

Life with ME/CFS

“Comparable to a car being driven with the brakes on; eventually the stress and tension within the system causes something to overheat and break down, leaving the car powerless.” John Sparkes

When I first read the article on CFS/ ME on the internet nearly five years ago these words jumped out at me as they seemed a perfect analogy for what I had experienced. I was browsing the internet for information written about ME from a Christian perspective as I had been diagnosed with the illness three years previously and was still struggling with it. I had received excellent medical care from my doctors and a course of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy to help me manage the symptoms of the illness



and I had returned to work part time. However, I had found no understanding or answers to why I had been, and still was, so ill and I lived with the constant fear that it would completely overwhelm me again.

As I read the descriptions of the Choleric and Melancholic temperaments and the interaction between the two temperaments within a person it described me so accurately! I had lived all of my life until becoming ill as a Choleric – I had been strong and determined and very capable and the description of how someone with my temperament would suppress and control their emotions and condemn them as weakness described me perfectly. Yet, although I didn't like to admit it, I could also identify with the description of the Melancholic temperament and the pressures that caused.

Completely out of character I clicked the 'contact' link on the website and requested further information! After a short correspondence I embarked upon the on-line course and started to understand and come to terms with the Melancholic side of my temperament. I had never shared my thoughts of feelings at any depth before and it was such a relief to share some of the huge burdens that I had carried, unknowingly, for so many years. It was also very painful as I had to face the reality of things that had happened to me in the past and the reality of how I felt about myself deep down.

I was able to do that because of the gentle understanding and support of the pastor of this church and the completely unconditional love and acceptance I have been shown by the church.

As my understanding of myself has grown and I have gradually learnt to accept myself as a Melancholic I have found that the physical symptoms of the ME have decreased and my health has gradually improved. I had great difficulty accepting that the root causes of my illness were psychological and lay within myself and that it was not merely a physical illness that I had 'caught' but, once I accepted that and let the Lord bring his healing and wholeness, then my physical health improved. I have also increasingly found peace within myself and peace with God and, although it is an ongoing process and I do still struggle at times, I am much more 'whole' as a person. My life is completely different now than before I was ill; I have retrained and have a new direction in my career, I am rebuilding damaged relationships and I feel that at last I am free to be person that God created me to be.

My initial impression of this article was correct and the insight into CFS/ ME provided by an understanding of the temperaments is simple but very powerful and, combined with the wisdom and counselling skills of the pastor, has been life changing for me.

- Julie

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