

## 🔍 Case Study: Autogenic group therapy in the successful treatment of the symptoms of Lyme disease in a 47 year old Principal Engineer.

*Lyme Disease was named in the 1970's after a town in Connecticut USA . However 'Ozzi', a name given to a mummified iceman, is the oldest case known to man. He was found in the Italian alps in 53000 BC. So you would think that by now we should have a bit more understanding of suitable treatments. But sadly Lyme disease remains an enigma, with no clear guidelines in its effective treatment.*

*The following is the first-hand experience of living with Lyme disease. It has been written to enable a little more understanding of the difficulty of its diagnoses, the effects the tests have on the body and then what is offered by way of treatment. Names have been changed to protect anonymity.*

*Autogenic Therapy came about after his company referred Finley for CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy). Due to difficulty Finley had at this stage of the disease, with the focused concentration necessary and the written homework expected each week, it was decided that the demands CBT would make far outweighed the benefits at this time, so CBT was put on hold. Luckily I had worked with similar symptoms in patients with Parkinson's disease where Autogenic Therapy had really helped in subtle as well as profound ways. Thus began the gentle unravelling of Finley's symptoms within the containment of the group; he describes brilliantly the struggles with resistance to therapy and the way his special relationship with Hector, his ailing horse, was affected by his healing too.*

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*For more information please visit:*

[www.Autogenicttherapy.org.uk](http://www.Autogenicttherapy.org.uk)

*Groups run at Glencairn House Clinic on Wednesday. Monthly drop in group also available. Please email or phone the clinic for more information.*

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## **Finley's Story**

Finley was looking for a new home for his beautiful horse Hector.

Hector had been lonely and somewhat poorly for a while and this was a chance to move him to be with new friends and hopefully give him a new lease of life.



Following a visit one sunny evening in September 2014, Finley was most pleased to have found lovely new stables with no less than 9 other horses of all shapes and sizes. Perfect.

The very next day, at work, during the completion of a phone call, Finley rubbed something off of his itchy right leg. Looking into his hand, he found something very familiar, a tick, smaller than a pin head, lying there looking rather pleased for itself, tiny but clearly fully engorged with blood. The itchy mark on the back of his calf confirmed to Finley that this was his blood...



In this part of the South West of England a constant battle is waged to keep the horses clear of the various tick species carried around by the local wildlife, and nothing more was thought about the incident until 2 weeks later when Finley pulled up lame, with an unexpected calf strain. On inspection, there was the classic 'target shaped' discolouration, about 6" across and the underlying muscle had deteriorated to fluid.

Three months later in late December, found Finley admitted to hospital and having had a lumbar puncture, ahead of the expected treatment for Meningitis. However this was a false alarm, another cruel twist of Lyme disease. It mimics the symptoms of many other diseases, and the previously demure consultant actually ran up the corridor, in amazed excitement, the results had come back negative. "Fancy that"... fancy that indeed thought 'Guinea Pig' Finley.

During the next 6 months 'Lyme' came in waves, Finley would feel slightly better for a while, then the wheels would fall off, and some random bodily function/s would appear to fail and he would feel much worse. A slow progression through the medical dictionary, coincided with countless negative tests, in stark contrast to the severity of the 'spurious' symptoms. An attempt to go back to work in February, despite the illness, ended in failure, when some simple tests were carried out, that showed Finley had no skin sensation anywhere on his body, and the fact that he had virtually no perception of balance, was probably why he had no knowledge that he was randomly falling over until his face abruptly met the floor. These gentle rebuffs by the Occupational Health Department at Finley's work, occurred once a month for the next three months.

Lyme's final kick was its ability to affect friends and family. Finley could see the disease mirrored in the pained expressions on the faces of friends and family members, and most of all his partner. Lyme was absorbing anything within sight; it seemed that everybody was suffering, and there appeared to be no way forward other than a slow decline.

Lyme can also be very elusive during testing, and false negative results are not unknown. With all tests coming back negative, some seized upon this as a reason for Finley "to buck up and stop thinking yourself ill". The pressure was mounting.

So in reality feeling no better, but trying to get used to the condition, Finley felt obliged to return to work (on very limited hours) in May 2015. And from this point things rapidly deteriorated.

The final straw came around June, when sudden onset poor circulation throughout his whole body coincided with mental difficulties that rapidly brought enormous relationship strains into the family home.

Finley was referred to the retained Company Psychologist, and, the Consultant Neurologist who, with still no positive Lyme diagnosis results despite all the tests, referred Finley to the Infectious Diseases Clinic at Bristol as a last resort.

For the first time since he was bitten 9 months prior, Finley very quickly got some reassurance that he was being taken seriously. Comments in rapid succession, "It is very serious... you know Lyme disease will kill you?" and a slightly surreal moment, when, following quiet contemplation of the folder of test results and a thorough physical examination at Bristol, the consultant transferred her gaze back and forth between the folder of notes and Finley for a couple of minutes, and then suddenly said: "Finley..... you have got Lyme disease.....! I know that, you know that... can you please tell that lot in Somerset!"

A 28 day course of intravenous antibiotics was prescribed in late September 2016, and following months of politics between the various Health Care Trusts, Finley found himself in late January 2016, facing a lifelong phobia of surgery, in a Somerset Hospital, having a PICC line fitted, ready for treatment.

The treatment month was horrendous, but the Lyme was worse, and despite various issues throughout Finley persevered. But there was no instant relief, the side effects kicked in hard and new depths were found.

But there was a brief glimmer, sometime on treatment day 20, when Finley very suddenly noticed he had tripped a split second earlier, and with little or no dignity, managed to arrest the fall in the next second or two, traversing about ten yards up the corridor comedy style. No one saw it, no one to see the eureka moment, but Finley had a little weep to himself.

Progress was virtually imperceptible and could only be measured looking backwards, and this was strictly limited to once a month. Improvements were enough that by May 2016, the one year anniversary after first returning to work part time, Finley had dragged himself back to work full time in body, but mind and spirit would have to catch up, hopefully.

The Lyme symptoms could take years to dissipate if they actually went completely at all. And Finley was left with not much mental capacity to think and no emotional capacity at all. In fact it became clear that the unfortunate victim of the whole situation was Finley's relationship with his partner. She had supported him throughout and as they were both 'rubbish at arguing' the inevitable toll on their bond was painfully deep, despite their love.

So Finley embarked on further Psychological therapy, and it became clear that his 'skillset' in dealing with emotional issues was somewhat limited, even before the Lyme took hold, by a difficult childhood, a broken back (L1 – L4 Lumber) which, miraculously, he was able to eventually walk again after, and a PTSD incident in adult life, that left him off work for a period of 2 years.

Despite desperately wanting to catch up on the time lost to Lyme and in some aspects, the time lost since childhood, and extreme sadness over his relationship, Finley was completely frustrated with himself, as he appeared unable to do anything constructive or even try to help himself. A rabbit caught in the headlights. In fact, a direct metaphor for the situation he was in awaited him at home every night: he had pulled his house apart 5 years ago and had still not got round to putting it back together, which frustrated him and had slowly made his partner give up on them ever getting somewhere together, leaving her heartbroken.

Something was very wrong and as a start to the journey of reprogramming a lifetime of coping, his Psychologist suggested an Autogenics course.

As a scientist this sort of 'mumbo jumbo' as Finley called it, should have sent him running. But Finley had always had an open mind on mumbo jumbo, and was well aware that there is much we don't understand, but it does not mean it is not true, or that it does not work. And thus, with trepidation, a 10 week course was embarked upon...

During the early sessions Finley became aware that he had no proper relationship with his body. When asked to concentrate on all his limbs for the first time, Finley commented, "I tried to look in amongst the turmoil, and for this brief moment the four entities stopped their battling, turned to me and said 'Hi, what's kept you?!', and just as quickly turned away back to face the turmoil."

An early fascinating experience was an itchy spark that formed just behind his eyes as soon as he tried to concentrate, that slowly spread throughout the front of his brain as the weeks past.

A one-time red backdrop (instead of the usual black) when he shut his eyes one time, out of session, along with circular patterns of purple pulsating light, within the sessions, were pleasant enough distractions. Sickness, though normal, was not so pleasant in a later session.

But the remarkable events were outside of the training. During the September to December timeframe, Finley was suddenly able to concentrate on his highly detailed research work, and complete some tasks that had been an outstanding pressure for 2 years since he was first taken ill with the Lyme. He started to do odd tasks with the house. But the most remarkable change was with his horse Hector. It is a known phenomenon that humans have a special relationship with horses, and it turned out that various niggles that had afflicted Hector over the past couples of years receded or went away completely. In fact, on inspection over the previous two years there was a remarkable correlation between Hector's ailments and the real low points in Finley's Lyme journey. As Finley improved so did Hector, and Finley noticed a change in their bond and a deeper relationship.



*Can you sum up Autogenics in one sentence? "It was my very first introduction to me" [Finley - March 2017]*

As Finley started for the first time to actually take notice of himself, he was able to at least start to attempt authentic communication with the rest of the planet, and it was Hector who spotted it first and nurtured it throughout the winter.

This is the start of the journey and there have been setbacks. Finley has actually started saying no rather than being complicit in everybody else's existence at his own expense, but the disappointment manifested in some people, with Finley's new approach leaving him feeling guilty, wondering if he is being unnecessarily rude on occasion, and questioning Autogenics to the point of stopping. (He has been reassured both at work and by the Autogenics drop in group, that he has not been rude, but

Finley thinks the reaction in some people is going to take time to get used to, particularly it seems, in the work environment.)

Autogenics is one tool and part of the journey Finley must go through to address his conditioned behaviour, and the damage it has been doing to his body for most of his life, unbeknownst to him.

And this state of flux is a very difficult situation to navigate at this time. Life has gone on and in the first 3 months of 2017 Finley has found himself a little under the weather with the Lyme remnants (as will be expected from time to time), has had tough times at work, which he now notices did affect his health for a time, and has dealt with several unexpected bereavements, just like many other people will have experienced in their lives during this period.

But because Finley still deals with trauma using his old habits at this time, he takes in and buries the conflict within himself. Autogenics has made him a first-hand witness; now he has started to take note of himself, and he directly feels the twisted tormented energy that he is trying to swallow and its bubbling up trying to escape is rather unpleasant.

“I was finally a witness to the battle going on in my body that I have never even been aware of in the past. I just want to climb up and out of that quagmire.... be elsewhere...” [Finley, March 2017]

So again Autogenics was blamed for this experience and put on hold, until the next drop in group. Everybody else was pleased to report to be having a marvellous time, and Finley was very happy to say he was having an awful time. The Group Leader was rather pleased with him! The group session removed a huge knot he had been carrying for a month, since he previously was too scared to practice the technique.

“I now trust myself to not stop Autogenics during the difficult times. It is already life changing, I have had a peep inside me, and have been introduced to the rest of my body, and I have joined its battle. I am on a relentless journey of discovery and there is no putting the lid back on. I might still be the rabbit staring at the headlights at the moment, but I just realised there is a car behind them heading in my direction. I think I am going to learn how to move out of the way.... Tout de suite!!” [Finley, March 2017]

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