People complain about ‘feeling tired all the time’, but until you have a condition that sucks away every ounce of your energy, you can really only imagine what being truly exhausted is like.

After leaving university I became a secondary school teacher, and I’d worked my way up to being the head of a busy department before I was struck with chronic fatigue, more commonly known as ME. Feeling ‘tired’ doesn’t even touch on how debilitating it can be. There are days when you literally can’t open your eyes to get out of bed, and you have to crawl across the room. It’s completely devastating.

Aged 33, I had to give up teaching. Back then, ME wasn’t a recognised condition so I wasn’t able to retire on health grounds. I’d only been married a year and on top of everything, we were struggling to fall pregnant. It put an enormous strain on our relationship and on me. Why was my body failing me?

Healing Mind and Body

Within a year, my beloved father died, my husband left me and I was diagnosed with breast cancer. It’s fair to say I hit rock bottom.

I had no idea that one day I’d look back on my cancer diagnosis as a ‘gift’, but it was a huge turning point for me. As well as surgery for my cancer, which I agreed to, doctors offered me hormonal medication but a voice deep inside me spoke up. ‘No thank you,’ I heard myself say.

So much in my life felt horribly out of control. It was time to give my body the boost it needed, on my terms. I’d studied Food Science and Nutrition at university and I’d always had an interest in the natural side of medicine. I started to do research into just why my body had developed breast cancer and how to treat it in a more natural, homeopathic way. Doing the studying exhausted me, but healing myself was the ultimate motivation. I became fascinated with the world of naturopathic medicine and decided to pursue ‘complementary’ methods of healing.

As I went into remission, I studied for five years with the College of Naturopathic Medicine based at Manchester University. All the while I was making huge discoveries about myself. I realised I’d been living with a condition called hypothyroidism for most of my life, also known as underactive thyroid. I was also suffering from heavy metal toxicity through the 17 mercury fillings in my teeth. Some people are sceptical that fillings can poison the body but believe me, the symptoms are very real. I had all of mine replaced.

When it came to my diet, it was completely overhauled. I cut out wheat, cow’s milk, refined sugar and yeast – all things that I believed were suppressing my immune system, which had allowed the cancer cells to flourish. Slowly, I started to feel stronger and the fog that had clouded my brain for so long lifted. For the first time in my life, I felt in control of my health and while I was healing myself, I found myself a new career.

Empowering Others

Today, I’m proud to say I’m a practitioner at The Clinic of Natural Medicine in Garstang, Lancashire, and I help other people with their illnesses by empowering them to understand their bodies. There’s still so much we have to learn and my research continues.

I feel the best I ever have done and incredibly, I do now see my cancer diagnosis as a positive experience. It gave me the motivation to sit up and fight back. Once you get that drive, you can achieve anything.

● Visit The College of Naturopathic Medicine website at naturopathy-uk.com.