

Chapter 5

Adrenal Fatigue, Part I: Physical Symptoms and Physical Treatments

Note: Please be aware that the observations and opinions contained in this chapter and the following chapter are my own observations and opinions, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the various experts I reference throughout the chapters.

Adrenal Fatigue: A Condition That Affects Body, Mind, and Spirit

Adrenal fatigue is a mystifying and fascinating condition. The more you learn about it, the more you see just how connected it is to almost every aspect of our well being: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. The condition of the adrenal glands will have an effect on you in every dimension of your life.

If you suffer from Lyme disease and related issues, it is a near certainty that you also suffer from adrenal fatigue, at least to some degree. The symptoms of adrenal fatigue can be very subtle, so you may not even know you are dealing with it. Be warned: if your symptoms are subtle now and you don't do something to heal your adrenal glands, your symptoms will surely progress and worsen as time goes on; the worse adrenal fatigue gets, the more difficult it is to reverse it. In fact, it becomes exponentially more dangerous the longer it is unrecognized and unresolved. The reason that adrenal fatigue is tricky to recognize is that some of the more common symptoms associated with adrenal fatigue (including emotional instability, fatigue, and other issues we will look at) are also associated with Lyme disease, making it difficult to identify which underlying issues a person has.

We will divide the topic of adrenal fatigue into two parts: the physical manifestations, and the non-physical manifestations. The current chapter will address the physical manifestations, and the following chapter (Chapter 6) will address the non-physical manifestations (which include mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects). The two chapters are inseparably connected and are intended to be an overview of the topic of adrenal fatigue. For more extensive, in-depth coverage, I will provide book and website recommendations at the end of this chapter, and I implore you to look at these additional resources. Adrenal fatigue is a very counter-intuitive, dangerous condition, and if you suffer from it, you really need to do some extensive reading on the topic if you hope to get well.

Introduction

The adrenal glands are endocrine glands that rest on top of the kidneys. When functioning properly, they produce many types of hormones, including stress hormones. These glands are critical to proper body functioning on numerous levels. Many problems, including thyroid imbalances, depression, chronic fatigue syndrome, panic disorders and agitation,

mood imbalances, and a plethora of emotional symptoms may be due to adrenal fatigue.

Adrenal fatigue occurs when the adrenal glands cannot keep up with the quantity of hormones they are required to produce to maintain bodily functions. When this happens, the adrenals become drained, and the body experiences a growing net deficit of essential hormones. The result is that the body is no longer able to expend energy on physical, mental, and emotional activities. Since everything we do as humans is either physical, mental, or emotional (or a combination of the three), adrenal fatigue has an impact on each and every aspect of our lives. While there are many other features of adrenal fatigue, as we will see, the primary point to remember is that adrenal fatigue is a problem of energy inadequacy. When you have adrenal fatigue, you will get worse when you expend too much physical, mental, or emotional energy, and you will get better when you allow for sufficient physical, emotional, and mental rest.

Adrenal fatigue is a problem that leads to massive dysfunction throughout almost all body systems. In this way, adrenal fatigue is very unlike other kinds of health problems. For example, if you have chest congestion, you are likely to only experience a narrow set of symptoms limited to the lungs. Not so with adrenal fatigue. If you have adrenal fatigue, you'll experience dysfunction in nearly every other organ in the body, and you'll experience dozens of seemingly unrelated, yet severe, symptoms. Because of this, adrenal fatigue is a serious problem. People with severe adrenal fatigue are often confined to their beds for years at a time without enough energy to even walk down the stairs and eat breakfast. A long-time family friend is such a person, and I've watched her maintain this state for over two decades. It has been very sad to see.

Adrenal fatigue is typically caused by one or more of the following circumstances:

1. **Disease**—The adrenal glands are weakened and compromised by physical disease and are not able to operate at full capacity. In this case, the adrenals themselves are physically damaged by some disease process.
2. **Stress**—A person experiences extreme stress, worry, emotional distress, anxiety, or other feelings which trigger the fight or flight response for an extended period of time. In this case, the adrenals may not have been physically damaged by a disease, but they can still become depleted, drained and exhausted, if mental or emotional stress is prolonged or severe.
3. **Brain Dysfunction**—In circumstances when a person's stress level is normal and not excessive, the adrenal glands may still become fatigued if the brain is malfunctioning and sending over-stimulatory signals to the adrenal glands, telling them to produce excessive stress hormones. This situation typically results from some kind of dysfunction within the brain, not the adrenal glands.

There are other causes of adrenal fatigue, including dietary issues and other physical/emotional problems. However, the above three will be the ones we focus on. For Lyme disease sufferers, all three are typically in play. Lyme disease and co-infections (especially *Bartonella*) cause physical damage to the adrenal glands themselves, leading to #1 occurring. #3 happens when Lyme disease and co-infections cause physical damage to the brain, which disrupts signals sent from the brain to the adrenal glands, causing the adrenal glands to get false alarms and overreact to even the smallest stress stimulus. And #2 happens during the course of normal life events and stresses, but is exacerbated by #'s 1 and 3. While healthy people are susceptible to adrenal fatigue, they are typically only vulnerable to #2, and therefore, they can tolerate significantly more stress than can Lyme disease patients before their adrenals begin to fail. This discussion should illustrate that Lyme sufferers are much more susceptible to adrenal fatigue than the general population.

One last note before we move on: Adrenal fatigue is an issue that compounds as the adrenals become more exhausted. Exhausted adrenal glands become much more sensitive to stress. So, the experience of adrenal fatigue can be a downward spiral. When the adrenals are in bad shape, relaxation and de-stressing is desperately needed, yet finding relaxation and peace are much more difficult because the adrenals over-react to even the smallest stressful stimulus. This puts people with adrenal fatigue in a very precarious and dangerous position; a paradox of sorts. Moderate to severe adrenal fatigue is a very serious and life-threatening health problem which needs to be treated with the utmost caution and respect.

Symptoms of Adrenal Fatigue

The symptoms of adrenal fatigue can overlap tightly with the symptoms of Lyme disease. In many instances, this leads to poor recognition of adrenal fatigue as people mistakenly attribute all of their symptoms to Lyme disease. Some common symptoms of adrenal fatigue include exercise intolerance, sleep disturbances, lack of energy and fatigue, and feeling overwhelmed by the smallest of tasks. It is common to feel exhausted yet not be able to sleep. Since these are all potentially Lyme disease symptoms, too, it can be tricky to know what's really going on. One way to distinguish adrenal fatigue from the plethora of Lyme disease symptoms is to look for emotional instability, fatigue, sleep disturbances, and other symptoms which have their onset the day after exercise.

Also, while Lyme disease can cause fatigue and weakness, the fatigue and weakness that accompany adrenal fatigue are often much worse and much more debilitating. Lyme disease sufferers without adrenal fatigue may feel horrible hiking up several flights of stairs, but they can still do it. In contrast, those with severe adrenal fatigue may not be able to make it up the stairs at all, or if they do make it, they will experience a huge crash in the following days.

Another possible differentiating feature is that adrenal fatigue typically begins or worsens after a person experiences extremely stressful life events; for example, divorce, the death of a loved one, loss of a job, or other similar challenges. Numerous tests are available to measure the hormones produced by the adrenal glands to determine whether they are at normal levels. I am not convinced that these tests are significantly useful, but in the hands of the right doctor they may provide clues.

Shortness of breath, or rapid breathing, may also be present when the adrenals are exhausted, and there are several deep breathing techniques available to help reset the breathing patterns to normal. Of course, Babesia also causes shortness of breath, adding to the confusion. However, the shortness of breath that comes with adrenal fatigue is often accompanied by other adrenal fatigue symptoms, while the shortness of breath that comes with Babesia is often accompanied by other Babesia symptoms; therefore, you will have clues to help you determine what the root cause of your symptoms is.

The startle response can also be heightened when adrenal fatigue is present. The body may feel like it is always on high alert. Again, unfortunately, this symptom can also be caused by tick-borne infections when adrenal fatigue is not present, hence, the difficulty of determining which problems are caused by adrenal fatigue and which are caused by tick-borne infections.

For men, adrenal fatigue symptoms can be brought on or exacerbated by sex because the demand to create new hormones during and after sex drains the adrenal glands.

Adrenal fatigue symptoms are often experienced as “crashes.” These crashes can include the sudden onset or worsening of symptoms. The initial crashes are often the worst, because they typically precede awareness of the problem, and are, hence, not addressed with the proper therapies and interventions. If the proper steps are taken and recovery begins, these

crashes will be experienced with less frequency and severity over time, leading to a slow, uphill climb out of the depths of adrenal fatigue. However, if exercise or other taxing activities are resumed too soon during the recovery process, or if worry and stress overwhelm the adrenal glands, then backsliding can occur in the form of additional serious crashes. Adrenal fatigue experts, such as Dr. Lam, whose book is referenced at the end of this chapter, often use a graph to illustrate the “crash-recovery” cycle and the various phases of healing. Unfortunately, recovering from a severe adrenal crash can be a very prolonged process, often requiring six months to three years. The good news, as we will see in the following chapter, is that the lifestyle changes required to heal from adrenal fatigue are often very positive, healthy changes that can lead to a more satisfying and relaxed life.

Emotional Symptoms

We will address the emotional aspects of adrenal fatigue in the next chapter, but it is important to be introduced to these symptoms before we go any further.

The most debilitating symptoms of adrenal fatigue are the emotional symptoms. These symptoms aren’t “all in your head.” Weakened adrenals actually cause physical imbalances in the body and are the underlying physical cause for feelings of guilt, shame, insecurity, desperation, sadness, anger, and others. Remember, the brain is a physical organ, and how you feel is influenced by the chemical reactions taking place in your brain. Adrenal fatigue causes physical changes in many parts of the body, and these physical changes lead to brain imbalances that result in tremendous changes in how a person feels about him or herself, and how they feel about the rest of the world. It can be very easy to just write these symptoms off as normal emotional responses to being in a tough situation involving chronic illness or life trauma. However, research concludes the opposite: these symptoms are not a natural and normal response to being

sick. Instead, they are physical in nature and a direct result of the damage that the infections are doing to your organs.

It is important to realize that the symptoms we are talking about here are the result of real, physical causes. This opens the door to treating them with real, physical treatments rather than limiting the treatment approach to therapies like counseling or meditation. While psychological approaches are helpful, and are indeed needed for adrenal fatigue recovery (as we'll see), they will never completely solve the problem as long as the problem includes unresolved physical dysfunction within the brain, organs, and adrenal glands.

The above paragraphs are not a complete list of the symptoms of adrenal fatigue; numerous other symptoms exist. At the end of this chapter, I will provide resources for other books and websites which can shed additional light on the symptoms of adrenal fatigue.

As I am fond of recommending, a therapeutic trial of treatment for adrenal fatigue may be helpful when you don't know whether or not you have the condition. If you respond positively to the therapeutic trial, it may help confirm the existence of adrenal fatigue. If you experience no response, then it may indicate that you are not suffering from adrenal fatigue. However, keep in mind that almost all victims of tick-borne infections have adrenal fatigue to some degree.

Treating Adrenal Fatigue

The treatment of adrenal fatigue is perhaps one of the most frustrating endeavors you will encounter during your recovery from Lyme disease but also one of the most potentially rewarding. As Americans, we are used to taking a pill to make our health problems disappear. In fact, not only do we want to take a pill, we want to be back on our feet as quickly as possible to participate in the busy lives that we lead. Even Lyme disease sufferers have this expectation: "Doctor, just give me my antibiotic pre-

scription right away, and give me the highest dose possible!” And, in fact, Lyme sufferers do get better with aggressive treatment. Maybe antibiotic therapy alone isn’t enough, but certainly other kinds of aggressive treatments can be helpful.

Adrenal fatigue turns this treatment paradigm on its head. When it comes to adrenal fatigue, we need to literally re-wire our thought processes and expectations for recovery.

In the beginning of this chapter, we talked about how the adrenal glands in people with Lyme disease are weakened by infections and are over-stimulated by haywire signals from a malfunctioning brain. This leaves those who suffer from Lyme disease destabilized and compromised, and even less capable of dealing with the stresses of normal life. There is no pill or supplement which can fix this problem. The only way to heal the adrenal glands is to give them a rest and remove the stressors which are keeping them down.

So, removing the infections which weaken the adrenal glands, as well as healing the brain so that it doesn’t send haywire signals to them, is important. However, eliminating life stress is also critical and is not easily done. In fact, it may require a complete re-working of your lifestyle, priorities, vocation, and even relationships. This is hundreds of times more difficult than popping a few pills. When we talk about removing life stress, we aren’t just talking about avoiding fights with your spouse or boss. We are talking about re-thinking your entire outlook on life, and making peace with the many internal and external factors that add anxiety and worry to your life. To heal from adrenal fatigue, you almost have to figure out how to become a whole new person. The treatment for adrenal fatigue isn’t an easy pursuit, and unfortunately, some people are unwilling or unable to make the necessary changes.

The next chapter will address these kinds of lifestyle changes in more detail. The simple reality is that to heal from adrenal fatigue, we have to

literally change what we do on a day-to-day basis and how we think about our lives. These changes, while difficult, can ultimately be very rewarding, as we attempt to live a more balanced and relaxed life.

There are, of course, various supplements, prescriptions, and therapies which claim to help with adrenal fatigue. For some people, such interventions may be useful, but for most Lyme disease sufferers, they will do nothing more than artificially stimulate the adrenal glands which will lead to greater adrenal weakness at some point in the future. Or, in the case of interventions which provide the body with external hormones, the adrenal glands will atrophy and shut down, causing a dependence on the interventions and a permanent weakening of the adrenal glands. In both cases, the end result is not healing and rehabilitation but further debilitation and damage. Again, the only true, lasting recovery comes from removing the physical and emotional stresses from the adrenal glands, which allows them to heal and rebuild. I can tell you from experience that many Lyme sufferers (including myself) are reluctant to accept this reality and will first run through the gamut of quick fix treatments before they come to terms with the truth about adrenal fatigue.

While supplements and nutrients cannot be a substitute for rest and the elimination of stressors, they can provide support during the recovery process. Let's examine some of the available supplements and treatments, and discuss their pros and cons. Let's start by looking at vitamins and food choices, because they stand apart from other supplement options in their ability to actually provide true, long-term healing.

B Vitamins, Vitamin C, and Food Choices

While most available supplements and interventions are mere bandaids, the vitamins and food choices we will look at here are among the few interventions which actually lead to healing and rebuilding, not just temporary progress or masking of symptoms. Why are these particular interventions helpful? Because even when lifestyle modifications are cor-

rectly implemented and stressors are removed, the adrenal glands must still be given the raw materials to heal and rebuild. These raw materials are found in the foods and vitamins discussed now. Without these special foods and vitamins, recovery can take a lot longer.

Vitamin C. Scientists have noticed that vitamin C is found in high concentrations in the adrenal glands. In fact, there is no other part of the body which hoards vitamin C like the adrenal glands. Vitamin C is critical for proper adrenal function and during adrenal exhaustion, vitamin C reserves are quickly used up. As a result, vitamin C supplementation—specifically, liphophilic vitamin C, also known as “Lipo C,” which is highly absorbable and bioavailable to the adrenal glands (and other body systems)—is extremely important during recovery from adrenal fatigue. Various companies manufacture Lipo C, including Researched Nutritionals and LivOn Labs. Lipo C will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 17. Note: vitamin C increases the absorption of iron, so if you have unhealthy high iron levels, be careful not to take vitamin C near the time of consumption of high-iron meals.

B Vitamins. All of the B vitamins, but especially vitamin B5 (pantothenic acid, or pantethine in the more active form) are essential for adrenal function and are quickly drained during adrenal fatigue. Consequently, supplementation with a B complex as well as higher doses of pantothenic acid and/or pantethine is necessary during recovery from adrenal fatigue. My favorite B complex, “B Right,” is made by Jarrow Formulas and is available from Amazon.com and iHerb.com. Note that toward the end of adrenal fatigue recovery, doses of these vitamins may have to be decreased as the adrenal glands learn to function on their own. Excessive doses can overwhelm the adrenal glands.

Multivitamin and Multimineral. While not as important as vitamin C and the B vitamins, a multivitamin and multimineral are still important during recovery from adrenal fatigue. The adrenal glands use many vitamins and minerals as cofactors during proper functioning.

Food Choices. Dietary habits are very important during recovery from adrenal fatigue. The chapter of this book on diet (Chapter 4) includes not just healthy foods, but healthy foods which are specifically compatible with adrenal fatigue recovery. Cholesterol and saturated fat are very important for adrenal hormone production and should be consumed regularly. Chicken broth, especially homemade from an organic chicken, is particularly healing to the adrenal glands. Animal sources of protein and fat should be chosen over vegetarian sources. Frequent, smaller meals throughout the day provide support during the early stages of adrenal fatigue recovery: these meals should include animal protein. When badly beat up, the adrenal glands will need simple carbohydrates eaten in small portions throughout the day to help provide basic energy. High salt foods are also important in the initial phases of healing. Amino acid supplements such as pea protein, whey protein, and similar products can help the adrenals to rebuild. For more on a diet that promotes adrenal healing, see Chapter 4.

The above food choices and vitamin/mineral supplements are critical to the healing process and are more important than any other supplements or herbs. They provide the adrenal glands the basic building blocks necessary to rebuild and recover. Now, let's move on to examine other adrenal fatigue therapies which have less value in the healing process.

Adaptogenic Herbs

Adaptogenic herbs such as Maca, Ashwagandha, and Rhodiola are said to help the body to better cope with stress. They may also have a direct effect on the adrenal glands by stimulating them or attempting to regulate them. While these herbs can be helpful for people with very mild adrenal fatigue, or when used for very short periods in people with more advanced adrenal fatigue, they still do not address the underlying causes of adrenal fatigue and life stress. Therefore, despite what some marketers may say, they hold only a small place in the treatment of advanced adrenal

fatigue. Overusing them may, in fact, over-stimulate the adrenal glands leading to even further problems and adrenal weakness.

Hormone Supplementation and Glandulars

Adrenal fatigue results in inadequate production of adrenal hormones such as cortisol. As a result, some patients and practitioners choose to supplement with cortisol, cortisol precursors such as pregnenolone, or natural substances (like licorice) which may act like cortisol in the body.

All of these interventions can lead to feeling better quickly. The problem is that they may turn off the adrenal glands and cause adrenal gland atrophy. As the body gets used to receiving hormones from an external source, it turns off endogenous production. This can have dire long-term consequences as the adrenal glands may never recover their original functionality and activity. While some doctors advocate very small doses of cortisol, even these have been correlated with future problems. Proceed with extreme caution when it comes to any kind of treatment which introduces hormones into the body from an external source. These treatments may be useful as temporary rescue interventions but should only be used during the initial phase of recovery, while you are busy getting your lifestyle straightened out and removing other stressors from the adrenal glands. Make sure you are under the care of an experienced physician if you use any of these interventions.

Licorice is one herb that is used because it may cause the cortisol secreted by the adrenal glands to remain in the bloodstream for longer periods of time before being eliminated from the body. While licorice is probably a less dangerous intervention than hormone supplementation, it should still be used with caution.

Glandular supplements are simply supplements made out of the glands of other animals such as cows. Adrenal glandulars are available for

sale under many brands and are typically made from dessicated (dried) cow adrenal glands. The philosophy behind consuming glandulars is that you aren't just getting one hormone, like you would with, say, cortisol supplementation. Instead, you are ingesting the entire adrenal gland of the animal, which contains dozens of hormones, tissues, and nutrients, all in the correct proportions and quantities. Glandulars are also available for other organ systems, such as the brain, liver, thymus, and others. Many healers believe that you can heal the liver by consuming liver glandular, and you can heal the brain by consuming brain glandular, and so forth.

While adrenal glandulars may cause the same problems as other kinds of hormone supplementation, namely, the inactivation and atrophy of the adrenal glands, in my opinion, glandulars are more gentle, beneficial, and healing than direct hormone supplementation. Using glandulars in moderation may provide the adrenal glands with a temporary rest and allow them to rebuild. This makes glandulars my favorite adrenal fatigue supplement, but they come with the warning that they are not capable of providing complete healing. They are only capable of providing a temporary rest. Complete healing, again, can only come from removing the underlying stressors burdening the adrenal glands. For a therapeutic trial to test whether one may be suffering from adrenal fatigue, glandulars may be a good choice. Lastly, even glandulars may lead to adrenal atrophy, so they should be used only temporarily. Only use them when you are ready to make all the other lifestyle changes described in the following chapter. If you use glandulars and are unwilling to provide other kinds of support for the adrenal glands, you will be wasting their effectiveness on a temporary boost, and you'll be left right back at square one when you discontinue taking them.

Wisdom governing the use of adrenal supplements can be summarized as follows: Always prefer rest, a low-stress lifestyle, and nutrition when healing from adrenal fatigue. Every other intervention is a crutch which might be beneficial for a short period, but which will only be a bandaid covering symptoms.

Tips for Recovery, with a Focus on Lyme Disease

Let's now take a look at some general, guiding principles for recovery from adrenal fatigue, with a specific focus on the unique challenges presented by Lyme disease.

Symptom Support

When the adrenals are not working properly, many body systems get thrown off. You may require sleep aid, thyroid support, digestive support, and other interventions while you are healing your adrenals. The books and websites listed at the end of this chapter provide details on this type of support. Remember, though, this support is a bandaid intended to help you get started on the real treatment; that is, long-term, comprehensive, stress reduction, and removal of the infections causing tissue damage within the adrenal glands.

Getting Better and Getting Worse

Do not take the task of recovering from adrenal fatigue lightly. If you have some degree of adrenal fatigue now and do not do something about it, it will continue to get worse and may debilitate you. The further the condition progresses, the more difficult it is to reverse.

To understand adrenal fatigue recovery, consider this over-arching principle: When the stressors placed on the adrenal glands are less than the capacity of the adrenal glands, recovery progresses. When the stressors are greater than the capacity of the adrenal glands, recovery regresses. So recovery requires extended periods during which rest exceeds stress. Exactly how much stress you can tolerate without backsliding depends on how messed up your adrenal glands are. This logic leads us to the conclusion that the longer you wait before you begin healing your adrenals, the less

stress you'll be able to tolerate during the recovery process without back-sliding. If you think about it, this can become a very serious, precarious situation. The sicker you become, the harder it will be to get better.

Those with severe adrenal fatigue can get thrown into a tailspin after seemingly inconsequential exercise, like walking up a flight of stairs. These people require extreme lifestyle modification and near complete rest, if they are to recover. On the other hand, people with minor adrenal fatigue can jog a mile and only experience mild adrenal symptoms. But one thing holds true: mild adrenal fatigue will progress to serious adrenal fatigue if stress exceeds rest.

Worthy of note, particularly with Lyme disease, is the need to eliminate the infections in order for recovery to take place. Because the adrenals are weakened by Lyme disease and co-infections, treating these infections is a primary component to getting well. In addition, it is important to control lifestyle stress, take in the correct nutrients, and maintain an adrenal-friendly diet.

Adrenal Fatigue as a Layer of the Onion

Adrenal fatigue can actually be one of the layers of the onion—it can come on at a certain point in the recovery process, based on the order by which you are removing infections from the onion.

This is true because Bartonella in particular can cause the most damage to the adrenal glands and the communication pathway between the brain and the adrenal glands. So, if you are dealing with layers in which Bartonella is dormant, you may have less of a problem with adrenal fatigue. However, once you reach the layer of the onion where Bartonella is active, adrenal fatigue may rear its ugly head. Be careful: increased stress on, and inflammation within, the adrenal glands can mean that small life stressors are experienced as out-of-proportion disasters, leading to a great deal of drain on the reserve capacity of the adrenal glands. The severity of

Bartonella can wax and wane throughout the recovery process, so the same can be true of the severity of adrenal fatigue.

If you are dealing with a layer of the onion during which the adrenal glands are particularly taxed, employ extra caution in your life to ensure a low stress lifestyle, and begin consuming the foods and nutrients which provide optimal support to the adrenal glands. And, of course, attack and kill the infections causing the problems (be careful, though. Herxheimer reactions and inflammation can temporarily worsen adrenal fatigue, as we will see in the next section).

Treating Infections can Temporarily Worsen Adrenal Fatigue

Yes, I have been telling you that in order to eliminate adrenal fatigue, you have to address infections. However, since the infections can actually live inside your adrenal glands, treating them can increase inflammation within the adrenal glands and can temporarily wear them down. Accordingly, while anti-infective treatments are still necessary, they should be undertaken with caution. If the adrenals are particularly weak, gentler treatments should be used. Furthermore, anti-inflammatory eating and supplements may be used to calm the adrenal glands during treatment. And lastly, anticipating more rest and less activity during anti-infective therapy is important. In the end, the infections must be dealt with in order to get well.

Other Hormonal Imbalances in Lyme Disease

Adrenal fatigue is not the only hormonal issue noted in Lyme disease. In addition to adrenal fatigue issues, practitioners and patients are increasingly recognizing the importance of all kinds of hormonal imbalances in the symptom picture of Lyme disease. All of the organs and body systems which produce and regulate hormones get hit when a person is infected with Borrelia and co-infections. While I do not believe that treating hormonal problems will fix the cause of Lyme disease, I do believe that doing

so can lead to dramatic improvement in symptoms, and an accelerated recovery. The topic of treating hormonal imbalances is very complex and controversial. I will not be addressing the topic in depth here, but instead, I simply want to make you aware that many of your symptoms may be the result of various hormone issues. This should not be ignored during the recovery process. It can be very valuable to consult a doctor who is versed in treating hormone issues in patients with Lyme disease since there are many natural and pharmaceutical interventions which can provide symptom relief.

Adrenal Fatigue Can Take a Very Long Time to Heal

Even if you are doing everything right, adrenal fatigue can take months or years to heal. Don't be discouraged. Look for small, positive changes. Don't ask the question, "am I completely healed today?" Instead, ask the question, "Am I better than I was 3 months ago?"

Additional Resources

Adrenal fatigue is a peculiar and counter-intuitive condition. Without a deep understanding of the recovery process, one can flounder in frustration for months and even years. Please do not ignore this fact: it is very difficult, if not impossible, to recover from adrenal fatigue without first gaining a complete understanding of this mystifying and unusual condition. This is not a condition where you can expect to succeed by "throwing spaghetti at the wall and seeing what sticks." You have to take careful, planned, precise steps in order to get well. It is for this reason that I strongly suggest that you pursue the resources I have listed below.

In my opinion, the two experts with the best grasp of adrenal fatigue are G. E. Poesnecker, DC, and Michael Lam, M.D., M.P.H., A.B.A.A.M. Each of these doctors has fantastic books on adrenal fatigue and has greatly influenced my understanding of this condition. Dr. Lam's book is entitled, *Adrenal Fatigue Syndrome*. Dr. Poesnecker's book is entitled, *Adrenal*

Syndrome. Unfortunately, at the time my book was written, Dr. Poesnecker's book was already out of print. Sometimes, used copies can be found on Amazon.com. I strongly suggest obtaining both of these books, if you can. While other experts claim to have a grasp on adrenal fatigue, it is these two doctors who have the most accurate information.

Dr. Lam also has a fantastic website with dozens of extensive, free articles on adrenal fatigue. I highly recommend visiting www.drlam.com. Do not attempt to recover from adrenal fatigue without first reading Dr. Lam's materials.

Another fantastic resource is the chapter on Adrenal Fatigue contained in Connie Strasheim's book, *Beyond Lyme Disease*. This chapter can be viewed online as a free sample chapter by visiting:

www.lymebook.com/adrenal-fatigue-hypothyroidism.

Again, I would like to emphasize that I *strongly* suggest doing some further reading on adrenal fatigue. It is a very complex condition, and the two chapters in my book which address this topic only scratch the surface. If you believe you may be suffering from this condition, you should go beyond what I offer here and avail yourself of the resources mentioned above.

Chapter 6

Adrenal Fatigue, Part II: A New Worldview—Asking Basic Questions about Life as a Human Being

Moving from the Physical to the Non-Physical

You may be wondering why we are still talking about adrenal fatigue when the book has already covered this topic in the prior chapter. The reason is simple: Adrenal fatigue has two primary components—the physical, and the non-physical. The previous chapter looked at the physical manifestations of, and treatments for, adrenal fatigue. This chapter will examine the non-physical aspects, including the emotional, spiritual, psychological, and mental implications. If you haven't read the prior chapter, read it first, before reading this one.

As we learned in the previous chapter, supplements, dietary changes, and other interventions are only the beginning when it comes to treating

adrenal fatigue. Reducing stress in your life and changing your worldview is the next step, and also, the most difficult one. These changes require you to rethink your place in the world, how you fit into the culture that surrounds you, and what's important in life. While researching, buying, and starting a new supplement product require only a small amount of energy, redefining your identity and your worldview is a massive undertaking. Unfortunately, the lifestyle changes that are required are so difficult and counter-cultural that many people won't make the necessary changes, and they'll experience only partial improvement in their adrenal fatigue. Yes, it is true that Borrelia and co-infections can hasten the onset of adrenal fatigue. However, once you have adrenal fatigue, it is not enough to just address these infections.

What do I mean by "counter-cultural" lifestyle changes? Let's take a deeper look.

Modern Life and Human Psychology

For a long time, I was one of the people who didn't make the healthy lifestyle changes necessary to recover from adrenal fatigue. I didn't listen to my wakeup call until my adrenal fatigue had progressed and spun out of control. Looking back, I regret not heeding the warning signs earlier. My recovery from adrenal fatigue took longer than it should have, due to my denial. It is my hope that this book will save you from the same mistakes. While I was able to recover, it wasn't easy, and I wish I had known this information years ago.

Adrenal fatigue isn't just another bodily dysfunction, as is so common with Lyme disease. Instead, it's your body's way of revolting against, or rejecting, the unhealthy parts of your entire worldview and lifestyle. It's all-encompassing. Early on in adrenal fatigue, your body gives you the choice and gently invites you to make changes. Later, if you don't listen, the changes may become involuntary as your adrenal fatigue progresses far

enough to become debilitating and preclude you from participating in the complexities of modern life.

What exactly are the problems I am referring to when I talk about modern life? We'll look at these in more detail, but in summary, they include: a hurried life punctuated by ever-increasing work stresses and demands; relational turmoil and stress; lack of contentment and an ever-increasing desire for more; separation from nature and the natural rhythms and cycles of nature; and, probably most importantly, worry and anxiety as a way of life. Let's look back through human history to find out how and why these patterns of unhealthy thinking and behavior have developed.

While human existence has never been easy, it's only in recent human history that life has become so busy and stressful. Note that I use the word "stressful," not "uncomfortable." Surely humans alive today are more comfortable than we've ever been throughout history; we have mastered climate control, food distribution and storage, and other creature comforts unavailable to generations past. Humans of the past suffered from more disease, faced more physical challenges, and certainly dealt with more miseries than we do now.

However, life in past generations was less stressful than it is today, not in all ways, but in many of the ways that are important in adrenal fatigue. Before telephones, the Internet, and other methods for rapid communication across large distances, life was confined to your immediate village, town, or area. This made things much simpler, as you tended to the people and things around you and didn't worry about world events beyond your city or town. Before cell phones and email, most businesses were closed by 5 pm so people could go home, relax, and recharge. Now, people are "wired in" at all times, often conducting business at all hours of the day and night, and employers are becoming increasingly demanding; they expect their employees to be available all the time and to deal with problems in real time. In recent generations, people in America have be-

come less satisfied with humble housing, vehicles, and provisions. We've become discontent, and we're constantly striving for more... more of pretty much everything, including more money, more power, more recognition, more luxury. These pursuits have cost us dearly and left us drained, exhausted, and burned out.

The type of work we perform in modern life is also very different from what it was in older times. While pushing a plow in a field with one's own hands certainly isn't easy work, it is, in many ways, healthier work than what we do today. Studies have shown that outdoor physical work, under the sun, with the breeze blowing in one's face, is much healthier for the body (and the adrenal glands) than sedentary office work in front of a computer. Farm work used to entail rising with the sun, and living and working in harmony with the cycles of nature. This is the kind of life our bodies have had for thousands of years; it is only in very recent times that we've completely changed how and where we spend our days. Farm work and other occupations of old no doubt caused other physical issues, but it is unlikely that they contributed as heavily to adrenal fatigue as modern life does.

What's interesting is the speed with which life has changed on planet Earth. Most of these changes have occurred within the last 150 years, and the rate of change continues to be exponential. Our society and culture is changing faster than our ability to evaluate the negative impacts of these changes.

If, as you read my description of old-fashioned life, you are taking deep breaths, relaxing, and longing for liberation from your technosaturated, high stress, high pressure life, it's likely that you have a case of adrenal fatigue, and it's likely that modern life isn't doing much to help you! Your body is longing for a different life, a life more in tune with how humans have lived for thousands of years. For me, the longing is palpable and intense, and undeniable. It has also led me to make significant changes to my lifestyle, especially in how I spend my days.

Some of the stress we face isn't a result of modern life and culture. It is simply a product of human psychology. A mentality of "keeping up with the Jones's" has driven many people to work themselves into the ground in order to pay for the luxuries and amenities traditionally reserved for the rich. A culture of consumerism has driven an attitude of entitlement and discontentment. Extra money is often used to upgrade homes and vehicles instead of paying down the mortgage, paying off debt, and making life simpler. While these kinds of behaviors aren't new, they have intensified and become more uncontrollable in recent times. Satisfaction, thankfulness, gratitude, and contentment are feelings not experienced by many. Yet it is these very feelings which are healing and soothing to the adrenal glands. Some people spend their entire lives without ever really feeling content or grateful for what they have.

Other harmful feelings which result from basic human psychology are worry and fear. These feelings can be tremendously difficult to turn off. Yet, worry and fear cause stress, and that stress triggers the adrenal glands to work overtime in fight or flight mode.

In summary, there are two primary sources of stress in modern life: Stress that is new and results from modern jobs, technology, and separation from nature; and stress that is not new, which results from worry, fear, discontentment, jealousy, and consumerism. Both of these sources of stress must be addressed in order to recover from adrenal fatigue. The first kind of stress can be addressed by making external life changes (e.g.—changing one's career, moving out of the city to get closer to nature, turning all technological devices off after 5 pm, and spending more time hiking, camping, or participating in other activities in nature). The second kind of stress must be addressed by making internal life changes (e.g.—learning to be content with what we have, learning to replace fear and anxiety with trust and faith, and learning to find satisfaction in experiences rather than expensive merchandise). In this way, adrenal fatigue requires both internal and external lifestyle changes.

My Own Journey Out of That Deep, Dark Hole

Adrenal fatigue progresses if it is not addressed, and the more it progresses, the harder it becomes to ignore. Such was my own experience. After a particularly difficult series of life events, my very mild case of adrenal fatigue (which I hadn't even recognized yet as adrenal fatigue) progressed into a full-blown adrenal crash. It is hard for me to share this part of my story with you because it was such a difficult time in my life, and even the memories associated with it are stressful to recount.

Fortunately, I became familiar with the books and websites mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, and I knew I was in for big trouble if I didn't make some changes. The changes weren't easy, and I certainly can't say I've arrived, but I've begun moving in the right direction. The internal and external changes I have had to make were much easier once I realized that I didn't have much choice in the matter: either I learned how to change, or my quality of life would be lost. Looking back, now, in retrospect, I can see that those dark days of adrenal fatigue were actually a blessing; my life is so much healthier and more fulfilling now. It saddens me to look at people and see how unhealthy and unhappy many of them are, even those who aren't stricken with a tick-borne illness.

When my adrenals were at their worst, I was simply in survival mode. Really worn down adrenals cause horribly unpleasant symptoms such as near-panic level anxiety, terrible insomnia, a sense of impending doom, inability to deal with even the smallest daily tasks, severe depression, and explosive relational interactions (more on that later), to name a few. In fact, while many things Lyme disease sufferers face are horrible, I must say that the symptoms associated with adrenal fatigue were among the worst things I've ever experienced during my time on planet Earth. Exercise intolerance was also very limiting and depressing for me, as I am a very active person and things like hiking and mountain biking are a part of

who I am. Now, looking back on those horrible days, I am so grateful I can enjoy the activities I used to take for granted. A simple mountain bike ride now provides me with indescribable joy, because I know what it feels like for these activities to be out of reach.

My first few months of recovery involved taking lots of vitamin C and B vitamins, consuming plenty of animal fat and protein, sleeping a lot, resting a lot, and trusting that things were going to be OK. And more than anything, it was important for me to forgive myself for lost productivity, missed life opportunities, and other losses that were incurred during this time. A sense of guilt and inadequacy are extremely common symptoms during severe adrenal fatigue, so it is important to recognize these emotions as symptoms of the condition, not as a true reflection of one's own self-worth. Extending grace to one's self during recovery is so important.

The first few months of the recovery process were the hardest, because improvement wasn't easy to notice, and I just had to keep going forward on faith that things would work out. It wasn't until later that I could clearly see a pattern of improvement forming.

By now you can see how much this chapter differs from the prior chapter. Both chapters are on adrenal fatigue, but you probably never guessed just how deep the non-physical aspects of adrenal fatigue can be!

After my adrenal fatigue recovery stabilized and I got on a good track, I still had to be careful. If I overdid it (either with physical stress such as exercise or hiking, or emotional stress such as bickering and arguing with friends or co-workers), I would experience a setback and a temporary resurgence of the really nasty emotional symptoms mentioned in previous paragraphs. These mini-crashes, or setbacks, are wonderfully explained and illustrated in Dr. Lam's material (both in his book and on his website—see the end of the previous chapter for references). Understanding why and how they were occurring gave me an objective perspective which

helped tremendously in providing the fortitude and perseverance needed to work through that phase of recovery. As time went on, the mini-crashes were less frequent and less severe. But the process took a couple of years. This is why it is so important to catch adrenal fatigue as soon as you can since doing so can significantly shorten the duration of recovery. This is also why it's so important to learn how to treat adrenal fatigue properly, as incorrect decisions and actions can prolong an already extensive recovery window.

Now I will share some of the lessons that I learned from adrenal fatigue. These insights were gained from personal experience as well as from reading the work of top adrenal experts and doctors. It is true that many life stresses cannot be avoided. However, many of them can be avoided, and here are the lessons I have learned about how to avoid them.

Choosing Good Role Models

You've heard the saying, "If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything." I believe that this statement accounts for much of the stress people experience in their lives. Because we have not intentionally chosen a healthy lifestyle to model our lives after, we will instead follow the "lowest common denominator" examples in our society and culture. Usually, these examples end up being those which are intentionally put in our path by corporations and their marketing departments. The single and primary goal of corporations is to relentlessly convince us that we are inadequate, dissatisfied, un-whole people who will be fixed by the products they offer. If we listen to this message, we start to believe it. We start to think that we really don't have enough—enough money, friends, vacations, good looks, talents, or fill-in-the-blank attributes. This dissatisfaction creates a desperation to change our circumstances and gain more acceptance and approval from society at large, so we increase our work loads, spend less time relaxing and taking care of ourselves, and set off on the busy task of filling our lives with more—more of everything. This

pattern of behavior is one of the primary triggers of adrenal fatigue. And, it just so happens that many people with adrenal fatigue are “Type A” personalities; so for us Type A’s, it will require even more self control in order to turn off these unhealthy patterns of thinking and behaving.

While simply recognizing the above patterns, and attempting to avoid them, is helpful, I find it has been very valuable to pick out examples of people whom I want to emulate. A few years ago, my wife and I met some folks who are now among our best friends. They had decided to quit their high stress, high power, high paying jobs and live a simpler life. At first, their newly found lifestyle seemed crazy to us—almost irresponsible. That’s because we were viewing it through the filter of modern society’s lense: that is, the highest and best achievement for life should be a busy, productive, over-achieving lifestyle. Eventually we began to see the wisdom in our friends’ simplification of their lives, and having them as an example in our own lives served to greatly weaken the default, culturally influenced belief that more of everything is always better.

If you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything. So, pick someone who stands for something, and use them as an example, instead of the messages of corporate marketing.

People Pleasing, Perfectionism, and Taking Care of Yourself

People with adrenal fatigue are typically also perfectionists and people pleasers. These patterns of behavior tend to weaken the adrenal glands, because we experience anxiety and stress when those around us are displeased with us, or at least when we think they are. We also experience anxiety and stress when our expectations of perfection in people or situations are met with the reality that people and situations aren’t perfect.

Weakened adrenal glands cause symptoms of emotional instability, which makes us even more susceptible to our perfectionist and people pleasing tendencies. So, you can see that it can become a vicious cycle.

Recognizing this pattern is very important. Since ultimate self-acceptance can never come from an external source, our anxiety and stress can never be quenched by other people. Likewise, people and things will never be perfect, so our anxiety and stress will never be quenched by discovering perfection in our lives. Therefore, we must extinguish the anxiety and stress with acceptance: Acceptance of ourselves, and acceptance of the imperfect people and things in our lives.

In addition to the unhealthy feelings involved in perfectionism and people pleasing, there is also an unhealthy level of work, energy expenditure, and effort. Perfectionism lacks a finish line, or end goal, to life's activities and interactions with others, so perfectionists never grant themselves rest. In other words, people pleasers and perfectionists never feel like work is done, settled, good enough, or acceptable enough. We always feel like more could be done, should be done, and must be done. Guilt, in particular, drains us like no other emotion. This constant unease equates to a slight draw on the adrenal glands over a long period of time. Not only will this strain lead to adrenal fatigue, it will also prevent a person from recovering from adrenal fatigue. We must adopt the wisdom in sayings like, "Do your best, then let it rest." We must set reasonable goals for ourselves, and after we've met those goals, rest and ignore that inner voice which tells us, "No! You haven't done enough! You should still be doing more!"

While we could get into the psychology of people pleasing and perfectionism, I will save that for a psychologist. I'm simply here to tell you that people who have adrenal fatigue, perfectionist tendencies, and people pleasing traits must work very diligently to change the way they think about the world. At the top of the list of changes is to tell yourself and learn to believe the following statement: "Doing my best is good enough."

After I do my best, I deserve rest, down time, and sleep. Taking care of myself is a worthy priority.” Until you really believe this statement, you will be susceptible to continued drain on your adrenal glands. Like a slow leak in a tire, that drain will prevent you from making forward progress.

We must also diligently look for other areas of our lives which may be causing a slow leak, or drain, on our adrenal glands. Past events, even those that occurred decades ago may still be draining us emotionally. Unforgiveness, guilt, shame, regret, and other feelings might be causing low-grade anxiety and keeping our adrenals from recharging completely. It may even be possible that we’ve been living with these feelings for so long that we don’t immediately recognize them when conducting an inventory of our state of mind. The point here is that any kind of emotional distress, even at a very low level, places a small drain on the adrenals and must be addressed and healed if the adrenals are to fully recover.

Managing Expectations

The friends I mentioned earlier (who drastically simplified their lives) shared a poem with me over dinner one night. The poem is entitled “If,” by Rudyard Kipling. You can read the whole poem online by doing a Google search; it is a fantastic poem and I recommend that everyone read it. I will share a small portion of it here:

*If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
[...] Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!*

Here’s what I love about these lines. Our adrenal glands get drained when life doesn’t go our way, because we end up worrying that we will be living a life which we don’t feel is “right” or “best” for us. We all have an

idea of how life “should” go. When it doesn’t work out as expected, we get stressed out. The wisdom in the poem shows us that both triumph and disaster should be seen as imposters. In other words, we will be OK even when they occur. We can feel safe, secure, and right, just by being who we are and living our lives the best we can. When we strike the lottery and get rich (triumph) or when we lose our jobs and end up poor (disaster), these are but imposters to what we really value in life. When we adopt this perspective, triumph and tragedy will no longer control our emotions.

Whether rich or poor, I can still take a walk, have a conversation with a friend, love my family, and play a game of chess. I can still enjoy the simple things in life. Convincing yourself that triumph and disaster are but imposters, distracting you from what really matters in life, will go a long way to calming your adrenal glands, allowing you to be content in the present moment, and dispelling unrealistic life expectations.

It may be surprising that triumph is also considered an imposter. Yet, take a look at the celebrities and other super-rich. It is clear that money and success can be equally as draining as disaster, in many ways!

Here’s the take-away lesson. The hardest part about designing a simple life isn’t actually executing it. It is getting over the lies society has beat into our heads: that what makes us valuable, successful people, is how much money we make, what kind of car we drive, and how successful we are.

Once you accept life as it is instead of worrying about how your life isn’t perfect, you will also learn to accept yourself how you are. You will be less inclined to accept stressful jobs or pursue unhealthy activities in order to force your life to meet expectations which were never healthy in the first place.

Choosing Financial Simplicity

While we all need money to survive, many Americans choose to heap additional stress onto their lives by attempting to “keep up with the Jones’s,” always trying to achieve the lifestyle just out of their reach. A blog that changed my life, and which I recommend to you now, was written by a man who was able to retire at age 30, not because he got rich, but because he chose simplicity. The blog is both inspiring and practical in its advice on financial simplicity. Instead of re-writing the wisdom he offers, I will simply refer you to his blog so you can read it for yourself: www.MrMoneyMustache.com. It is currently one of the most popular finance blogs in the country. As more and more people wake up from their brainwashing, they are turning to blogs like this to help them navigate out of the maze of a life controlled by corporate marketing and driven by feelings of dissatisfaction, greed, and envy.

When you choose financial simplicity, and really start to believe that the materialism which dominates most of the first world is destructive and unhealthy, you will release yourself from the pressure and stress that comes with discontentment. Of course, you may still experience stress in attempting to make a living—we all have to put food on the table—but once your basic needs are met, you can free yourself from the constant feeling that your life isn’t good enough without bigger houses, cars, and material possessions. Go and read Mr. Money Mustache: his writing is fantastic and will give you a whole new perspective on your financial life.

Accepting Yourself

People recovering from Lyme disease and adrenal fatigue have limitations which other people aren’t subject to. For me personally, these limitations aren’t huge, but they are still there. For example, I don’t do well consuming alcoholic beverages. I can get a good amount of sun exposure, but too much drags me down. I can participate in most vigorous activities,

including mountain biking and running, but I need days in between these activities to rest and recharge. I can be active throughout long, busy days, but I need my sleep.

You can choose to accept your strengths and limitations or be bitter about them, but you can't choose to change them—at least not instantaneously. While you are working on your healing and shrinking your limitations, it is best to have an attitude of self-acceptance. This doesn't mean you give up on improving your health. It also doesn't mean that you give up on the good stuff in life. It just means that you find the good stuff which fits within your current set of capabilities. When I was recovering from adrenal fatigue and could not participate in my much-loved activities of mountain biking and hiking, I decided to take up camping. Instead of being bitter, I found something that I could do. Camping turned out to be incredibly satisfying and joyful. While my daytime activities during camping trips didn't include strenuous, all-day hikes, they did include such things as short walks, mild hikes, swimming, rafting, cooking, enjoying friends' company, relaxing by the campfire, and other similar pursuits. See the crossroads, here? I could have become bitter about not being able to go mountain biking and do all-day hikes, or I could have simply made the best of my situation with the tools I had to work with. I'm not saying I never had any bad days. Of course, I struggled, but I made it a point to try to keep a positive attitude. And I won't leave you hanging: there is a light at the end of the tunnel. While it took a long time, my adrenal fatigue is 95% gone now, and I am back to regularly enjoying hiking, mountain biking, and running!

People with adrenal fatigue are not alone in their need to accept their limitations. I have a friend, an avid athlete, who hurt his back terribly, needed surgery, and had to give up many of his favorite activities. He eventually found a positive attitude, bought a fishing boat, and loves taking his family and friends fishing. He still goes to the gym almost daily to stay in shape. He can only do certain exercises because of his back, but

boy is he strong: he's the strongest one in the gym for the particular exercises he can do.

Everyone has limitations and everyone has the opportunity to participate in activities that match their capacities and strengths. Yes, you heard me right: *EVERYONE* has limitations! Our attitude towards those limitations, and not the limitations themselves, is what defines us. Recovery from adrenal fatigue will progress much more smoothly if you accept yourself, don't push yourself beyond what you are capable of doing, and find joy in the activities in life that match your strengths and capabilities. Healing of your adrenals is possible, but in the meantime, make the best of what you've got.

The Triangle of Emotional Distress

We will now look at what I call the triangle of emotional distress, which comprises three points: unresolved emotional conflict, physical brain damage, and adrenal fatigue. As we will see, Lyme sufferers often have all three of these problems, and when combined, they can be very serious and challenging.

Let's begin with unresolved emotional conflict.

Unresolved Emotional Conflict

Many top Lyme experts have now agreed that unresolved, past emotional conflict can delay recovery. It is a mysterious concept, and one which took me a long time to accept. Somehow, unresolved emotional conflict remains locked up inside the brain and creates a blockade that prevents not only spiritual and psychological healing but healing of the physical brain as well.

Lyme sufferers often end up having a hard time letting go of feelings they've internalized in the past, including such things as unhealthy beliefs, assumptions, past wounds, and other hurts. These pent up emotions become locked away in the brain. While this can take place in the healthy population as well, there's something about brain trauma which makes those with Lyme much more susceptible to this phenomenon.

Unresolved emotions can include many different types of trauma, such as that derived from past relationships, experiences, losses, regrets, insecurities, and more. Somehow, these emotions become encapsulated in the brain and even become intertwined with infections and toxins such as heavy metals. During the recovery process, you can hit blockades in healing wherein your recovery process is literally halted by some kind of emotional conflict you've been carrying around in your brain for years. As hard as you try, you just won't get any better until you deal with the conflict, release it, and move on. Sometimes, Lyme sufferers even experience strong flashbacks and emotional glimpses during the recovery process, especially during intense anti-infective or detox treatments. These flashbacks can cause emotional crises. If the emotional crises aren't dealt with, healing can come to a halt.

This may sound far-fetched, but trust me, the more you learn about Lyme disease, the more you'll realize that simple, Western, compartmentalized medicine is far too limited and unsophisticated to accurately describe Lyme disease. The sooner you accept the unconventional truths of Lyme disease, the sooner you'll be able to get on with your healing. We truly are beings composed of mind, body, and spirit, and these parts are not necessarily separate and unrelated.

One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that the physical damage done to the brain by Lyme disease spirochetes, co-infections, toxins, and other imbalances predisposes the brain to have a more difficult time clearing emotions which would, in an otherwise healthy brain, be discarded.

This brings us to the second point in the triangle of emotional distress: physical brain damage.

Physical Brain Damage

Physical brain damage is the second point in our triangle of emotional distress. *Borrelia* spirochetes can drill their way past the blood-brain-barrier and infect the brain. Their toxins and physical presence can damage the brain and be the primary cause of brain dysfunction. This dysfunction can manifest as everything from depression, anxiety, forgetfulness, and obsessive-compulsive behavior, to more serious problems including schizophrenia, aggressive behavior, and even suicidal thoughts or actions. As a result, many psychological symptoms experienced in Lyme disease are not character flaws or lack of self control, they are, in fact, organ damage.

We accept organ damage as a legitimate cause of disease in someone with, say, kidney disease. It's time that we also accept that the brain is a physical organ and is susceptible to the same kind of physical damage. It's time to stop stigmatizing mental disorders as if they are somehow caused by personality defects or the fault of the person suffering from them.

Adrenal Fatigue

Finally, adrenal fatigue is the third point in the triangle of emotional distress. The adrenal glands, which are already weakened by the damage done by Lyme disease, become increasingly stressed by the first two points in the triangle. These stressors are just too much for them to handle, so the adrenals become drained and weak, causing symptoms strikingly similar to the symptoms experienced as a result of the first two points in the triangle. Emotional symptoms of adrenal fatigue include anxiety, worry, insecurity, and a feeling of hopelessness, just to name a few.

Other Factors in the Triangle of Emotional Distress

We've just seen that the three points in the triangle of emotional distress are unresolved emotional conflict, physical brain damage, and adrenal fatigue. When combined, these three points are capable of creating serious mental and emotional dysfunction. However, it should be noted that there are other factors, too, which contribute to the overall problems taking place in the brain of a Lyme sufferer.

For example, heavy metal poisoning which often accompanies Lyme can cause severe psychiatric symptoms. Likewise, hormonal imbalances and hypercoagulation can have devastating effects. Finally, brain inflammation can wreak havoc on mental and emotional functionality.

The End Result

The end result of these various dysfunctions is a soup, or mixture, of unpleasant emotions caused or contributed to by each of the three points on the triangle (and by the other factors mentioned). Yet, while each individual point on the triangle has helped to cause the problem, the resulting emotions are intertwined, interrelated, and very difficult to separate and associate with their respective cause(s). Furthermore, each point on the triangle is synergistic with the others, meaning that the whole of dysfunction is much greater than the sum of the parts.

It's hard to know which came first, the chicken or the egg. Was an already emotionally compromised person more susceptible to getting Lyme and adrenal fatigue, or does the physical damage caused by Lyme and related infections compromise the hormonal systems, organs, and chemicals that regulate emotions? Perhaps the physical damage done to the brain by the infections is behind the emotional dysfunction? In reality, it is probably a little of each, but one thing is clear: It can be difficult to sort it all out, and the depth of emotional and psychological imbalance created by this triangle in those with Lyme disease is profound. The triangle is also typically much more pronounced during the end stages of recovery.

when most of the larger, physical issues have been addressed. One Lyme practitioner has said that the emotional symptoms of Lyme are the last to go.

There is one thing in particular which makes the triangle very, very dangerous. Many people who are victim to the emotional triangle have no idea what is behind their suffering. Unfortunately, if they aren't educated about the physical causes of their brain dysfunction, Lyme disease sufferers may walk around with awful feelings including guilt, perfectionism, hypersensitivity, worry, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and more. Without understanding the physical causes, these people may feel like they are worthless and have lost their grounding in life. This is why it is so important to educate Lyme sufferers, practitioners, and caretakers about these topics. Once understanding takes place, it can be much easier to deal with the symptoms and say to one's self, "I'm not going to let these feelings dominate me, because I know they are just physical dysfunction—they aren't really who I am."

Unfortunately, accurate education is severely lacking. All too often, Lyme disease sufferers are expected to experience improvement in psychological symptoms when they are given common treatments for depression, treatments which work for the general population. But true healing in the Lyme disease population will not occur when interventions are limited to such things as counseling, anti-depressant medication, or meditation. Instead, healing can only occur when the Lyme disease sufferer recognizes that they have compromised adrenals, that their brain is physically damaged, and that their unhealthy emotions are bound tightly—and physically—inside their brain. These problems which are specific to Lyme disease require solutions specific to Lyme disease! Unfortunately, even among many of the top healers, the triangle of emotional distress is still unrecognized and untreated. Even the more advanced "natural" healers who forego Valium and anti-depressant drugs in favor of more "naturally healing" options like herbs, hypnotherapy, and acupuncture will still find success to be elusive if they don't understand the triangle of emotional distress.

I'm not saying these other therapies won't help at all; I'm saying that they must be only part of a complete healing program. The most important factor in healing is understanding. Once the causes of the problems are understood, appropriate treatment can be used.

The stakes become even higher when you realize that adrenal fatigue, as well as physical dysfunction in the brain itself, gets into EVERYTHING you think, say, do, and feel—your work, your attitude, your family life, your goals and dreams, your relationships, and your self-perception—EVERYTHING. Your overall happiness and ability to get through the day are impacted. These debilities are especially pesky when they are bad enough to compromise you emotionally but not bad enough to completely change your behavior or raise red flags to your friends and family. When severe, at least you can look yourself in the mirror and say "Wow! What is going on inside my head? This really isn't me. I need help." When subtle and moderate, you may just attribute these emotions to the blues, or life circumstances, or "just how you are wired," when in fact, they are actually symptoms of physical dysfunction inside your body. People experiencing such mild symptoms probably won't even make it as far as a conventional doctor's office or natural healer's clinic. They may instead stay within the confines of their home, alone, devastated and believing that their dismal thinking truly is a part of their authentic self.

Don't let the preceding paragraphs bring you down, or discourage you. In fact, with proper education and treatment, Lyme disease sufferers can return to health, and thrive. It is proper education and treatment which are the keys to success. Let the preceding information equip you with knowledge of what's happening in your body and empower you to choose the healing modalities which will help you return to health.

Help for the Burdened

Among other things, solutions to the triangle of emotional distress include, but are not limited to, treating the infections in the brain and detoxifying the brain, healing and recharging the adrenals, and taking steps to release unhealthy, encapsulated emotions. Decreasing inflammation, balancing hormones, and taking other steps are important, too. Don't forget that untreated co-infections can also slow progress. I talked to one Lyme sufferer who had no healing in her triangle of emotional distress until she treated Babesia with Mepron. After that, she found anti-Lyme therapies and other interventions to propel her forward.

The most difficult of the necessary treatments may be dealing with unresolved emotional conflict, because this endeavor requires not just herbs and treatments but deep reflection and self-examination. When it comes to this kind of healing, I have found that journaling (the act of writing in a personal diary) can help a person identify internal conflicts and resolve them. There are also a number of therapies available which address stored emotional conflicts, including EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique, also known as "tapping"), counseling, and others. While some of these appear to be a bit outlandish and far-fetched at first, I can say that after years of research, most of them are legitimate and have numerous followers who regained their health through their use. As the Lyme community becomes more aware of unresolved emotional conflict as a cause for their sickness, we are seeing an abundance of resources and books on this topic. I recommend the books and work of Amy B. Scher, who is an expert in emotional healing.

Finally, spirituality can play a large role in healing. In particular, trusting in God can help to relieve feelings of worry and fear about the future. There are many bible verses which speak of God's acceptance of us and his unconditional love; such truths can help relieve us of the pressing feeling that we are not good enough. My favorite book of the bible is Ecclesiastes, and one of my favorite verses from this book is 4:6:

“Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.”

I just love how this verse gives us permission to live a peaceful, tranquil life instead of working ourselves to the bone in order to get rich and have cultural status and power.

I would like to close this chapter with a topic that I have personally found to be very helpful, and healing—camping.

Camping and the Outdoors: Medicine for the Soul

Note: Camping is dangerous in areas with high tick populations and Lyme disease incidence. Yes, I am aware that this includes most of the continent of North America and the rest of the world! While I am conscious of the risks of encountering ticks in the outdoors, I have personally decided that the benefits of camping outweigh the risks. I do not ask you to follow in my footsteps in this decision; each person must evaluate the risks and rewards of camping for him or herself. Where I live, in Northern California, we have access to camp sites where foliage and forest density is less than some other parts of the country. Again, I'm not saying camping is right for everyone, everywhere, but remember, too, that living a life indoors, without exposure to nature, also has many serious disadvantages. Please consult your doctor and/or local forestry experts before going camping.

In Chapter 4, which focuses on the dietary aspects of healing from Lyme disease, I mentioned that the paleo lifestyle extends beyond just a way of eating. Indeed, when it comes to healing from adrenal fatigue, returning to our ancestral roots can provide huge benefits. While most of us can't quit our jobs and live in a cave, we can take steps to disconnect from the stress of modern technology, and modern life, as much as possible. Often, we spend more time on our computers and smartphones than we really need to. It is compulsion and addiction that drives much of this behavior, not necessity. We need to make the conscious decision to spend more time in nature, or reading a book on the couch, or going for a walk

outside. We need to build more space into our lives, more “margin,” more free time. We need to allow ourselves to rest, rebuild and recharge.

While there are numerous ways to rest, rebuild, and reconnect with nature, I would like to share my experiences with camping. I would not go as far as to say that camping is right for everyone, but I believe the experience of camping can teach us some important lessons about disconnecting from our modern, wired, always-on lifestyles. Furthermore, as I’ve said several times now, I believe that there is something fundamentally healing about spending time in nature. Just as a glass of water can quench thirst, I believe time in nature can heal the body, both physically and psychologically. Science is quickly coming to agreement with this idea; more and more research is identifying measurable, physical properties of the outdoors which calm our psyches and revitalize our bodies.

Below, I’ll share an essay—published on a friend’s blog—that I wrote on camping. First, though, I’d like to point out some of the benefits of camping (or, if not camping, simply spending more time in nature):

1. Camping brings us back into alignment with the natural rhythms of the Earth; we rise with the sun, and rest with the darkness. We leave behind artificial lights, computer screens, and television shows.
2. Camping brings us close to the ground. Lying just inches from the dirt, our bodies are exposed to the electromagnetic energy of the Earth. When I am camping, I always wake up in the morning with an unusually high sense of wellbeing, and I feel more rested than when I’m sleeping in my house. This is true even when it is cold outside.
3. Camping takes us away from the harmful electromagnetic exposure we receive when indoors and surrounded by all of our electrically powered appliances, smartphones, TV screens, computers,

and especially WI-FI signals (by the way, in my home, we do not use WI-FI; instead, our computers are wired to the internet via actual ethernet cords).

4. Camping forces us to relax. Work is far away, house chores can't be done, and the TV can't be turned on. We have little choice but to really relax and enjoy the present moment. I've always felt that three days of camping feels like three weeks. Time seems to stand still, and the days meander on.
5. Camping reminds us of what's important: we are in close quarters with our family and friends, without distractions, so we can spend time building relationships and investing time getting to know each other.
6. All-in-all, camping is a healthy experience that encourages balance and relaxation. I've talked with many other Lyme sufferers who also find camping to be tremendously beneficial.

Essay: A Boring Camping Photo—More Than Meets the Eye?

This is an essay I wrote on a camping trip several years ago. The essay was written about a simple photo I took while we were camping in Big Sur, California. The black-and-white replication of the photo here may be difficult to interpret, so I'll tell you what is represented in it. The photo itself is a simple, uninteresting image I shot while lying down in my tent. I was looking up at the canvas of the tent, with an unzipped tent window through which you could see the canopy of trees above. I think the image was taken during an afternoon nap, perhaps. As you will see, the photo itself is not the interesting part of my essay. Keep reading.

CAMPING ESSAY

Is there more than meets the eye in this seemingly uninteresting, commonplace photo I shot while lying in my tent for an afternoon nap, looking up at the canopy of Eucalyptus trees surrounding our campsite in Big Sur, California?

Is this just my view from the tent, or is there more going on here?

Let me start by saying this: this is my favorite of more than 100 amazing photos from an awesome camping trip we took with our friends.

No, there isn't a hidden item you should be searching for in the photo—no scary spider, no rare bird in the trees above my tent, no, “Where's Waldo?” challenge in this photo. What you see in the photo is what I see too—nothing out of the ordinary or remarkable.

While the other photos I took on our camping trip to Big Sur display fabulous activities, relaxing time around the camp fire, and great fun had by all (especially our children), this particular photo is the most profound. Let me explain why.

Many of the activities you participate in while camping are just that: activities. They are fun, maybe even relaxing, and perhaps even out of the ordinary. Hiking, swimming, cooking, and lounging around the campfire late at night come to mind. These are great activities.



However, what I really love about camping and why it's my absolute favorite summer leisure activity is this: Camping completely turns your routine on its head. What do you do first thing in the morning when you are at home? What do you do before you go to bed? What do you do after lunch? If you are like most of us, you have

a routine. And, I'll venture to guess that your routine is pretty intertwined with technology: I would risk assuming that you probably check your email first thing in the morning, and perhaps just before you go to bed.

You probably also have some unhealthy thinking patterns that go along with your routine. Maybe in the morning when you wake up and check your email, you worry about bills that you have to pay, or about your day's work ahead, or about the chores around the house that haven't been tackled. Or maybe, your unhealthy thinking is centered on some other, completely different topic. I can't know; I'm not inside your head. I can tell you that personally, my unhealthy thinking patterns are pretty much the same and predictable day-in and day-out: they have to do with work, productivity, and an inability to relax and see the big picture.

When I take a few hours off work and do something fun, it doesn't fundamentally change my routine, nor does it change my "stinking thinking" patterns. Why? Because most of a person's routine (mine included) happens not during the day, but around bed time, and in the morning. These are the times when you really set your compass for the day.

Now we're getting somewhere. Now you can understand why this seemingly boring photo is my favorite of dozens of camping photos. While I can relax and go swimming or go for a hike on any given day, the only days when I am really knocked out of my routine are the days when I'm in that tent, looking up through the windows, feeling the fresh air breezing in. At home, I'm always stuck in my routine because I'm always doing the same things before bed and when I wake up in the morning.

When you are camping, you leave everything behind—your computer, your routine, your chores, your worries, your thinking

patterns. Camping is different enough from normal life that it sort of pushes the reset button in your brain. A hotel room doesn't do that for me; sure, hotel vacationing is awesome and relaxing, but you are still sleeping in a man-made structure, with your laptop sitting on a desk nearby, electricity just a plug away, and all the amenities, paperwork, parking, and other aspects of modern life within arm's length.

Camping is just about the only activity I've found that fully and completely pushes the reset button in my thinking. Three days of camping, and I'm refreshed completely. When I return home to my regular life, I have a new perspective on things. Does my new, clear thinking last forever? No, it usually deteriorates back to my normal thinking patterns within about a week or two. So that's when it's time to go camping again! Or at least, that's when it's time to reflect back to the camping experience, to remember what I learned and how I felt when the world wasn't barking at my doorstep, when my phone wasn't ringing constantly and when dozens of emails weren't pouring in at all hours of the day demanding my time.

The essence of camping isn't the activities you do during the day. It's the act of getting dislodged from your routine—of rising and sleeping with the cycles of nature, of leaving everything familiar behind for a few days. When you do this, you'll discover fun, relaxation, and intimate time with friends. But even more, you'll discover your soul. You'll find that your soul has been suffocating amid the modern demands of your busy, wired, technologically connected life; it has been pleading with you to give it some fresh air. You never heard your soul because you were too busy. What you were busy with differs among all of us, but I can say with certainty: you were too busy.

I'll end on a less philosophical note. Camping is cheap, so most people don't have a good excuse not to do it. If you loathe the work

involved in planning and preparing, it means you are probably too entrenched in your routine—consider this a warning signal of impending burnout. Trust me, it's worth it. Put your computer down, gather (or buy) your camping gear, and plan a trip. Leave your life behind for a few days and discover a renewal that will refresh you, recharge you, and reset your thinking patterns like nothing else I've found on planet Earth.

Camping is my gift to you. Well actually, it's not my gift at all; it's God's gift to you. Accept the gift, and take some time to recharge your soul. And when you are lying in your tent, looking up through the open windows, you'll feel what I felt—the bliss of a break in your routine; a chance for your soul to drink in the natural environment it was intended to dwell in; and a rare opportunity to push the pause button on even the most consistent and normal aspects of your daily life.

Epilogue: The Word “Camping”

I really don't like the word “camping.” It conjures up pictures of silly, superficial activities like eating s'mores, towing an RV, and lying on a sandy beach by a campsite. Really, the activity of “camping” is much more profound than that. Camping connects us with nature like no other activity: sleeping mere inches away from the dirty ground with no climate control and no walls. Camping pushes the rewind button on the world’s calendar, and we get to live as if it were 1500 years ago, without the modern amenities and basics of modern life. These profound shifts in how we experience the world are deeply relaxing and inspirational—and even a bit philosophical. On my last trip, I was left alone to read while the family did a day trip hike. I sat by myself at the camp site for six hours. The heat, the bugs, the curvature of the Earth my chair was sitting on, the shadows moving across the ground as the hours passed—these were all experiences so different from my normal life that they inspired some pretty deep

thoughts: “This is how people lived for thousands of years before modern times. Wow!” Such an experience made me think: Are we really better off in modern times with so much technology and connectedness? Are we healthier? Are we happier?

Your own philosophical questions might be different than mine, and your own experience will be yours alone, unique as you are—but one thing’s for sure: camping is about a lot more than s’mores and RVs. It’s a complete shift in the human experience and gives us insight into the experiences of our ancestors. Modern life with electricity, the Internet, and Espresso is but a blip on the radar of human existence. For most of history, we’ve lived a lot more like what we now call “camping.” Most of us lack that perspective and just take daily life for granted. Yet that very perspective is the one thing which we may truly need in order to live a more balanced life.

So next time you hear the word “camping,” remember that this is an activity with profound and deep implications and lessons about the human condition. In fact, because camping is so affordable, I’d make the argument that camping is one of the richest, most rewarding, interesting activities dollar-for-dollar of anything available on our planet.