

## **CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME**

Remember the last time that you had the flu—you may have felt achy all over, had a dull headache, felt tired even though you slept all day, you couldn't concentrate, you didn't sleep soundly... Now imagine that the symptoms continued for weeks, then months. You went from one doctor to the next trying to find help. This is the plight of many people with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome has been documented in medical journals for at least 100 years. It is also called Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS) and has also been called the “yuppie” disease, Neuronyasthenia, chronic mononucleosis, chronic Epstein Barr Virus disease, myalgic encephalomyelitis, and Natural Killer Cell disease. It is the least understood of the autoimmune related conditions. 90% of the reported cases are women (generally overworked white, type A personalities) but the condition has been reported in migrant farm workers with environmental stress as well. It is likely that many cases are not recorded due to the difficulty in diagnosis of the disorder.

### **Symptom Criteria**

Other problems that produce the same symptoms: thyroid trouble, anemia, infection or depression.

4 out of 8 symptom criteria must be present:

The fatigue must:

1. Be at least 6 months duration;
2. Not be lifelong (patients must remember when they did not have the symptoms);
3. Result in substantial reduction of occupational, educational, social or personal activities, as compared to the person's activities before the onset of illness
4. Not be the result of ongoing exertion or be relieved by rest.

Symptoms must have started at the same time or after the onset of fatigue, and must be present simultaneously for at least 6 months during the illness. Patients must meet at least 4 of these criteria:

1. Impairment of short-term memory or concentration that is severe enough to cause substantial decrease in previous levels of activities;
2. Sore throat;
3. Tender lymph nodes in neck and arm pits;
4. Muscle pain;
5. Joint pain involving more than one joint, without swelling or redness;
6. Headaches of a new type, pattern or severity;
7. Unrefreshing sleep;
8. Malaise or fatigue lasting more than 24 hours after exertion

### **Exclusionary Criteria**

1. any other medical condition that could mimic CFS—such as a history of malignancy, chronic infection, neuromuscular disease, etc.
2. bipolar affective disorders, psychotic or melancholic depression, schizophrenia, and dementia
3. anorexia nervosa and bulimia
4. alcohol or substance abuse within 2 years of onset of fatigue or at any time thereafter
5. severe obesity

80% of those with CFS have crimson crescents inside of their mouth near the molars.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome has many **contributing factors**—a large number of triggers cause changes in the immune system, sleep and hormones. Triggers may include stress, infections, surgery, depression, physical, emotional abuse, nutrition (including candidiasis) and environmental factors (including allergies, pollutants and chemicals). The difference between people with CFS and the general (stressed) population is that long after the trigger is gone the illness continues.

### **The difference between Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia and Lupus**

CFS seems to be more fatigue although body tenderness and soreness can be part of it. Fibromyalgia is diagnosed when 11 of 18 points on the body are sensitive to touch (these do correspond with the marma points.) 50% of people with CFS also have Fibromyalgia. We surmised with Vijay that the people with Fibromyalgia are most likely Pitta dosha. Lupus is diagnosed with a blood test and is a condition of the blood and joints.

### **Ayurveda**

These conditions tend to occur in Vata and Pitta constitutions. CFS and MS are Vata disorders. Fibromyalgia and Lupus are Pitta disorders .

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome would be treated by Ayurveda immediately (not after 6 months!) to decrease the ama in the body and to increase the agni. The process of panchakarma would be to remove the toxins, mobilize the toxins and then rid the body of toxins.

### **THE 5 BODIES**

#### **Annamayakosha**

The separation is from chronic stress—the imbalance of tension and rest in their life due to the many triggers stated above. Dealing with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome could be the first time in their lives that many of these people pay attention to their bodies in their lives. There is an overall lack of awareness of their physical body, the elements, the doshas. The systems involved are primarily the immune and nervous systems with other systems varying on a case by case basis—most people will have muscular skeletal, endocrine system involvement.

### **Pranamayakosha**

In the Energy body there is separation in the breath in general, the prana vayus and the chakras . All vayus are affected especially apana, upana, and vyana. All chakras are affected but primarily from disconnection from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> chakras.

### **Manomayakosha**

The energy pie: a metaphor for the amount of energy we have available on a daily/weekly etc. basis. The pie can be seen as composed of 1/4 emotional energy, “mental energy, “ physical energy, and spiritual energy. When a person dealing with Chronic Fatigue Symptom (CFS) uses up the pieces of their pie or compensates for loss of energy in one quarter by borrowing from another quarter the person is further depleting themselves which will strain the immune system more. Unlike a person not dealing with CFS they cannot push or use saved energy resources but has to rest and most likely stay inactive until energy is regenerated. There might be an observable pattern over time of which activities cause which energy strain but more often the fatigue symptoms may come suddenly with no warning signs. Not being able to rely on body and mind as usual, the person experiences losses in their social and work life. Not being able to participate, engage, accomplish, or produce and experiences like "running out of steam", "missing out", " falling behind" cause feelings of frustration, confusion, low self-esteem, anger, anxiety, guilt (not being enough) and isolation to emerge. These losses due to the illness cause depression. The techniques of yoga can teach the client to become more aware of the feelings, wants and needs of body and mind, and to then pace the self better. Working in groups, with a partner breaks isolation. Laughter and love strengthen the immune system. Suggestions for working with CFS include using heart-opening asanas, mudras that focus on giving and receiving love, yogassage, the healing power of self-touch, restorative poses for self-nurturing, asanas toning muscles and experiencing inner strength. Energy flow of 1, 2nd, and 3rd Chakras are mainly affected. Therefore grounding, balancing, centering asanas are good as well as pranayamas that open these Chakras to allow the experience of pleasure, joy, and trust. Use mandalas (self created) and affirmation to connect with self in a gentle way.

### **Vijnamayakosha**

The person with CFS has difficulties looking beyond themselves and battling on a daily basis to find ways to live with the fatigue. There is little energy left to foster the wisdom body. By nurturing the manomayakosha the person can develop strength to observe behavioral patterns. The client might even seek cognitive behavioral therapy to learn about triggers that set off stress responses in the body and mind (e.g. self-expectations, learning who they are.) Yoga nidras with positive healing and affirmation are useful. Through experiential learning the client can practice in the asanas self awareness of sensation, thoughts and feelings. By this they learn not to "push" to prevent exhaustion, to rest when needed, to wait before acting, thereby preventing relapse and breaking old patterns.

### **Anandamayakosha**

The separation from others, spirit and the self can be addressed in yoga nidra and pranayama. Images from nature and the elements of earth and water (1st and 2nd Chakra)

can introduce unity. Learning to connect to the true self, finding perspective on what matters, what is ultimately important? Experiencing energy flow, vitality and strength by being rather than doing.

## **WELLNESS PRINCIPLES**

(We arranged our Wellness Principles in the order of an IYT class)

1. **Check-in & Sharing.** We thought that this would be a very important part of the class to help students know that they are not alone and to develop a community.
2. **Body Awareness** is very important to get them in touch with their body to feel both tension and relaxation. Different body awareness exercises can be used to work with different koshas, systems of the physical body, awareness of each part of the body, prana vayus, etc. Body maps and journaling are also beneficial to get them in touch with themselves and to document their feelings. They may discover times of wellness and unity—not just pain.
3. **Pranayama.** Breath awareness and abdominal breathing will help students to reduce stress and increase awareness. Prana vidya and alternate nostril breathing will help with balance. They could use right nostril focus to stimulate energy in the morning and left nostril focus at night to promote sleep. Sitkari, sitali have cooling effects with some heating and Kaki or strawbreathing will be very helpful for this group. Sounding and mantra will give them vibrational healing. They can make up their own mantra or use the following Sanskrit mantras for self empowerment:
  - Om Nama Shiva—This Siddha mantra uses universal elements that govern each element: earth, water, fire, air and space.
  - Nara Simha Ta Va Da So Hum [Nah-rah-seen-ha Tah Vah Dah Soh Hum] – Narasimha is the principle for destroying the seemingly indestructible and can be invoked to gain freedom from evil situations.
4. **Asana**—“slow sustained exercise” is prescribed for this condition so yoga is perfect. (Researchers Arthur Hartz, M.D. and Suzanne Bentler recently compiled evidence that suggests that yoga help persons with Chronic Fatigue better than anything else—see April 2001 Yoga Journal article “Rest for the Weary” by Alice Lesch Kelly)
  - Coordinate breath and movement—slow, smooth, steady and with awareness
  - Emphasize grounding and relaxation with vata balancing
  - Restorative postures such as supported fish (to gently increase energy and for opening), forward bending (for inward focus), twists (to help increase agni) and legs up the wall (60 to 70% of CFS patients have neurologically mediated postural hypotension—which means their blood pressure drops when they’re standing and inversions are non-drug treatment for this)
  - Somatics to release chronic tension and bring them into contact to the different areas of their bodies.
  - Chair yoga and modified postures with props.

- Partner and Self-Massage to develop relationship with self and others
- Tadasana and other poses as strength and energy are available.

## 5. Guided Imagery

*[Key Elements of Guided Imagery offered during Experiential Session]*

- Body awareness practice outdoors, to heighten awareness, to come into present moment, time and environment, to let go of tension.
- Using environment to ground (sitting on the earth--feel nourished and revitalized).
- Throughout session repeatedly bring awareness back to present moment and uniqueness of it.
- Introducing awareness of the senses with eyes closed, exploring object from nature with eyes closed. Becoming aware of sun, wind, temperature, sound far away, closer, very close, sound of own breath.
- Introduce theme of pleasure by experiencing senses, relaxation, nature and the present moment "tap into a deep source of energy inside".
- Deepening experience: mention sacredness of moment, sacredness of the senses, sacredness of the mundane.
- Unity: notice how this awareness connects you with forces, support outside of you. Let self surrender and effortlessly be carried, nurtured, held up by nature (higher power) "let go".

## 6. Affirmation

Read affirmation: " The power of the earth gives me the strength. The power that surrounds me and gives me enthusiasm, pleasure and joy."

- Bring back to body sensation, awareness of environment, slowly open eyes.

## 7. Mudras for Chronic Fatigue:

**Uttarabodhi Mudra**—use when you feel physically and mentally listless, when you want to relax, or when you need a rousing idea—a flash of inspiration. It strengthens the metal element associated with the lungs and large intestine. It strengthens inhalation, has a refreshing effect and has a direct relationship with the nervous system and anything that conducts electrical and or energetic impulses. No contraindications. Fingers interlaced with thumbs and index fingers straight and together pressing on sternum and solar plexus.

**Pushan Mudra**—god of nourishment. Accepting and receiving with gesture on one hand and letting things go with other hand. Regulates the Autonomic Nervous system, mobilizes and detoxifies. Right hand --tips of thumb, index finger and middle finger on top of each other, other fingers extended. Left Hand—tips of thumb, middle finger and ring finger together, others extended. Inhalation—take energy in form of light. Pause—spread light. Exhalation—let expended energy flow back to you.

**8. Meditation** would be helpful for this population to relax them and help them find their connection to their inner guidance. Since CFS is a vata disorder using a technique such as a mantra, dristi, counting, or sounding to steady the mind will be helpful.

## Resourches:

*Thriving with Your Autoimmune Disorder, A Woman's Mind-body Guide by Simone Ravicz, PhD, MBA*

*Coping with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome by Fred Friedberg PhD.*

*Healing Mantras by Thomas Ashley Farrand*

*Rituals of Healing Using Imager for Health and Wellness by Jeanne Achterber Ph.D, Barbara Dossey, RN, MS, FAAN and Leslie Kolkmeier, RN M Ed.*

*Structural Yoga Therapy by Mukunda Stiles*

*Yoga for Wellness by Gary Kraftsow*