

The Lightning Process™ and ME

Greg Crowhurst, Aug 20th 2006

According to its founder Phil Parker, The Lightning Process™ is based upon the assumption that "M.E can be turned around rapidly, through addressing thought patterns". Sadly many ME sufferers are so desperate they will try anything.

The Lightning Process™, like another recent innovation - Reverse Therapy, works on the premise that some workings of the body, like the hypothalamus, can be brought under our conscious control. Whereas Reverse Therapy is a form of psychotherapy, The Lightning Process uses a mix of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) and Hypnotherapy Gutierrez (2006). to help people get well .

.Developed at the University of California between 1973-9, NLP is loosely based on Virginia Satir's Family System's work, Milton Erikson's Hypnotherapy and Fritz Perl's Gestalt . It must be emphasised that some of NLP's insights can be helpful: "We are how we communicate. Say you can't do something and you're right. However say you can and you open up the possibilities." (Crowhurst 1991); the author has found this maxim to be extremely empowering in his own life. Even so, at heart NLP is yet another form of behaviourism, and all the objections amassed against the psychiatric lobby seem to apply equally well to the The Lightning Process™ .

A criticism of NLP, for example, and the psychiatric lobby, is the lack of scientific validity of their claims, however the NLP community are making some progress in statistical research, especially around NLP meta programs – this refers to the series of mental filters which determine how one behaves based on how one thinks – even so it is probably more accurate to regard this as a variation on a theme of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

Several reviewers have characterized NLP as :

- pseudoscientific
- psychobabble
- charlatanry
- fraudulent
- a dubious therapy
- a cult
- a religion, similar though not so overt as Scientology.
- a New Age therapy – considered responsible even for the New Age movement.

The main tenet of NLP that all human behaviour is neurological, and is based exclusively on the 5 senses, rather than attitudes, reason, emotions, mind, morals or ego - is questionable. It implies a purely reactive rather than a responsive individual; it is our responsiveness that makes us human. The fact that neurological terms are used and that ME is a neurological illness could raise sufferer's hopes by association.

Individual NLP trainers often introduce or idiosyncratically develop their own methods, concepts and labels, branding under the "NLP" names such as :

- New Code of NLP
- NAC Neuro Associative Conditioning™
- Neuro – Semantics™
- Advanced Neuro Dynamics™ & Time Line Therapy™
- DHE- Design Human Engineering™
- SkyDancing Tantra™

And of course the Lightning Process™ .

Much of NLP is charismatically or evangelistically taught . It is possible to gain a qualification in NLP in just a few sessions, but it may not even be worth the paper it is printed on. Concern has been expressed that NLP can be manipulative , that practitioners show a weak grasp of ethics, and that there is no regulatory body .In addition the field has been criticised for a “lunatic” fringe that goes around claiming to be able to do virtually anything.

As on the Lightning Process TM website, anecdotes and user testimonials are mostly used by NLP practitioners in support of their treatment , rather than rigorous pre and post-treatment comparisons.

Relevance to ME

An argument often used in ME is that sufferers become so preoccupied with negative thoughts and the illness itself, that it reinforces its grip on their lives. The mind and the body are linked and it is possible by changing their thoughts for the sufferer to raise their energy levels, enhance their coping skills and even get well. While there is no proven link between thinking yourself well and the body making itself well, there is no doubt that the body-mind connection is mysterious and sufferer's can at least tap into a beneficial higher spiritual, if not physical energy (Crowhurst 2006), and can certainly learn how to cope better within the illness.

Phil Parker describes his Lightning Process TM as an “ interactive journey of discovery, that takes 3 hours to unfold “ Although this may seem impossible for the ME sufferer they do not need to worry for “as soon as the journey begins symptoms start to lift “. Would Parker say the same to a Cerebral Palsy sufferer or a Parkinson's sufferer, I wonder ? For ME is just as serious and physical an illness

The key to successfully recovering from your M.E, says Parker on his website is to :

“1. Identify the thought patterns that my research has found to be always present in someone with M.E.”

.....What an extraordinary claim to make !

2. Discover a way to automatically, easily and effectively stop those thought patterns

3. Then decide what to do with the rest of your life.

...If only it were that simple !!

His approach is strikingly similar , if not identical, to the behavioural programme currently being peddled by the psychiatric lobby , which survey after survey reveals to be unhelpful or even dangerous, for the ME sufferer.

Sanghera's (2005) criticism , in the Financial Times, of NLP, that it “ is simply a half-baked conflation of pop psychology and pseudoscience that uses jargon to disguise the fact that it is based on a set of banal, if not incorrect, presuppositions”, can be applied entirely correctly to the psychiatric approach to ME and highlights brilliantly the inadequacies of both.

Any claim, like Parker's that the complex, neurological illness ME can be cured by changing your thoughts, flies in the face of all the evidence. . Time and again the issue comes down to are we talking about strict neurological ME, as defined by the Canadian Criteria or to the ragbag artificial construct "CFS" as concocted by the Oxford definition, which incorporates all manner of disparate fatigue states, including depression, some of which might indeed be amenable to Parker's Lightning Process TM.

If you are thinking negatively and feeling bad about yourself as a result of your thoughts, then there is no harm in changing your thoughts however if your thoughts are accurately acknowledging your awful physical reality, then changing them is not going to bring about a physical cure. You may feel more optimistic, more hopeful. There is no direct link between feeling good and being well unfortunately. You can hope to be well, but it does not mean you are going to be.

When are we going to have real treatment for ME sufferers that actually honours the severity of the symptoms and the severity of the illness people actually have - rather this New Age thought - theory currently being peddled both as mainstream psychiatric treatment and others that are more of a fringe treatment ?

There is a whole level of denial that allows people to downgrade the severity and integrity of this severe neurological illness into something that can easily be changed with the right thought and the right exercise. Feeling very ill is not necessarily the same as being very ill. However being very ill will make you feel very ill - and that is an entirely different ballgame.

Gutierrez M (2006) "<http://www.mariannegutierrez.co.uk/article/reverse-therapy-and-lightning-process-and-three-little-glands> \

Crowhurst G (1991) Walk Your Talk : how a bias for action and effective communication can work to overcome the twin obstacles of doubt and fear in community-based teams. Community Living.

Crowhurst G (2006) Beyond Normal Prayer, St Paul's Publications, London.

Look into my eyes and tell me I'm learning not to be a loser, Financial Times, London (UK), Sanghera. [[url=HYPERLINK "http://news.ft.com/cms/s/770f7e96-15cd-11da-8085-00000e2511c8.html"](http://news.ft.com/cms/s/770f7e96-15cd-11da-8085-00000e2511c8.html) \ <http://news.ft.com/cms/s/770f7e96-15cd-11da-8085-00000e2511c8.html>"]<http://news.ft.com/cms/s/770f7e96-15cd-11da-8085-00000e2511c8.html>