

My body told me to rest: I got better by doing the opposite

Martin Greig is the latest sufferer of chronic fatigue to be cured by a little-known Scottish therapy

REMEMBER the morning. It is seared in my memory. It was a beautiful summer day, the first of my holiday. A world of possibilities lay ahead – only I was struggling to open my eyelids. Swinging a leg out of bed seemed like an effort. I looked at my alarm clock: 9.15am.

I showered and had breakfast. The tiredness hung over me like a storm cloud. My girlfriend phoned to make plans; I said I didn't feel up to doing much. I could feel my eyelids getting heavy again. I put down the phone and looked at the clock: 11am. I wanted to crawl back into bed.

I wasn't overly concerned. I had started a new job three months previously and had been working flat out. It was August 2004. Around March or April that year I had picked up the flu, which I believed initially to be the start of my problems. I tried to work through it but never quite shook it off.

I moved to my new job as a sports writer at The Herald at the end of May, but as the months passed I felt increasingly under the weather. So I took a holiday. And here I was – sun shining, exhausted, but confident that a break would re-charge my batteries. I was, after all, 25, physically fit and had never been ill in my life.

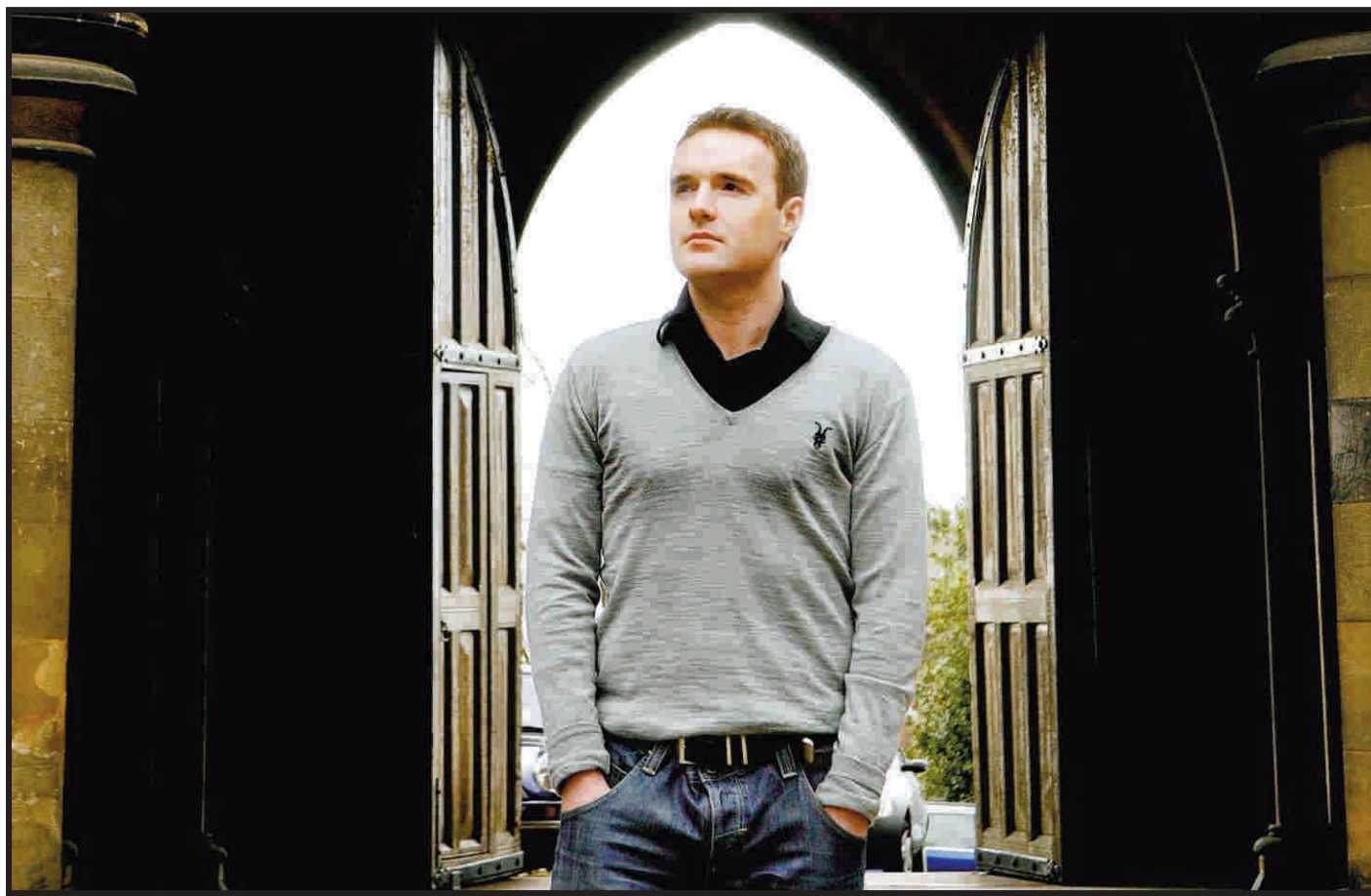
By the third day, my best-laid plans had fallen by the wayside. I phoned in sick the following week, by which stage I was suffering from deep fatigue. I began to worry, so I went to my doctor and she sent me for blood tests. They came back clear. She could see I was drained and signed me off again, but there was little improvement. Thankfully, all my colleagues at The Herald, to my eternal gratitude, were very understanding.

I went back to the doctor. "We could be looking at something like malaria," she said. My jaw dropped. I sought a consultation with another doctor who diagnosed it as "post-viral symptoms", which was at least more likely than malaria, but even she could offer no remedy.

I was off for three months. By then, I had recovered enough to make a phased return – two days at first and then gradually building it up. After six months I was working normal hours, but still not back to where I had been before. I still felt more tired than I should have done and regularly experienced other symptoms – muscle tightness, pin pricks in my feet and light-headedness.

It was clear that physical exertion exacerbated my symptoms so I was worried that any form of it would lead to a relapse. The only real advice from medics and support groups was "pace yourself".

I tried other things. I ate more slow energy-releasing foods; I went to my bed early. The differences were minimal. I became increasingly concerned that I would never fully recover. By then, I had realised



OUT OF THE DARKNESS: Martin Greig realised orthodox medicine didn't have an answer. He says he owes his recovery to Mickel therapy. Picture: Andy Buchanan

that orthodox medicine did not have a clue what was wrong with me or how to treat it.

Hope came from an unexpected source. A friend was suffering from a similar condition and found it even more debilitating than I did, having had to stop work completely. She had been researching the series of interrelated conditions commonly referred to as ME, chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia, and her trawl of the internet threw up something called Mickel therapy. The explanations it offered – see panel below – struck

a chord so she booked an appointment. I dropped in to see her one night, as usual feeling under par.

The subject of Mickel therapy came up and she said that it had started to make a real difference to her. After three sessions, she felt less tired and more confident about the future. I was delighted for her. I left feeling much more positive and e-mailed my friend's therapist for an appointment that night. I instinctively felt that this was something which could help me. In particular, two things I liked were that it did not involve any medication and

was not psychotherapy. I attended my first session a few weeks later with a Mickel therapist called Lynda Carnochan.

The theory is that the symptoms of the "energy disorders" – currently labelled variously as ME, post-viral fatigue syndrome, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and many more besides – are caused by a malfunctioning hypothalamus gland. Treatment involved a series of one-hour sessions during which I learned why my symptoms were there and how to work with them to regain my health.

What struck me was how practical Mickel was. It required dedication and decision-making, but I was prepared to do anything to improve my situation.

Like my friend, after three or four sessions I noticed a difference. I would still have bad days or weeks but the length between them was increasing. I started to build things back into my daily routine that I would never have contemplated previously, like physical exercise and socialising.

The process reminded me of an episode of the sitcom Seinfeld. In

an episode called The Opposite, Jerry's best friend George Costanza attempts to turn his life around by doing the opposite from what his head tells him to. Instead of being intimidated by beautiful women, he approaches them. Instead of being subservient to his boss, he challenges him. As a consequence, his life turns around for the better.

When experiencing symptoms my head had always told me to rest. I realised, through Mickel, that doing so only caused my symptoms to escalate. So I did "the opposite", exciting, life-enhancing stuff that sparked positive emotions. I was apprehensive at first, but I soon started to feel like I had a life again and gained confidence from not suffering setbacks.

One night out in particular sealed it for me. It was my friend's birthday. The drink was flowing and all seemed right with the world. At one point, I looked at my watch and noticed that it was 5am. I had been partying all night and felt great. I went to my bed for a few hours, woke up early afternoon and still felt fine (apart from a bit of a sore head). In the past, I would not have gone out at all, expecting to have experienced tiredness for several days at best afterwards. I was getting better.

That was last year. The symptoms have continued to diminish. Even if they do raise their ugly head, I now know how to respond to them so that my body no longer needs to create them. Seven sessions later and six months on, I am back living the kind of active life that a 29-year-old should. It is all thanks to Mickel Therapy.

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It was developed by a Scottish doctor: so what is Mickel therapy?

Mickel therapy is a groundbreaking new treatment for a wide range of chronic health conditions including chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), post-viral fatigue syndrome (PVFS) and fibromyalgia (FMA). Developed by Scottish medical doctor Dr David Mickel, pictured, the treatment involves no medication, dietary change, supplements or psychotherapy of any sort – Mickel therapy is unique, in a genre all of its own. Treatment involves a series of sessions during which clients learn why their symptoms are

present and, crucially, how to work with them to regain their health.

What does Mickel therapy believe causes CFS/ME/FMA and related conditions?

Mickel therapy is underpinned by the hypothesis that the conditions of CFS, ME, PVFS and FMA are created by a dysfunction of the hypothalamus gland. However, Mickel therapy recognises the conditions of CFS, ME, PVFS and FMA as being

purely physical and not psychological in nature.

How does Mickel therapy work?

Until Mickel therapy's hypotheses and process are studied properly then the answer remains unclear. However, the results show that it does.

Dr Mickel believes a whole range of chronic health conditions are created, and subsequently maintained, by the effect of negative primary emotions such as anger, fear and boredom on our physical cells. These are primal, instinctive emotions that are being created spontaneously in our mid-brain without cortical or "thinking brain" activity. Unfortunately, in

our modern world, increasing numbers of people have stopped responding to these negative primary emotions, which ultimately manifest themselves in physical symptoms. Mickel therapy reunites clients with these emotions and coaches them in the constructive handling of them, to leave them symptom-free.

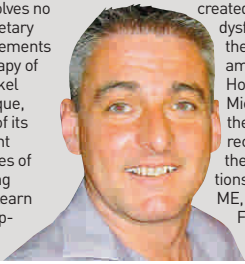
What does Mickel therapy involve?

Trained practitioners meet sufferers in a series of face-to-face sessions lasting one hour. All practitioners are supervised following each and every session, thus ensuring a high standard of therapy across the board.

What proof exists that Mickel therapy works?

Mickel therapists point to the testimony of more than 1000 clients who report a full return to health – a 92% success rate. This, of course, requires validation by approved research. The Mickel team would welcome such research, and want to have Mickel therapy properly studied.

● To find a practitioner in your area visit www.mickeltherapy.com
● Dr David Mickel will give a one-hour introductory talk about the therapy on Saturday, May 17, in Glasgow. More information from Lynda Carnochan on 07866 454064 or at lynda@mickeltherapy.com



my health | Terry Neason

FEEL much healthier than the average fifty-something because of what I put in my body and because I laugh a lot. If I were to sum up my health in three words they would be: water, breathing, positivity.

When I tell people that I'm a pescatarian I often also have to tell them that it's not an ancient Scottish religion. I eat fish but that is the only meat I've eaten for the past 20 years. I love fruit, vegetables and raw foods.

I drink about three litres of water a day and I cannot overstate just how useful it is. Water helps with everything: vitality, youthfulness and especially my skin. My skin is in incredible condition, if I do say so myself. I think people bypass the benefits of water and take it for granted, but it really is a brilliant way of improving your health.

I gave up cigarettes 17 years ago and for the life of me I don't know why I did it in the first place. I used to do all the typical daft things in my youth – late nights, binge drinking and the rest. I may have abused my body and mind then but it was all part of growing up. I feel so lucky to

have been alive in the sixties, where there was so much freedom and the idea of stress just wasn't there.

When it comes to exercise I'm not a slave to the gym. I do have a treadmill at home and I stroll on that for a couple of miles each day while listening to my iPod or rehearsing. In that way, I combine my exercise with relaxation because in life you can't force yourself to do something you don't enjoy. If you're lucky enough to develop a passion for the gym or keeping fit then you're lucky, but most people don't and I'm one of them. Remember that sex is also a great form of exercise and the endorphins that it releases are great for the soul.

I love to laugh and probably live to laugh. I'm not saying that I don't ever feel down but I do try to stay positive. A lot of ailments are psychosomatic and so I believe that if you can talk yourself into feeling ill, you can talk yourself out of it.

Even though I'm overweight, I'm one of those people who are relatively fit but overweight. If I were

to go to a doctor he'd most likely tell me to go off and lose a few stone and I'd tell him where to go. I'm happy, I'm healthy, I enjoy life and I'm very rarely ill, so just leave me alone, doc.

I'm a hard worker and I must admit I do get stressed. The

difference is, I live with it and move on. Again, breathing helps and, actually, I find I can use the stress to improve my performance on stage. I remember doing a show on the night my mother died. I think I went into another world before having to go back to dealing with my grief.

Water, breathing and positive thought are basic things we all take for granted but I promise you, if you start to appreciate them then you and your health can't go wrong.

Terry Neason is appearing in *Secret Smiles 'n' Love Songs at the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow, from tomorrow until May 3. For more information, visit www.tlcpowertalk.com*



wellbeing | health and happiness

This week: Success is all in the mind

ASK any man in a pub to explain Scotland's lack of success in football and you'll get a theory, but psychologists believe they have the answer. Last week, researchers at St Andrews and Exeter universities said studies had shown that the Scottish side consistently fails because the players believe they will. Success, it seems, is in the mind.

So what is success? Professor Stephen Reicher, head of the psychology department at St Andrews University, was one of those who conducted the study. He believes success cannot be defined universally and that success is simply a function of what each person views as important. "Success is relative to what people value, and values alter from group to group," he says. "They also alter for the individual when they act as a group member and different things become important to them."

So there is no one definition of success?

Our idea of what is successful is based on what we deem to be important and there can be a great discrepancy between two common ideas of success. "Sometimes that might be material, it might be more money. Sometimes it might be generosity and helping others."

Each of these ideas of success is based on the beliefs of different groups in society and each is equally valid. The problem arises when one group cannot or does not understand the fluid nature of success and so views others as financial or moral failures.

Why are some more successful than others?

It's easy to compare ourselves to millionaires such as Richard Branson or Deborah Meaden of Dragons' Den, pictured, and notice the ways in which they appear more successful than us. What we often fail to recognise is that our definition of success, based on what is important to us, may be vastly different to those we are comparing ourselves with. Reicher warns of the pitfalls of



FALSE IDOL? Deborah Meaden.

comparing our successes with those of others: "In seeing some people as more successful than others, we project on to them what we think of as important rather than necessarily seeing what they think of as important. "Success isn't always having a bigger house or car or a better job. Some may feel fulfilled, for instance, by having a craft, a hobby or relationship."

Are success and happiness linked?

The problem, according to Reicher, is we can mislead ourselves into believing that if we

health news

Cold water on herbal cure

It has long been common advice: head off a cold or hay fever with a drop of echinacea. But just how effective is it? Not much, according to a new study.

The trial, at the University of California, San Francisco, found no evidence that echinacea prevents nasal congestion or sore throats. The participants were randomly assigned to take either three echinacea capsules or three parsley-containing placebo capsules twice a day. Once a week, the researchers asked the volunteers whether they had had a sore throat, runny nose, headache or other cold symptoms over the previous week.

Overall, the echinacea group reported nine "sick days" per person, while the placebo group reported 14. The difference, however, could have been chance.

"Although echinacea is touted as an immune stimulant and sold in almost all health food stores, this study is one of many with equivocal findings that really do not support the use of echinacea to prevent the common cold," said lead researcher Dr Joelle O'Neil.

Exercising the mind

Forget those brain-trainer computer games, you might be better off trying something a good deal more old-fashioned: a little bit of exercise. Scientists have said that keeping the heart fit with aerobic exercise may boost older adults' brainpower. In an analysis of data from previous trials, researchers in the Netherlands found that when healthy adults older than 55 improved their fitness through aerobic exercise, there was also often an improvement in memory, attention or other mental abilities.

The findings appear in the Cochrane Library, a publication of the Cochrane Collaboration, an international organisation that evaluates medical research.

Dr Maaïke Angevaren and colleagues at the University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht reviewed 11 clinical trials conducted in the US, France and Sweden that involved 670 adults older than 55. "Improvements in cognition as a result of improvements in cardiovascular fitness are being explained by improvements in cerebral blood flow, leading to increased brain metabolism which, in turn, stimulates the production of neurotransmitters and formation of new synapses," said Angevaren.

Improved cardiovascular fitness may also protect the brain by lowering the risks of heart disease and stroke, Angevaren said.

Attack on Alzheimer's

A new kind of drug that hitches into cells could become a potent new treatment for Alzheimer's disease. The compound effectively blocks an enzyme responsible for the build-up of sticky deposits, or plaques, in the brain by attaching to exactly the right spot on the cell wall where the toxic activity takes place, German scientists have revealed in the journal *Science*. The formation of plaque is thought to play a key role in the development of Alzheimer's.

If all goes well, a version could be available for use by patients in five to 10 years, said Kai Simons of the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics in Dresden.

The World Health Organisation estimates there are about 18 million people worldwide with Alzheimer's disease and this figure is projected to reach 34 million by 2025.

achieve a set of goals that others have reached we will be equal to them not only in terms of success but in terms of the happiness that their success brings them.

Naturally, this is not always the case. You can only expect an increase in happiness to mirror an increase in success if you have first identified success on your own terms.

The most accurate measurement of happiness is not success; rather, success must be based on individual happiness. Nobel prize-winner Albert Schweitzer said: "Success is not the key to happiness, happiness is the key to success."

It is perfectly possible, then, to be considered by others as unsuccessful but to remain perfectly content by your own standards. Reicher says: "What is important is that people have the right to define for themselves whether they have succeeded or not."

It seems, then, that the key to being more successful lies in first understanding what is most important to you – and that is not as easy as it sounds.