that it is still achievable on a *bad* day. In this way, levels of activity (and stamina) can hopefully be built up.

With this idea in mind, it is important that specific muscle stretching and strengthening exercises need to be included in a daily routine (*when appropriate for the individual*), in order to regain strength and stamina.

In order to recondition and strengthen muscles, exercises need to be carried out daily. However, the needs and ability of each individual vary, so this should be a personalised exercise programme, preferably overseen by an experienced physiotherapist or similar health care provider.



Stretching Exercises

In order to maintain full ranges of movement at joints throughout the body and reduce general stiffness, it is important to carry out regular stretching exercises as well as the detailed strengthening exercises recommended in the *Five Steps to Health*.

It is suggested that an appropriate stretching (or *warm up / cool down*) routine is carried out daily or twice daily by all those able to do so.

Strengthening Exercises:

Chronic disease and other causes of body deconditioning often result in weakness or poor stamina in the major muscle groups of the body. When attempting to recondition the body, the major muscles to address are the following:

- Quadriceps Muscles (front thigh)
- Hamstrings (back of thigh)
- Biceps and Triceps (arms)
- Calf muscles (back of lower leg)
- Abdominal and back muscles involved in core stability.

Other muscles may also be affected and require attention.

In order to strengthen these muscles and thereby improve the body's overall stamina, it is recommended that an individual should try and carry out daily or twice daily strengthening exercises covering all these areas. The aim is to build up the number of exercise repetitions very gradually, so as not to overwork or exhaust the body, but gently improve aspects of strength and stamina. Ideally these exercises will be overseen by an understanding healthcare professional such as a physiotherapist, who will suggest which exercises to focus on, and give advice regarding the number of repetitions to attempt.

Initially, the number of repetitions possible may be very few. The individual should aim to do the same number of repetitions every day (i.e. start with a number that is achievable even on *bad* days; this may be only one or two to begin with, but this can gradually be built up as health and fitness improve).

As with all aspects of the Five Steps to Health, it is important to begin and continue a reconditioning programme very gently, to ensure that it produces only positive consequences.

Yoga

The word *Yoga* means 'unity' or 'oneness' and is derived from the Sanskrit word meaning 'to join'. This unity or *joining* relates to mind, body and spirit and combines physically held postures with gentle stretching, relaxation and breathing exercises to promote balance, health and energy. For thousands of years this '*science of living*' has been practised and passed on generation to generation in the East. In recent years the practice of yoga (particularly the aspect of physical yoga postures – *asana*) has become more commonplace in the West, usually as part of a general fitness regime. It is also increasingly recognised to improve quality of life at all levels; physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

Although it can be very helpful to find an experienced and supportive yoga teacher, it is not always necessary to attend a regular yoga class or residential course in order to benefit from the effects of yoga. Resources abound, online, in books and magazines these days, to teach individuals about different methods of practising yoga, including how to develop your own routine to practise daily at home.

One particular *asana* (posture), relatively simple to hold and highly effective at encouraging relaxation of the whole body and mind, is *Savasana*, or *corpse pose*. See the instructions and picture below:

1. Lying on your back, either flat on the floor / bed or with your head resting on a thin pillow, relax your legs and, keeping them as straight as is comfortable let your feet flop gently outwards.
2. Relax your arms and, keeping them also straight, turn your wrists outwards, so that your palms are facing upwards and your arms are not touching the sides of your body.
3. Tuck your chin in slightly, towards your chest to elongate your neck and softly close your eyes and your lips.
4. Breathe in and out slowly, through your nose, focusing your awareness on your breath.
5. Every time you breathe out, imagine tension leaving your body and worries leaving your mind. Feel yourself sinking further into the bed or floor that you are lying on.



Browse the Resources section for further recommendations for Yoga to help with M.E. / CFS.

Mind Reconditioning

Five Steps to Health aims to help the body into a state where healing is better able to occur, then to provide it with all the tools and building blocks necessary (such as oxygen, vitamins and so on) that will enable healing to be carried out from a cellular level. This final aspect of the protocol is aimed at trying to combat the negative effects that chronic disease has on the mind and emotions, and achieve an optimal mental and emotional state for recovery to health.

Mind reconditioning also includes other aspects of emotional and psychological support, which I believe are essential in management of M.E. / CFS. In some individuals, psychological and emotional support may be of utmost significance, in getting through the day-to-day experience of living with the consequences of a severe, chronic disease, often misunderstood by medical practitioners. For others, this aspect may involve the alteration of beliefs regarding their role in life and achievements necessary to be the person they feel obliged to be.

Many individuals with M.E. / CFS can derive benefit from Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) (a form of applied psychology). Under the guidance of an experienced practitioner, techniques can be learnt and applied to encourage and enable healing to occur. For some individuals, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT; a form of psychotherapy) techniques may be useful. However, improvement from this form of therapy will depend on the extent of M.E. / CFS and how much brain-fog the individual is experiencing. Useful CBT needs to be carried out by a well-trained practitioner who has good experience and understanding of working with M.E. / CFS individuals and acknowledges the many different and physical aspects of the condition.



The aim of *Five Steps to Health* is to help individuals live the healthy life they want to live. It is important for individuals to decide what kind of life they *want* to lead. So often (at least when healthy), we end up rushing through life, swept along from one situation to the next; obligations and ‘important opportunities’ controlling our actions and decisions, often concentrating on the next or next but one matter in hand, never really living in the moment

and making decisions about *how* we want to spend our time, or what we want from our lives: at this particular moment and in this particular situation.

The truth is that *all we have is now!* We cannot predict what will happen in the far-off future within our lives, or even in the near future, so it is important to get the most from the current life experience, making it as good (productive / enjoyable / peaceful / easy) as possible. This may sound impossible when experiencing body-wide pain, completely immobilised by exhaustion and totally dependent on others for even the most basic of tasks, but even a situation like this can be *optimised*. I believe (*although again, it may be hard to comprehend*), M.E. / CFS *can* provide an individual with an opportunity to really examine their true desires (when brain-fog and depression allow!) and explore the actual essence of one's being. With appropriate emotional, practical and spiritual support, this **can** be a life-enhancing experience.

The following pages contain a few sample methods utilised in the *mind reconditioning* segment of *Five Steps to Health*. They are far from exhaustive and some will be much more relevant and appealing to some individuals than others. Use this book as it is intended: a resource to stimulate your interest and enthusiasm for following up a treatment or lifestyle change that catches your attention.

For further suggestions and recommendations, visit the Resources section at the back of the book.

Relaxation

Everyone needs to be able to relax, in order to allow *batteries to be recharged* and to halt the effects of stresses and strains on the body. Sometimes individuals with M.E. / CFS find it particularly difficult to relax properly, and unfortunately often need that relaxation even more than others. Poor breathing patterns are also sometimes a problem in these individuals and retraining of breathing or breathing exercises can have a positive effect on symptoms.

Here are a couple of basic ideas to try, when you are unable to sleep, to allow your body (as well as your mind) to enter a greater state of relaxation.

Simple Breathing Focus:

Sit or lie with your back straight, as comfortably as possible. Close your eyes and

concentrate your mind on your breathing. Take a slow, comfortably deep breath in through your nose, for a slow count of five, and then very slowly breathe out through your mouth for a count of eight. Do not force the breath out, just try and exhale slowly enough to make it last to eight. Hold your breath out comfortably for a few seconds, then, when you feel the need, again inhale slowly through your nose for a count of five, and exhale very slowly through your mouth, counting to eight in your head. Repeat this for as long as you feel comfortable, or until you are feeling totally relaxed. The breaths should not be so deep as to make you feel light-headed, but should be deep enough and slow enough for the whole process to be smooth and relaxing.

Autogenic Training:

This technique is basically a form of self-suggestion, where you place yourself in a relaxed state by repeating and concentrating on feelings of warmth and heaviness in the arms and legs.

Sit or lie as comfortably as possible. Close your eyes. Try and make your whole body, including your legs, arms, head and neck go relaxed and floppy. The aim of this exercise is to relax each part of your body in turn, without tensing up the previous areas when moving on to the next. Throughout, try and avoid getting caught up in any pain and discomfort and other sensations in your body and focus on the weight of the specific body part.

First concentrate on your right leg. Without tensing up the rest of your body, try and make your right leg go even more floppy. Don't worry if this seems very difficult. Simply continue with the following instructions. Focusing on your right leg, imagine it is made of lead, heavier than anything else around. Concentrate on its heaviness and your inability (or desire) to lift it or move it at all. Say to yourself slowly, "My right leg is very heavy". Repeat to yourself twice more "My right leg is very heavy", "My right leg is very heavy", the whole while concentrating solely on your right leg and its incredibly relaxed and heavy state.

After three repetitions, transfer your focus to your left leg. Do not move either your right or left leg – just leave your heavy right leg and move to concentrating on your heavy left leg. Again, imagine it is so heavy that even if you were to try, you would not be able to move it at all, as if it is practically welded to the bed or chair. As you focus on it, slowly say to yourself, "My left leg is very heavy", "My left leg is very heavy", "My left leg is very heavy". Now keep your heavy legs still and gently start to focus on your right arm in the same kind of way. Imagine it is incredibly heavy; all of it, from the shoulder down to your fingers; too heavy

for you to move. Say slowly to yourself, "My right arm is very heavy". Repeat this, slowly, a couple more times, until you truly believe it, and can really feel that your arm is no longer a part of your body, but a lead weight attached to you. Slowly repeat this process with your left arm, and then with your head and your neck.

Now use the following repeated affirmations as slowly and gently as those above, each time focusing on the relevant body part and feeling the truth of the words:

- ✚ Heart: "My heart is calm and regular." Repeat four times.
- ✚ Breath: "My body breathes itself." Repeat four times.
- ✚ Abdomen: "My abdomen is warm." Repeat four times.
- ✚ Forehead: "My forehead is cool." Repeat four times

By this stage your entire body will hopefully be feeling much more relaxed, hopefully your heart rate and breathing have slowed down and you will either be a lot closer to getting to sleep or at least to having a proper rest. Please note that although both breathing exercises and relaxation techniques may be a challenge at first and seem ineffectual. As with many things in life, practice will make them easier and more effective.

Meditation

Many books have been written on the multitude of different methods of Meditation available for us to practice today. This is no longer just the remit of cross-legged monks in the Himalaya; millions of people all over the world practise Meditation every day



now, in order to benefit from the many physical, mental, emotional and spiritual effects. M.E. / CFS is a condition that be benefited greatly by development of a regular Meditation practice; and it doesn't have to be hard work and tiring! Guided Meditations offer a very simple and enjoyable way to begin to enjoy the benefits of

Meditation. Although it is good to be in a comfortable and maintainable position whilst Meditating, sitting in the lotus position and other aspects often associated with Meditation are not essential in bringing about a valuable experience. See the *Resources* section for more recommendations.

Whilst meditating, we simply observe all thought patterns. When a thought arises we

may take note of it, but there is no need to become emotionally involved. We let go of it just as we might release the string attached to a helium-filled balloon and let the balloon drift away. Then we gently guide the mind back to the object of meditation. Gradually the mind becomes empty of all thoughts apart from the object of meditation. When this occurs we can experience a mental state diametrically opposed to stress; one free from worry, concern, conflict, and pressure.

The meditative state also has profound physiological effects. Mental activity always precedes and directs physiological activity; meaning that we think about doing something and then fractions of a second later we do it physically. In fact, all thoughts create a physiological response even if we merely think about throwing a ball; there is a slight but definitely measurable response in the arm muscles. If we think about something that angers us, a subtle echo of this takes place throughout the muscles and the nervous system.

Not surprisingly, many people claim they attain a state of total muscular relaxation when they still the mind. There are no thoughts and feelings dashing about on the field of consciousness. Because the mind is calm during the meditative state, there is an opportunity for relaxation of the muscles and a balancing of the nervous system. The body achieves a state of physiological quietness, and these physiological changes are far-reaching, involving muscles, blood chemistry, brain waves, breathing, the cardiovascular system, and metabolism. Thus, harmony is established at all levels of the body.

The suggestion that *Mind Reconditioning* is necessary in management of M.E. / CFS in no way implies that the condition is a psychological illness. The mind and body are inextricably linked and this is simply part of a necessary holistic approach to treatment in order to obtain optimal health.

Resources

All recommendations and suggestions made in this book are part of the 5 Steps to Health Recovery Protocol devised by Dr Claire J Bowen. If you would like further information on the full protocol, or would like to book a personal consultation, please contact Dr Bowen via www.UniquePerceptions.co.uk.

At www.UniquePerceptions.co.uk you can also access various other free resources including a downloadable relaxation audio and book Hypnosis sessions and order personalised Hypnosis CDs for M.E. / CFS Recovery.

Other Useful Websites and Organisations:

- ❖ **Get-Fitt Ltd:** An innovative and friendly London-based company offering an array of high quality, thoroughly tested wellness and detox products. They offer highly professional, fully supported individualised Far Infra Red Sauna programmes as well as hiring out equipment for trial prior to purchase. Contact them via <http://www.get-fitt.com>

- ❖ **BioLife Solutions Ltd:** UK suppliers of Activated Air Therapy Devices: Airnergy+. Also offer a range of other technologies including pain relief devices. Find out more at <http://www.biolifesolutions.co.uk>

- ❖ **Yoga for M.E. / CFS:** Angela Stevens has developed yoga techniques and classes specifically addressing the needs of individuals with M.E / CFS. She has produced CDs and tapes so that people can practise this very relaxing and gentle exercise at their own pace and in their own home. Visit <http://www.angela-stevens.co.uk/me.html> for more details.

- ❖ **Free Meditations:** As one simple option of Meditation practice, visit www.FreeMeditations.co.uk to download beautiful Guided Meditations for Healing and Relaxation and Stress Relief.

- ❖ **The Perrin Technique:** find out more about this osteopathic Lymphatic drainage technique at: www.theperrinclinic.com.

- ❖ **The Sun Ancon Chi Machine:** Find out more about this exercise device for immobile individuals at: www.chi-machine.co.uk.

- ❖ **Jane Sheehan:** International reflexologist and footreader. By combining footreading with her extensive experience of reflexology, Jane is able to address her clients' physical and emotional problems really effectively. Visit www.footreading.com.