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Focus

The Phenomenon of Post-Viral Fatigue

A Sought After Field of Work in Naturopathic Practice

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For those in a hurry

Post-viral fatigue can cause a significant reduction in quality of life for those affected. Naturopathic approaches such as herbs, Schuessler salts and homeopathy can be combined with mental techniques such as hypnosis or lifestyle measures, towards new energy.

For those affected, post-viral fatigue often leads to fainting, a long examination odyssey and the feeling of not being taken seriously. Philipp Feichtinger explains how this field of work is dealt with in naturopathy from different perspectives.

Post-viral fatigue can be understood as comprehensive exhaustion, fatigue and impairment of productivity as a result of a viral infection, the symptoms of which cannot be traced back to any other disease. A wide variety of virus strains can be responsible for this, such as corona, influenza, HIV, hepatitis, herpes, flavi (especially TBE) and various tropical viruses. The phenomenon of post-viral fatigue has become the focus of public and scientific interest, especially due to the corona pandemic. The clinical picture has existed for much longer due to the fact that various viral pathogens can be responsible for it. Often it was not perceived as such or not associated with the infection. Exactly which bodily processes are responsible for the development of post-viral fatigue is still the subject of current medical research.

Currently, a scientific distinction is made between different terms, such as "fatigue", a physical, mental or spiritual exhaustion due to various complaints. The chronic manifestation can be the result of underlying diseases such as tumors or anemias. Post-viral fatigue refers to the one described here. While post-viral fatigue syndrome describes a comprehensive complex of symptoms and can be compared to chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS/ME), it burdens the lives of those affected in the long term as a separate clinical picture.

Symptoms

Post-viral phenomena are not uncommon, especially in Post- or Long-COVID, and have thus also gained a face in the general public. The symptom picture can be extremely diverse and also differ in their intensity, which is why one should not be deceived by the term "fatigue". A distinction is made between physical, mental and cognitive complaints.

On the body level, reduced performance, feelings of weakness and exhaustion can occur even after little exercise, muscular weakness and sudden, severe and persistent fatigue. Vegetative symptoms such as headaches, nausea and dizziness are also noteworthy. Mental complaints can extend from listlessness and fear of overload to emotional withdrawal and even to declining interest in hobbies with a risk of depression. Possible cognitive complaints include declining mental performance as well as difficulty finding words and concentrating.

Contributing Factors

In the anamnesis, particular attention should be paid to contributing factors that can make the symptom picture even more difficult. Several of them should be understandable, but those affected may still attach too little importance to them. In addition to essential lifestyle factors such as diet, sleep quality, media consumption and lack of exercise, radiation exposure, inner conflicts, stress and stressful tooth foci should not be underestimated. Allergies and intolerances, autoimmune events, heavy metal contamination as well as silent inflammation have also become severe energy

killers for the body in recent years. Interdisciplinary cooperation with doctors is therefore advisable. If various contributing factors are balanced, body, mind and spirit are already more energetic again and you can devote yourself more consciously to post-viral fatigue.

Naturopathic Approaches

Post-viral fatigue can be very complex and difficult to grasp, which is why the different approaches to naturopathy can offer support through their effect on body, mind and spirit. The following is a small selection, which must be individually tailored to the individual patient and does not guarantee completeness:

Homeopathy

The use of homeopathic remedies requires a detailed anamnesis and a precise repertorization afterwards, even more than the use of other naturopathic procedures. For this reason, the following are some examples of homeopathic individual remedies that can be considered for post-viral fatigue.

People with headaches due to fatigue can benefit from Calcium phosphoricum.

Arsenicum album (White arsenic): This remedy is helpful for exhaustion and fatigue due to illnesses and infections. Arsenicum album is also indicated for nerve complaints, diseases of the gastrointestinal tract and respiratory tract as well as mental imbalance. People for whom the remedy can be beneficial complain of a feeling of overload even with little exertion.

Calcium phosphoricum (Calcium phosphate): The remedy can be used primarily in children, but also in general for fatigue and exhaustion after viral infections. The resulting immune deficiency and diseases of the respiratory tract and gastrointestinal tract can be treated with calcium phosphoricum as a supplement. People for whom this remedy is indicated report headaches and difficulty concentrating due to exhaustion.

Gelsemium (Yellow jasmine): The states of exhaustion indicated here manifest themselves in the form of tremors as well as feelings of lightheadedness and weakness. Lack of energy, feelings of dizziness, freezing and numbness are perceived. Here, Gelsemium can bring more awareness, alertness and physical strength again.

Herbs and Essential Oils

For more energy, cubeb pepper can be used.

The world of plants gives us many valuable companions for post-viral fatigue. Thus, **Hildegard von Bingen** recommends the Cubeb pepper for more energy, of which 5-8 grains can be chewed daily. One of their universal remedies is Galangal powder, which can be used for seasoning or as a tablet to rebuild one's own strength, especially after infections. From **phytotherapy**, however, preparations with gentian, ginseng, rhodiola, rosemary, sea buckthorn and taiga root are also recommended to make it easier to overcome exhaustion. With plant preparations, however, allergies must always be included in the considerations.

Our sense of smell is directly connected to our emotional center in the brain, the limbic system, which is why a beneficial activation of our energy can also take place via this pathway, for example through scents. This is possible via essential oils, which can be diffused in the room via a diffuser or mixed with a carrier oil and applied to the body. In the case of post-viral fatigue, tropical fruits such as lemon, tangerine, orange, lime or citronella can have a refreshing effect on our minds. But ginger, peppermint, lemongrass as well as resinous oils such as cypress, blue and black spruce can also promote and activate concentration. It is worth testing essential oils and changing the atmosphere of rooms where you spend a lot of time.

Bach Flowers

The Bach Flower Therapy founded by **Dr. Edward Bach** is more associated with mental states, but can however have holistic effects. Therefore, an individual Bach flower mixture can not only be a support for psychological complaints associated with post-viral fatigue, but also provide the motivation to free oneself from the current situation. Practical experience has shown that patients always consider the optimal flowers for themselves in the form of the essence bottles. These Bach flowers can be possible among others:

The Honesty Flower can help to change disagreements in one's own life.

Agrimony – “Kleiner Odermennig” (No. 1): The so-called Honesty Flower wants to help change disagreements in one's own life and free itself from false harmonies. Nevertheless, it should strengthen confrontation ability and the courage for activity, and gently integrate stressful aspects of everyday life.

Clematis – Common clematis (No. 9): If you feel mentally absent, combined with low vitality and lack of drive, the Reality Flower can bring more clarity and mental freshness.

Endurance Flower is suitable for people in constant battle mode.

Oak – English Oak (No. 22): For people in constant combat mode, the Endurance Flower is a good choice. Often these patients are at the end of their rope out of a sense of duty and are admired for their strength. Inside, it can look completely different, because you only live not to show weakness.

Schuessler Salts

Various Schuessler Salts can also be a valuable supplement for post-viral fatigue. Be it for convalescence after infections or to strengthen the energy metabolism. Some selected Schuessler salts are mentioned here:

No. 02 Calcium phosphoricum D6: This salt can be used to build up one's own defenses in the event of a high susceptibility to infections as well as to regenerate after long illnesses. In case of fatigue and exhaustion, Calcium phosphoricum can bring new momentum.

Schuessler Salt No. 05 can bring inner peace and strength.

No. 05 Potassium phosphoricum D6: Nervousness, melancholy and difficulty sleeping are indicators of this salt. It can bring inner peace and strength and is a source of energy for body, mind and spirit. If the energy metabolism of the cells is inhibited, nerve or muscle weaknesses as well as concentration and memory problems can occur.

No. 08 Sodium chloratum D6: The immune system can be brought into balance by this salt. Sodium chloratum can also be used for detoxification, lack of drive, exhaustion and digestive problems.

Bodywork

The most serious symptom in the scope of post-viral fatigue can be the lack or reduced controllability of physical strength. Those affected express the feeling that they have less to hardly any energy available for their everyday tasks, let alone exercise. A vicious circle up to the loss of muscle mass can occur. With these starting points, patients can self-actively stimulate the body, train their perception and motivate it to move:

Acupressure

The meridians supply us with life energy like a network and therefore require attention even in the case of post-viral fatigue. This can be questioned by means of the organ clock whether there are phases of the day in which exhaustion is most perceptible. It can be analyzed whether the corresponding meridian with the most energy is too active at this time window or the one with the lowest is additionally weakened. In addition to targeted support of the meridians with acupuncture, acupressure can be used for self-application and to strengthen body awareness. In practice, exemplary points can be presented and pressed under guidance so that patients can continue this at home. Point BL-10* is worth mentioning as an example. This releases blockages in the entire meridian system and tension in the shoulder-neck area and is located at the hairline, on the side of the palpable trapezius muscle (press for 2-3 minutes). In addition, during kidney time (5-7 p.m.), the Ki-1* point in the middle of the sole of the foot can be pressed for 3-5 minutes to reactivate the kidney fire. For more life energy and joy of life, the point EH-8* can be circled in the middle of the palm.

* Point numbering designated in OIRF Modern & Traditional Acupuncture program terminology.

Movement Training

Willingness and ability to move depends on the severity of post-viral fatigue. Patients who spend most of the day lying down will find it more difficult to encourage gentle training than those who are even more active in their everyday lives. Cooperation with physiotherapists and occupational therapists, personal trainers and fitness facilities can help to proceed in a needs-oriented manner. At the beginning, it may be necessary to practice the idea of movement. After all, if patients can no longer even imagine exercise, there is little point in encouraging them to exercise actively. Even minimal activities in everyday life can be discussed in practice and slowly increased: A small round of the garden, watering the flowers in the house or climbing the stairs a few times can be a big hurdle in the beginning. For more active patients, simple gymnastics, stretching or endurance exercises can be considered. It is important to apply it regularly and then reflect in writing with regard to one's own experiences, hurdles and physical condition.

Training of Body Awareness

Patients – not just those with post-viral fatigue – need to be motivated to train their body awareness. This also makes it easier to hear your signals and warning signs more clearly and to regenerate more quickly. For this, however, we need to understand and know our body. On the one hand, body-oriented relaxation methods such as progressive muscle relaxation or exercises from Qigong can be used. The latter can be calm or movement techniques for more inner peace, activation or energy collection. But energetic procedures also offer various techniques for self-application, which can lead us stronger to body awareness. The Japanese Healing Streams, for example, uses 26 so-called "safety energy locks" (SES), which, like the meridians, are located on both sides of the body and are assigned to different themes. The body positions on which they lie can be easily touched with the respective hand or individual fingers. SES 21 is located on the underside of the cheeks and can bring more freshness and alertness, especially to the face. But gentle physical exercises such as tapping or finger rubbing can also bring us into connection with the body. Gentle (self-)massages with essential oils, mixed with carrier oils, or Equilibrium bottles from Aura-Soma strengthen self-care and guide patients to do something good for themselves.

Mental Work

The mind plays a very important role in post-viral fatigue: if on the one hand, it comes to regaining confidence in oneself and one's own strengths, or on the other hand, to building motivation and the turning towards joie de vivre. Here we in naturopathic practice are called upon to also include mental approaches or to strive for interdisciplinary cooperation with alternative practitioners for psychotherapy, psychologists and psychotherapists. Some basic considerations on what mental strengthening can look like in post-viral fatigue:

Holistic Lifestyle

Pastor Kneipp and *Hildegard von Bingen* already had the principle of order or lifestyle as a powerful pillar in their health concepts. In the case of post-viral fatigue, it is therefore permissible to focus on the aspect of daily organization as early as the anamnesis. Here you can definitely take the time to analyze the morning, noon, afternoon, evening and night in more detail. Among the different parts of the day, there can be many factors that additionally promote fatigue: These can include a wrong pillow or a mattress that is too hard, a too little nutritious breakfast, too much pressure and stress in the afternoon and long screen time in the evening. It is not necessary to turn the entire daily routine upside down, it is often enough to sensitize the patients and have various unpleasant habits changed. At the same time, new rituals can also be integrated, such as a relaxation exercise to fall asleep or a technique from Qigong in the morning after getting up for more energy. The more positive incentives we create on the mental level in terms of our own lifestyle and the use of the available time, the more our body can recharge its batteries.

A mattress that is too hard can further promote fatigue.

Mindfulness and Meditation

No matter how pronounced post-viral fatigue is, mindfulness exercises can make a significant contribution to training one's own ability to concentrate and becoming more aware of oneself again. In practice, patients can be given many simple suggestions that can be quickly implemented in everyday life: Mindfulness can already begin with breathing by observing the resulting body movements, the duration of inhalation and exhalation or the pauses in between. The various ingredients can also be consciously tasted when eating, every contact with the ground can be felt with a few steps outside in nature, or its texture can be registered when feeling an object. It is important to encourage the other person to regain more depth and awareness in their own perception.

Body-focused relaxation techniques help to understand one's own body.

Unintentional meditation can also be a support on this path. Unfortunately, there is often still a false image and forms of fantasy journeys are understood by it. But meditation is a form of mindfulness with a pronounced focus. This can be directed at a point in space, at the state of the body free of judgments, at a certain mantra or a neutral idea. Meditation in its pure form may be practiced well and initially guided in practice. Then they can continue training at home. If the patients realize that they really only have to incorporate a few minutes for this and that their thoughts are also trained in the process, they also use this form of mindfulness. In any case, it should be pointed out that thoughts that arise do not have to be compulsively avoided. If you lose the thread, you immediately return to focus on the selected area.

An essential component of the mental level is one's own world of ideas.

Working With the Subconscious Mind

When we talk about the mental level, then above all one's own world of ideas is an essential component that must be taken into account urgently. It is important to consider: Are the inner images more directed at one's own inability and exhaustion in the form of the weakened body or are they nevertheless oriented towards the future and one's own positive abilities?

Hypnosis can give beneficial stimuli.

Hypnotherapy can give many beneficial stimuli to reactivate individual resources on the way to old strength and to create new neuronal networks. A reassessment of the current situation and the strengthening of the forces can be initiated significantly via the subconscious. If this work is then supported by needs-oriented exercise and naturopathic measures, the patients receive assistance on several levels.

Serious hypnosis uses the words, ideas and formulations of the patient, which not only creates optimal identification, but can also be further worked on afterwards in the form of self-hypnosis. I have also had good experiences with very specific visualizations that can be incorporated into everyday situations. In the case of post-viral fatigue, this can be a waterfall for refreshment and cleansing, a smiling face or the idea of a sunrise with new opportunities in the morning. The task in practice is to make it clear to patients that they can influence and change their ideas about themselves and the world to a large extent.

Conclusion

With a detailed medical history, the consideration of possible contributing factors and the differentiation from other symptom pictures, complementary medicine can create a broad basis of support for those affected. In addition to strengthening and realigning the mental level, physical activation can also be slowly advanced again. Accompanied by naturopathic approaches such as homeopathy, herbs, Schuessler salts or Bach flowers, the path forward can be started again together with the patients. This requires time, leisure and interdisciplinary cooperation.

The Author



Phillip Feichtinger, HP is a Heilpraktiker, a naturopathic and hypnosis therapist focused on holistic health. As a trained secondary school teacher (Austria), working with children is close to his heart. He is an Organetics (organic ethicist) practitioner, coach and author. He runs his own practice in Austria. As a lecturer and course instructor, he holds seminars and writes for various health magazines.

Book:



The book explains what happens in the body during post-viral fatigue, how it is distinguished from other diseases and what conventional therapies are available. It also shows naturopathic methods such as Ayurveda, acupressure, Kneipp, herbal medicine, but also micronutrients, physical exercises and self-hypnosis, which are supposed to help regain quality of life.

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