

Experiences of young people who have undergone the Lightning Process to treat Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Myalgic Encephalomyelitis - A qualitative study

Silje Endresen Reme, Nicola Archer and Trudie Chalder
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Summary

Independent qualitative study conducted by researchers from Harvard University and Kings College, London carried out in 2007.

They interviewed 9 Lightning Process participants, aged 14-26, and the 3 parents of those under 18, who had a diagnosis of CFS/ME. The participants volunteered in a response to an advert on the AYME website.

7 of the 9 young people reported that they were satisfied and much improved and 2 of the young people reported dissatisfaction and no improvement.

The 3 parents reported satisfaction with the course.

The paper included 2 case studies, one where the Lightning Process was not helpful and one where it was.

Phil Parker's response to the article

As we have had no conversations with the authors at this point, we have not been able to respond to some of their interpretations, and as the article raises some important points I have written this commentary from my perspective as the originator and developer of the Lightning Process.

Most, but not all, found the experience helpful. Some participants, and the researchers, had some criticism of elements of the Lightning Process course structure, approach and in one case the practitioner.

Any feedback from participants is useful and so over the years we have worked to develop and improve the delivery of the Lightning Process across the Register. Since the study was conducted (2007), we have already addressed the following areas that are highlighted in the study:

Length of seminar

One participant reported that the seminar lasted from 10am-7pm. This has been addressed with specific individuals and all practitioners are expected to all follow the same teaching pattern of seminars of between 3-5 hours.

Feeling of blame

(The paper comments that this is also found in other CFS trials with those who don't succeed)

The Lightning Process asks individuals to take responsibility for their own learning, this differs from blame for not succeeding. Additionally the Lightning Process, along with many other philosophical approaches, discusses how the concepts of 'feeling guilt' or that 'you are to blame' prevents change and progress. Not 'getting' this concept would indicate that they had yet to grasp one of the cornerstones of the Lightning Process approach, and then the practitioner, as any good trainer would do, would not blame them for this but work with them to find better ways to re-explain it.

Secrecy

The Lightning Process isn't shrouded in secrecy. I am happy for observers to watch Lightning Process seminars and for participants to discuss the Lightning Process with anyone they wish. However I do not give permission for my materials and intellectual property to be available to those without a licence to use them. The training to become a Lightning Process Practitioner develops a very specific skill set, and if someone was to use the materials without the underlying knowledge and training there may be safety issues.

Limits and illness

The authors suggest that the Lightning Process denies limitations of illness but this isn't a completely accurate version of the Lightning Process perspective. Instead of ignoring the illness or its limitations the Lightning Process teaches people how to improve their physiological function first before attempting to increase their exertion.

Speed of recovery

Although the Lightning Process seminar is three days, the Lightning Process starts from the initial interaction with the Lightning Process practitioner and continues until no further support is required by the client. Many people report that they are better after three days, but for others this takes longer as they embed the principles and practices of Lightning Process and build their stamina to reach their goals.

Effects of different practitioners

Lightning Process practitioners are taught to present the Lightning Process in a standardised format. They will obviously bring their own personalities to the presentation. It is important to select a practitioner that you feel you will have rapport with. The practitioners now all have stringent requirements with regard to their Professional Practice, Continuing Professional Development and have to be involved in supervision.