BOWEN AND FIBROMYALGIA

Research: “What is the effect of the Bowen technique on people with fibromyalgia”

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# Table of contents

**PREFACE** ............................................................................................................................................. 4

**WORD OF THANKS** .............................................................................................................................. 7

**THE BOWEN THERAPY** ....................................................................................................................... 9

- Who is Tom Bowen? ............................................................................................................................... 9
- How does the Bowen technique work? ................................................................................................. 11
- How important is our body posture? ................................................................................................... 15
- Why is Bowen technique a success? .................................................................................................... 16
- What can be treated with Bowen technique? ..................................................................................... 16

**FIBROMYALGIA** .................................................................................................................................. 19

- What is fibromyalgia? ........................................................................................................................... 19
- Lack of understanding in fibromyalgia ............................................................................................... 22
- Diagnosing ........................................................................................................................................ 22
- The new diagnostic criteria for fibromyalgia ...................................................................................... 24
- Causes of fibromyalgia ....................................................................................................................... 25

**BOWEN TECHNIQUE AND FIBROMYALGIA** .................................................................................. 30

- What do I want to achieve with Bowen when it comes to fibromyalgia? ........................................ 30
- General way of approach .................................................................................................................... 31
- General conclusion .............................................................................................................................. 33

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** .................................................................................................................................. 34

**USEFUL ADDRESSES AND DATA** .................................................................................................... 35

**ANNEX** ............................................................................................................................................... 36

- Case 1 ................................................................................................................................................ 36
- Case 2 ................................................................................................................................................ 40
- Case 3 ................................................................................................................................................ 43
- Case 4 ................................................................................................................................................ 47
- Case 5 ................................................................................................................................................ 50
- Case 6 ................................................................................................................................................ 53
- Case 7 ................................................................................................................................................ 57
Preface

Bowen technique has drastically changed my life.

My life as a child wasn’t easy. I lost my mother when I was four years old and I couldn’t rely on my father for support at all, so I developed a strong urge to succeed in life. I was determined to show and prove to everyone that I was able to achieve a lot, and so I worked 7 days a week, 10 to 12 hours a day.

After having given birth to 4 children, of whom the last ones were twins, my body finally failed me. I had already experienced pelvis problems when I was pregnant with my second child, problems related to pubic girdle pain, but once he had been born, those problems improved, and I continued working a lot, although only 6 days a week at a rate of about 10 hours a day.

Finally, when the twins were born my pelvis failed during delivery. I had already suffered from pelvic girdle pain during my pregnancy, but once I had given birth to the twins, the pains didn’t improve. My body was at its end, 4 children in 3.5 years were simply much too much.

A few months after the twins were born my body failed me: I couldn’t walk or stand or lie, everything ached. A wheelchair was the only way for me to move around. Cortisone injections brought a slight recovery and after 6 months I was able to walk again, but I had to use crutches.

I suffered from various problems one after another, until one day a doctor told me: “You suffer from fibromyalgia. There is nothing you can do, except learn how to live with it.”

I faced the pain, took painkillers every 4 hours, 75mg/day of Baleen, a muscle relaxer, yet nothing seemed to help. Despite everything, I continued working, pushing my boundaries, I was still going to show what I was able to achieve.

After a year, I once again was unable to walk and underwent surgery of a hernia at L5/S1 on the left side. The neurologist promised me that from then on everything would go much better.

Nothing was farther from the truth! The neurologist reconfirmed that my back problems were solved after the surgery, but that fibromyalgia was the cause of me not being able to walk, not being able to stand on my heels and the cause of me walking on the tips of my toes, both literally and figuratively.

So I continued taking painkillers, Baleen, antidepressants, tried revalidation, yet nothing seemed to help. I continued walking on the tip of my toes, since I was unable to put my feet flat on the floor. Orthopaedic shoes were designed for me.

I was desperate. Four little kids, a demanding job, yet stopping or giving up was not on my list. Acupuncture, osteopathy, physiotherapy, foot reflexology, I have left nothing untried to stop my body from aching.

Finally I went to Portugal for a health week and over there, Peter Sinclair, an Irishman, applied Bowen therapy to me for the first time. My first thoughts were: “What in the world is this all about?” First he applied a few touches to me and next he was gone, only to come back again a few minutes later.
I wasn’t too excited about it but then again, I had nothing to lose. In the evening, Peter called me to him and asked me what was wrong with me since he wasn’t able to get through to me at all. I told him my body was so tense that even the slightest touch hurt. I was unable to walk 100 m in a normal way. This caught his interest and he asked the permission to do a smooth massage. I trusted him, so I let him. I suffered, no matter how smooth he massaged me, the slightest touch was a touch too much. The next day, I was totally finished. I cried almost all day long, I was angry with myself for letting myself go like that. After all, I never cried, I was a tough lady and now I had turned into a wreck in no time at all.

Peter massaged me three days in a row for 2 hours. More and more I was forced to confront me with myself, I felt like crying rather than laughing, but I also felt my body starting to change. Before I returned to Belgium, Peter applied another Bowen therapy to me. By now, I wasn’t the same person as the one who had arrived in Portugal. I was angry, truly angry, and I was at a total loss. Yet I did notice that my muscles started to relax. Slowly but surely I could no longer stand the feeling of my orthopaedic shoes, my heels were dropping down to the floor. From time to time I forgot to take my painkillers and muscle relaxers, my pain had evolved to another level. My curiosity was aroused: What is the Bowen Therapy all about?

Since I started feeling better and better, I wanted to continue with this. It dawned on me that Bowen therapy might be the cure for my fibromyalgia. No matter what, I was going to continue this and so two months later I booked another flight to Portugal. Peter applied Bowen technique again, combined with meditation and muscle building. He took a whole week to treat me and I really benefitted from it. He also assisted me psychologically since I was still full of anger and aggression. I started feeling better and better. After a week I returned to Belgium, aware of the fact that I would need to work on myself. By now, I was able to walk 2 kilometres without my crutches, wearing normal shoes but with arch support, and I started forgetting to take my medication more often. I trained my muscles under supervision of a personal coach, so I would not go beyond my limits.

I went to Portugal one more time - a third time in a period of 9 months - to undergo Bowen therapy, in order to continue my way to recovery together with Peter.

It required a lot of work and courage to climb out of that hole, to dare look into my own heart, to realize that I was not doing terribly well and to have to find out by myself what was needed to make life better. Running my head against a brick wall now and again was disheartening. The hardest part to do, though, was tearing down the strong wall I had built around me. To become aware that actually you don’t have to prove anything to anyone else; that you are allowed to say “no” from time to time. All in all, it was really hard and sometimes it still is hard for me.

Bowen technique has completely changed my life. Professionally, I turned from an herbal spice mixer into a Bowen therapist. My Bowen therapist, Peter, has also changed my life with his patience and psychological insight and his belief that I could get better. My disorder is an opportunity to help others who are suffering from fibromyalgia. Given the fact that I have been diagnosed with fibromyalgia myself, I know all too well what one has to go through. Yet it is important to cast off the mantle of victim, your life will look differently after 3 to 5 treatments. But only on the condition that you are willing to go for it and aren’t afraid of looking into your own heart.
Unfortunately fibromyalgia will stay in my body for the rest of my life, and as soon as I go beyond my limits, I am confronted with it. But it’s the way in which I can handle it now that has made my life bearable again.
Word of thanks

I am happy to have had the opportunity to start exercising this profession and this thanks to many people.

First of all, I would like to thank Peter Sinclair, my Irish Bowen therapist, for making me see that it is really possible to do something about fibromyalgia and for making my life bearable again. But above all I would like to thank him for letting me realize that I can and should take my life in my own hands again and not just stand by idly.

My gratitude also goes to my personal coach, Hilde Van Oycke (Touché Sports Personal Training), for having had the patience to make sure I would always train within my limits 2 or 3 times a week. She has stood by me in word and deed and has become a very dear friend.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to my children. It mustn’t have been easy on them to have a mother who was always tired and with a constantly aching body. Yet, they have always been loyal and sweet to me. This greatly helped me to bear my illness. They were the most important motivation to carry on and get through it all.

Finally Karel Aerssens (Bowned) who thought me how to apply Bowen technique with a tremendous enthusiasm, and who still helps me by discussing hard cases via e-mail.
The Bowen Therapy

Who is Tom Bowen?

The Bowen Technique was pioneered by TOM BOWEN, Thomas Ambrose Bowen (1916-1982).

He grew up in Geelong, Australia, and was born to a working class family. He left school at the age of 14 and took various labouring jobs. In the early 1950s, Tom worked as a general hand at Geelong Cements Works. He worked there during the daytime, while in the evenings and during weekends he treated people with injuries, sportsmen and people with pain. At the end of the 1950s, Tom worked as a full-time practitioner (Brunnet, 2009).

Tom didn’t have any medical background but he was fascinated by the different postures of people and how these postures were related to pain symptoms and health problems. He just had the desire to help people who were living with pain.

He was a deeply religious man and would often refer to his therapeutic work as “a gift from God” (Wilks, 2009).

He was keen on helping poor people and he even treated disabled children free of charge. One Saturday a month, Tom held free consultations. After Tom’s death, Kevin Ryan, the last person he worked with, carried on his work for another 12 years. He treated prisoners at the local prison and helped out with injuries at the local football club. He was very much interested in sports. (Wilks, 2009).

He liked to help people but was also interested in animals, especially horses, which he treated at the farm. He also treated dogs.

He worked very hard as a therapist and in 1975 he treated about 13,000 clients per year, with the assistance of his secretary Irene Horwood and his 6 students, who each were taught by him for a little while. They all tried to understand and practice this technique. The students were Oswald Rentsch (massage therapist), Keith Davis (chiropractor), Nigel Love (chiropractor), Kevin Neave (chiropractor), Romney Smeeton (chiropractor) and Kevin Ryan (osteopath).
Oswald Rentsch examined Tom’s clients and was amazed at the result. A very high percentage indicated an important improvement after 1 or 2 treatments, even those people suffering from chronic problems. (Wilks, 2009).

Tom Bowen continued to practice and improve his technique during the 30 years he was working until his death in 1982. He died of diabetes.

He was a humble man, of few words, but with an incredible amount of energy and passion for helping people. He never documented his methods (Brunnet, 2009).

It wasn’t until 4 years after Tom’s death that Oswald Rentsch started teaching the Bowen technique, after having refined and documented Tom Bowen’s work. That was the beginning of “The Bowen Technique”, also known as ‘Bowenwork’ or ‘Bowtech’, instructed at the ‘the Bowen Therapy Academy of Australia’ founded in 1987 (Wilks, 2009).

A monument in memory of Thomas Ambrose Bowen, pioneer of the Bowen technique and alternative therapy for the treatment of muscles, joints and neurological disorders, was unveiled on Sunday, 27th of October 2002. That was the 20th anniversary of his death. (Monument Australia, 2010).
How does the Bowen technique work?

The Bowen technique is a very gentle way of treating in a natural way.

A Bowen treatment consists of light moves (rolling type of moves) performed on specific locations on the body alternated with pauses or resting periods between each series of moves.

Someone who doesn’t know the Bowen technique will never be able to assess how far-reaching and relaxing an effect a Bowen session will have on the entire body. Only by undergoing a session, one can experience the subtlety of Bowen treatment and learn the far-reaching benefits of the Bowen technique.

The therapist uses fingers and thumbs to move over muscles, tendons, ligaments, fascia (connective tissue), joints and sometimes nerves to induce a healing effect on the body.

After their first treatment, people are often amazed at how strong an effect these moves can have not only on their posture or attitude and structural problems but also on their general health and well-being.

The more gentle the moves, the more effective and the deeper the effect. This makes the technique also appropriate for babies and elderly people as well as for people with severe pains. Bowen didn’t work from the outside but activated the body’s own self-healing mechanisms. Our body does have an innate ability to heal itself.

The Bowen technique is a holistic (Greek: holon = whole/entire) approach, which means that we are of the opinion that the system (in this case our body) cannot be explained simply by its separate components. We do not only treat the symptoms but the whole body. In this way, the general health and well-being of the client will be improved in all aspects of his life.

A Bowen treatment is very relaxing and usually done while the client is lying on a treatment table, however it is also possible to conduct treatments while the client is standing up or sitting down. In fact, almost any position (in a wheelchair, lying on one’s side, etc.) is possible, what matters is that the client feels comfortable in that position.

The most unique aspect of this therapy is the pauses, or resting periods, in between the series of moves. These pauses are important to allow the body to respond to the just completed moves. The therapist will leave the room so that the client can relax without having the feeling of being watched. Pauses vary from 2 to 5 minutes or even longer for those who show a sensitive reaction to the moves or who have tense muscles. Pressure and position of the moves vary from client to client.
Bowen practitioners will not treat too much, since over-treatment will reduce its positive effects. Tom Bowen used the motto: ‘Less is more’. Sometimes a few moves suffice for a direct deep effectiveness. A move might make you feel dizzy or tired because it effects the autonomic nervous system that we have no control over. (Wilks, 2009).

Yet no one will be able to give an exact answer to the question: “How does the Bowen technique work?” All of the positive effects it has on people and animals, however, prove that the Bowen therapy works, but we don’t know how or why.

What we do know, though, is that the Bowen technique activates the self-healing capacity in mankind via “moves” that create and stimulate energy.

Bowen felt that his moves were either positive or negative. Positive moves created energy, while negative moves blocked the energy. This energy then somehow challenged the brain to remember how the body should behave and do whatever is necessary to balance and realign the body.

Mental, emotional or physical demands can lead to imbalances. During treatment, the responsible area in the brains is recognized via the nervous system and a signal is sent so that recovery is initiated.

You could say that the body starts cleansing itself in reaction to the treatment, and on top of that, people will get a better grip on themselves and will learn stand in their own power. They grow stronger emotionally and they will change parts of their life style. This happens without the therapist imposing such, it starts from within themselves, but only if it serves recovery. (Wilks, 2009).

Another way of approaching Bowen technique is muscles and the nerves they consist of. At first, a move slightly stretches the muscle, causing the stretch receptors (inside the muscles alongside the muscle fibres) to start sending sensory signals along the nerve pathways to the spinal cord. Signals will reach the brains via the spinal cord. The brain receives information of each separate muscle. A complex, self-corrective feedback mechanism sends back the information down the spinal cord to the individual muscles.

Tendons and muscles are more sensitive to contraction rather than to stretch and that’s why they need slower moves with a slightly firmer pressure.

When moving our body, our brain constantly processes the positional information of muscles, tendons, joints, skin and fascia. This processing decreases when our body is relaxed and that is the reason why a client needs to lay down relaxedly; in that way there will be a minimal disturbance of the brain part in question and the feedback mechanism can be
reoriented towards the move. Bowen moves are made at key structural points used by the brain to determine the body’s posture. That way, moves can improve the body’s posture. (Wilks, 2009).

We also know that Bowen moves are done at the level of the fascia, or the connective tissue of our body. Bowen noticed that the body maintained its structure through muscles and fascia. Fascia are white, translucent strands of solid tissue that differ in density and thickness depending upon the structure in the body.

Fascia is the biological fabric (consisting of fibrous, sticky and wet proteins) that holds everything within our body in its proper place. The fascia is essential for the continuous dance between stability and movement. It is crucial for a high performance, for recovery from an injury or disability, it is always present in our daily life. Fascia has a different consistency, histology and function in different parts of our body.

The wider definition of fascia equals fascia to all the collagen-base soft tissue. This includes all cells that create and maintain the extracellular matrix (ECM). This is a classical definition of fascia (i.e. connective tissue) plus all similar tissues: tendons, ligaments, fascia in and around the muscles and the fascia around the organs.

Our skeleton consists of bones that float in a sea of soft-tissue. Continuity of the fascia suggests that the myofascia (fascia in and around the muscles) acts like an adjustable tensegrity around our skeleton. Tensegrity is a contraction of the words ‘tension’ and ‘integrity’, to indicate that the integrity of a structure (in this case the skeleton) is derived from the tension members (i.e. the fascia) and not of the compression struts (in this case the separate bones). So there is a continuous inward-pulling tensional network in balance with the bones action as struts. (Myers, 2009).

The fascia is all around and forms one network, both embryologically and anatomically. Our dissection methods cut the human body into different parts so as to be able to better analyze it. But in doing so, we forget that the human body is one whole in which everything is interconnected. The fascia is in fact a biomechanical regulatory system and therefore has to be studied and treated as a system rather than as a series of components or symptoms.

The above mentioned definition however is insufficient as a definition for fascia since ECM doesn’t include cells whereas the connective tissue cells (fibroblasts, mast cells, osteoblasts,
chondroblasts, osteoclasts, etc.) are definitely a part of the fascia. A better definition would be: fascia = extracellular matrix + connective tissue cells (Myers, 2009).

**Fig. 7: Fascia**

Fascia play a mechanical and physiological role:

1. **Mechanical role**
   - Supporting and carrying function
   - Protective function
   - Shock absorbing function
   - Supportive function in lymphatic and blood flow
   - Transmission of forces

2. **Physiological role**
   - Communication and transfer
   - Biochemical function
   - Immunity and immune system
   - Regulation of fluid in tissues
   - Somatic brain function
   - Repairing function

(Bowned, 2012)
One of the functions of fascia is making sure we can stand upright. During a Bowen treatment fascia are attended to and this will have a profound effect on our posture and on the way we hold our spinal column. In consequence of the changes made in the way in which muscles and fascia relate one to another, a change in our body structure is inevitable and it forces the spinal column to adopt a better position. (Wilks, 2009).

There is still a lot of research going on into the way it really works. Many a practitioner feels an electrical impulse while making a ‘move’. Tom Bowen described this as information he received from these subtle impulses to read the body. These impulses have been registered scientifically and showed that a stretch in the fascia indeed initiates a small electrical charge. These impulses have a very powerful healing effect on the body.

In recent years, a lot of research has been done into the complex communication system arising from the interplay between the body’s tissues and its fluids. Researchers did discover a change in the constitution of blood on the cellular level after a Bowen treatment. (Wilks, 2009).

As more and more research will be published, greater light will be shed on how the Bowen technique works.

How important is our body posture?
Our posture has a major influence on the cause of our physical pains. Our body has to deal with physical and emotional distress from everyday life.

Therefore we will look for strategies (compensations) to handle this distress so we can maintain our balance for a long time.

But there comes a time when our body says stop, this is enough and compensation will lead to pain.

Example: In a car crash, someone may receive a blow to the pelvis, and this will also be reflected in the other parts of the body, e.g. from the right foot up to the neck and shoulders. One might observe that on one side the hip is higher whereas on the other side the shoulder is. This can have a physical and emotional effect on the body.

It is interesting to observe how weaker and tighter parts of the body will compensate each other in order to maintain balance. These relationships will often change after a Bowen treatment. Not only the muscles will relax but the relation between the structural posture patterns will change too.

Problems in body posture may sometimes be related to psychic and emotional problems. This often happens due to stress factors.

Other changes in our posture may be caused by e.g. a knee injury, which occurs due to an imbalance in the pelvis, which is putting undue strain on the knee while walking.
In this way, even headaches might be the consequence of an old fall on the tailbone.

The important thing is to locate as exactly as possible the cause why someone is suffering this condition, if not, symptoms will probably reoccur. For that reason, it is important to get a thorough anamnesis (medical history) before starting treatment.

A person’s body posture is determined by various factors. A body is capable to process an old accident and to memorize it. By the compensation of strong and weak muscles, the trauma remains in a frozen state. Bowen therapy is able to unfreeze this state and then treat it. (Wilks, 2009).

Why is Bowen technique a success?
Success of the treatment will vary from person to person. The Bowen therapist treats the person as a whole, not just his conditions or symptoms.

One of the most important effects of a Bowen treatment is the feeling of wellbeing and comfort. This is said to be due to the important effect Bowen has on the autonomic nerve system.

Stress is a constant factor in our lives for many a years. Long-term stress can lead to hyperactivity in the nervous system. This will affect our immune system, sleeping pattern, digestive system and other aspects of our health. Letting the nervous system come to rest through a Bowen treatment will positively affect our wellbeing.

Redressing the body imbalance will result into:
- More energy
- Feeling better physically and emotionally
- Less or no pain anymore
- Normal functioning
- Better coping with stress
- Improvement of sleep pattern

(Wilks, 2009)

What can be treated with Bowen technique?
- Physical conditions: Back and neck pain, knee problems, tennis elbow, RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury), frozen shoulder, foot and heel issues, lumbar pains, hamstring injuries, general muscle stiffness, TMJ problems (Temporo Mandibular Joint problems, jaw joint problems), Carpal tunnel syndrome, etc…
- Skeletal problems: scoliosis, arthrosis/arthritis, pubic girdle pain, knee and hip restrictions, …
- Respiratory problems: Asthma, breathing problems, hay fever, …
- Digestive complaints: gastrointestinal and liver problems, constipation, irritable bowel syndrome, bed-wetting, incontinence.
- Headaches: migraine, vertigo, sinusitis, tinnitus
- Fibromyalgia (FM), Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS)
- Anxiety- en stress complaints, burn-out
- Lymphedema, high or low blood pressure
- Hormonal imbalances, menopause complaints, premenstrual syndrome (PMS)
- Babies with sleeping problems, colic, reflux
- Post operative recovery

Fig 9: Most occurring conditions that can be treated with Bowen therapy

Bowen Technique is moreover very effective for sports injuries and can be used to enhance sports performances.

A Bowen treatment involves:

- **Intake.** This is very important. It is very important to provide a very good anamnesis: medication, operations, accidents. A full picture should be available. This information is confidential.
  The more information you get, the better and quicker you can treat. Information about lifestyle, diet, exercise, general well-being are of importance too.
- **A gentle touch** while performing the moves, so that the person won’t feel any pain during treatment.
- **Information on sensations** during treatment is also important. Some people might feel some sensations of heat in the body, tinglings, numbness in some parts of the body, cold, changed emotions during the treatment. It is important to communicate these sensations to the therapist. It is however also important not to talk too much so as not to distract the brain.
- **Drinking water.** It is of utmost importance to explain the importance of drinking water. A lot of people suffer from chronic dehydration due to their lifestyle. In fact, the water assumes the role of a conductor in our body that carries the information that we, therapists, give to the body to the brains, putting the brains to work in order to solve the problems our body is experiencing.
  An adult needs to drink 1.5 to 2 litres of water every day. Some people have built up a high dose of waste products in their body. This may be due to accumulation of lactic acid in muscles, to too much of sports or as a result of toxins built in the body due to various reasons, e.g. alcohol, smoking, drugs, but also, as already mentioned, overstraining of muscles by certain movements.
The therapist will advise to drink still water, especially for a long time after treatment in order to eliminate the waste products from the body. Once the treatment is over, pains may temporarily get worse and that’s when the water will help the detoxification of your body.

- **Walking.** Regularly taking a walk and not sitting still for too long is also important. Each step you take will give a new impulse to your body and gradually start the healing process.

In general, the Bowen technique is very subtle and the work should be well preserved for days after the treatment. The body will integrate the treatment and drinking water, taking gentle exercise and a 20-minutes walk per day will positively influence the process of recovery.

Other kinds of therapy such as manipulations, chiropractic, osteopathy, massage, acupuncture, etc… should not happen within a week before or after a Bowen treatment. (Wilks, 2009).

In fact, it would be best not to undergo any other therapies in between the Bowen treatments so as to assure a maximum response to the Bowen technique.
Fibromyalgia

What is fibromyalgia?
The word Fibromyalgia (FM) is derived from Fibro (i.e. fibrous/connective tissue), myo (i.e. muscle) and algia (i.e. pain), so literally the word means connective tissue and muscle pain. It is also called a soft-tissue rheumatic disorder since connective tissue and muscles are included in the soft tissue parts of the body.

Fibromyalgia is mainly characterised by chronic pain over the entire body and muscle stiffness, which can be felt in muscles, ligaments, tendon attachments and subcutaneous connective tissue structures.

![Fibromyalgia Tender Points](image)

*Fig. 10: The most painful points in fibromyalgia patients.*

Fibromyalgia resembles arthritis but is not quite the same since it isn’t accompanied by permanent disability and intergrowth of bone and mostly no inflammations occur.

There have been found no identifiable causes, not via blood tests nor via X-ray. No biological origin for the problem could be found either and so FM was often believed to be all in your head. In June 2013, however, the source of fibromyalgia seems to have been discovered. (Albrecht e.a., 2013), (Rice e.a., 2013).
Fibromyalgia affects 2 to 5% of the population, of which 80 to 90% women. It is commonly diagnosed between the age of 25 and 40.

FM is a non-life-threatening disorder but for the time being still an incurable non-progressive exhaustion disorder accompanied by various symptoms that occur simultaneously.

Since fibromyalgia patients are often very tired from the chronic pains they suffer all day long, they are often labelled by a diagnosis of Chronic Fatigue Disorder (CFS) as well.

That’s far from the truth. It is a misunderstanding that chronic fatigue disorder and fibromyalgia go hand in hand. Chronic fatigue disorder is not a symptom of “fibro”, but it is a lack of energy, whereas the “lingering tiredness” in fibromyalgia patients is due to a continuous fight against constantly recurring pains. They will continue performing their task and duties with exhaustion as a consequence, a feeling of tiredness that doesn't seem to pass, hence the link to CFS.

Both fibromyalgia and CFS are a sort of neuroendocrine dysfunction disorder. The big difference between the two is that fibromyalgia will cause a condition of a higher physical state of readiness whereas CFS results in exactly the opposite, there will be fatigue and reduced bodily reaction. (VLFP, 2013), (Fest, 2013).

The following are symptoms of fibromyalgia:

- Chronic pain and muscular stiffness over the entire body, and especially in neck and shoulder belt, arms, lower back, pelvic girdle and limbs.
- Increased tenderness to pressure at specific spots, called tender points.
- Aggravation of pain by some activities and movements, due to muscle acidification, exhaustion, cold and dampness and emotional stress.
- Loss of muscle strength
- Sleep disorders: too little recuperation during the night due to which muscles will not fully relax and consequently the patient will not feel rested.
- Physical fatigue and therefore lack of motivation to move and exercise so that muscles will start hurting more and more and muscles will continue stiffening up.
- Mental fatigue. Many patients are in a downward spiral due to pain. A vicious circle they are not able to break. The feeling of failing in one’s duty towards others and the guilt it provokes form the main basis of this. Uncertainty and anxiety increase mental fatigue.
- Chronic headache. Many people with fibromyalgia suffer from tension-type headaches and recurrent migraine.
- Spastic colon. Not being able to “let go” plays an important role in the bowel function. Most suffer problems with constipation, bloated feeling in the stomach, cramps, others will suffer from diarrhoea alternated with constipation.
- Concentration and memory impairment. This is called “fibrofog”, the feeling that your brains have descended in a haze or a ‘fog’. We must remember that doctors most commonly prescribe antidepressants increasing the symptom of forgetfulness and concentration impairment.

(VLFP, 2013), (Fest, 2013)
General personality traits:

These traits are characteristics and can be found in many people with fibromyalgia.

- Hardworking people with a very busy life, both on a professional and family level.
- Find it hard to say no and always available to help other people.
- Self-effacing in order to help others.
- Experience a lack of appreciation from their environment, which is considered to be just normal.
- Like to take the work off of someone’s hands and think that what they do is done better and faster. Set high standards for themselves and for others.
- Having control of everything is very important.
- Often feel guilty.
- Low self-assessment and inferiority complex are very present.
- Difficult in coping with criticism and comments.
- Suffer from inner discontentment, anger, rage and aggression in their body.
- Always walk on the tips of their toes.
- Find it hard to let go, subjecting their stream of thought to permanent tension.
- Some show a tendency to depression, pessimism and defeatism.
- Others will always pretend to be very optimistic, happy whereas often they don’t feel that way.
- In short, they go on and on and out of fear to fall down a black hole of which there is no escape.

(VLFP, 2013), (Fest, 2013)
Lack of understanding in fibromyalgia

People with fibromyalgia are often faced with lack of understanding. Disbelief is a key issue in their lives and so they experience a lack of support.

For some, it took years before they were diagnosed and even then, once it has been identified, they are sent home with the message: “learn to live with it”.

Incomprehension and lack of support force people with fibromyalgia into a role of victimhood, which is hard to cast off.

It pushes them into a certain corner and as a consequence a lot of people grow lonely. Tiredness and pain are invisible, so often they are not taken seriously by family, friends, colleagues,…

They get stuck into a vicious circle, a downward spiral that will make their situation even worse.

For that reason, it is important that others sympathize with fibromyalgia, but convincing everyone of the authenticity and seriousness of this disorder will be unachievable. Therefore it is important that people with fibromyalgia learn to be more defensive against this lack of understanding and, moreover, to cast off the role of victimhood.

Diagnosing

Considering the fact that fibromyalgia does not have an apparent cause, it will remain hard to make a diagnosis of fibromyalgia.

FM cannot be established through tests. Diagnosis is done by a number of international agreements:

- The patient has been suffering from the pain for at least 3 months.
- Pain/tenderness must be present all day long.
- These pain symptoms occur spread all over the body.
- Fatigue.

Diagnosis can only be made when all other possible disorders have been ruled out, like e.g. rheumatic diseases,…

Main tests used are blood and urine tests, X-ray, … if those show no anomalies or no adhesions and no other abnormalities have been established, a patient will feel relieved since nothing major is wrong, yet complaints will remain.

The client remains uncertain, he still has a lot of pain but no one to tell him what is wrong.

In 1990 the “Fibromyalgia Multicenter Criteria” committee established unambiguous criteria, i.e. the “ACR-Criteria”.

1) General bone/muscle pain present for at least 3 months.
2) Pain/tenderness in more than 11 of the 18 known tender points.

For tender points to be positive, a digital palpitation of 4Kg/cm² should be experienced as painful (tender is not to be considered painful).

In addition to these American classification criteria, 3 out of the criteria listed below should also occur:
- Change of symptoms by physical activity.
- Change of symptoms by weather conditions, more pain when it’s cold, less when it’s warm.
- Aggravation of symptoms due to anxiety and stress.
- Sleep disorder.
- Fatigue, lack of energy.
- Frequent headaches / migraine.
- Spastic colon.
- (subjective) Swellings.
- Tinglings / numbness.

The American College of Rheumatology formulated new criteria to classify fibromyalgia, which replace the 1990 criteria (VLFP, 2013).

Pain all over the body is still an important issue in diagnosing fibromyalgia. Apart from pain though, these new criteria also take other symptoms into account for diagnosing fibromyalgia and a severity scale has been introduced as well.

The new diagnosis differs with the old one in that the old one was an all or nothing judgement: one either qualified or did not qualify for fibromyalgia criteria.

In this new score, the severity of fibromyalgia is expressed by means of a number. The score will increase as more parts of the body ache and symptoms are worse.

These new criteria are a better reflection of the comprehensive problems accompanying fibromyalgia. (Geenen e.a., 2010)

**Research**

These new criteria are a valuable asset for scientific research. This new score will allow researchers to compare people with mild and severe fibromyalgia. In this way, researcher will be able to investigate whether e.g. brain activity or nerve condition is different in people with severe and with mild fibromyalgia. These criteria can also be used to express the effect of a treatment by means of a number. This way, it will be possible to compare the effects of different treatments worldwide. (Geenen e.a., 2010).

**Clinical practice**

For patients, it is important that these criteria show that fibromyalgia is more than just pain. Recognition of fibromyalgia could increase because more and more doctors might be willing to apply these criteria instead of the older ones.

It is comparable to baldness or a depressed mood. It’s different for all people and only when a specific threshold is exceeded, we call someone bald or depressed or – with the help of these criteria - fibryomalgie.

Any doctor that can see the symptoms is able to diagnose fibromyalgia. So even people who do not believe in fibromyalgia can also assess fibromyalgia. They will exclusively be asked to assess the severity of the various symptoms. (Geenen e.a., 2010).
The new diagnostic criteria for fibromyalgia
A patient may be diagnosed with fibromyalgia if the following 3 conditions are met:

1) Pain and other symptoms have been present at more or less a similar level for at least three months.
2) There is no other disorder that could explain the pain.
3) Fibromyalgia score (the sum of the pain index and symptom score) is at least 12, pain index is at least 3 and symptom score is at least 5.

**Pain index**

It is checked in which of the 19 areas of the body a person may have experienced pain in the week prior to the examination (for each painful area a score of 1). Someone suffering pain in four areas will have a pain score of 4. The following 19 areas are included in the score: chest, abdomen, upper back, lower back, neck and both left and right shoulder girdle, upper arm, lower arm, hip-buttock area, upper leg, lower leg and jaw. The lowest possible pain score is 0 and the highest 19.

**Symptom score**

For each of the three symptoms below, the level of symptom severity during the past week will be indicated:

- fatigue
- waking up tired (unrepressed)
- trouble thinking or concentrating

Each symptom gets a score as follows:

- 0 = no problem
- 1 = slight or mild problems, generally mild or intermittent
2 = moderate or considerate problems; often present and/or at a moderate level
3 = severe: pervasive, continuous, life-disturbing problems.

The extent of additional symptoms will also be checked. 42, mainly physical symptoms are considered, such as irritable bowel syndrome, bladder problems, headache or dry eyes.

0 = no symptoms
1 = few symptoms
2 = a moderate number of symptoms
3 = a great deal of symptoms

The symptoms score is the sum of the severity of the three symptoms (fatigue, waking up unrefreshed and trouble thinking and concentrating) plus a number of additional symptoms. Someone suffering from, for instance, severe tiredness (score 3), moderate to considerate problems with waking up unrefreshed (score 2), and has no problem thinking and concentrating (score 0) and from a lot of additional symptoms (score 3), has a symptom score of 8.

**Fibromyalgia score**

The fibromyalgia score is the sum of the pain score and the symptoms score. The fibromyalgia score varies from 0 (no symptoms of fibromyalgia) to 31 (severe fibromyalgia).


(Geenen e.a., 2010)

**Causes of fibromyalgia**

**New research confirms that the source of pain in fibromyalgia “is not all in your head”**

Fibromyalgia is a seriously debilitating affection characterized by widespread deep pain in muscles and connective tissue, tenderness in hands and feet, fatigue, sleep disorders and cognitive decline.

Making a diagnosis is difficult and subjective since nothing major will be detected in clinical tests. It often comes down to ruling out everything else. There are indications that the source of pain and fatigue is caused by hypersensitivity in nerve cells of the central nervous system (referred to as central sensitization), however why this is occurring has not been determined. On the other hand, a specific pathology indicating the possible cause of the problem has not been found, and thus the concept of fibromyalgia still remains in doubt.

Even today, many a doctor still believe fibromyalgia to be a psychosomatic disorder only existing in the heads of their patients.

A breakthrough research however shows that the problem is related to excessive nerve fibres in blood vessels.

American neuroscientists at the Integrated Tissue Dynamics LLC (Intidyn) and Albany Medical College (AMC) have made a major breakthrough towards a more certain diagnosis
of fibromyalgia. A significant insight into the cause and symptoms of the disorder has allowed the development of new strategies in prevention and treatment of the disease.

The research team consisted of the neurologists Charles Argoff, Md, and James Wymer, MD PhD of AMC and James Storey, MD, of Upstate Clinical Research Associates, who performed the clinical assessments and of the neuroscientists Phillip Albrecht, PhD, Quanzhi Hou, MD PhD, and Frank Rice, PhD, of AMC and Intidyn, who performed the analysis of the nerve endings in the skin. The analysis was conducted through a unique expertise and microscopic technology to examine small skin biopsies of the palm of the hand of fibromyalgia patients diagnosed and treated by Drs. Argoff, Wymer en Storey.

The skin biopsies had the size of half a pencil eraser. The study was limited to women because compared to men, twice as much women suffer from fibromyalgia.

The team discovered an excessive amount of sensory nerve fibres in specific areas in the blood vessels in the skin of the palms of the hand. These specific areas are little tiny muscular valves, called Arterioles-Venules (AV) shunts, which form the direct connection between arterioles and venules.

This discovered pathology concerning the nerve endings to the AV shunts gives a logical explanation not only for extreme tenderness in the hands, but also for the deep widespread pain all over the body and the fatigue symptoms in fibromyalgia. In addition, it explains why cold weather conditions aggravate the symptoms of fibromyalgia.

**AV shunts are like thermostats in the skin**

In order to understand what scientists believe to be the problem in fibromyalgia patients, let’s have a look at a problem we have all experienced at one time or another with our car. You get up on a cold and damp morning. You start your car, but the engine sputters and runs a bit rough. The engine warms up and runs more smoothly. When you drive faster, you start smelling coolant fluid and you notice that the temperature warning light is on. What is wrong with my car? You call a mechanic and he tells you that you need a new thermostat. Thermostat? What is that?

The thermostat is a valve regulating the coolant fluid between engine and motor so that everything will function smoothly. When the engine is cold, the thermostat sees to it that the coolant remains in the engine until it warms up. Then the thermostat allows the coolant to flow to the radiator so that the engine will not overheat. So the thermostat makes sure that the coolant between engine and radiator has the correct temperature while driving downhill when the engine doesn’t have to work hard or uphill when the engine has to work very hard.

Another effect influencing the operation of the thermostat is whether it is cold or warm outside. In other words, the engine is not the only source of heat and the radiator is not the only source of cold. On a hot day, more coolant has to flow to the radiator to compensate the high air temperature and the radiator will be turned on to cool the hot air. On a cold day, more heat will have to be led into the engine. Simple, isn’t it?

AV shunts help to maintain our body temperature and metabolism in balance.

Our body’s cardiovascular system works in the same way in order to regulate our body temperature. For us it is important to maintain our constant body temperature (37 °C) for a proper functioning of our delicate organs. A sustained decreased temperature (hypothermia)
or increased temperature (hyperthermia and fever) of just a few degrees is enough to permanently damage our brain, kidneys and liver. So how can we maintain our internal body temperature?

To begin with, our blood is the coolant and our heart is the pump. But where is the engine? The engine is mostly our muscles. Our organs, such as kidneys, liver and brain mostly don’t need a lot of heat, but our muscles do through physical exertion.

But, we are more complicated than a car. Our blood not only assumes the role of coolant, it is also a source of nutrition. So, when we get up and become active, we need a boost in our blood flow to provide nutrition to our muscles, but when heat in our muscles builds up, our blood flow is shifted to our hands and feet to get rid of the excess of heat. So it comes down to finding the correct balance so we can provide sufficient nutrition without building up the heat in our body. This means that the blood flow constantly shifts between muscles and skin to achieve the right balance. Our delicate organs are caught right in the middle.

The skin can heat up by redirecting the blood flow from the muscles to get rid of heat, or the skin can cool down by redirecting the blood flow to the muscles to keep heat.

So there are parallels between our cooling system and that of a car. We have described the cooling (blood), the pump (heart), the engine (muscles) and the radiator (lungs, skin, and in particular the hands and feet), but what and where are the thermostats? The thermostats are the AV shunts which are particularly numerous in the palms of our hands and in the soles of our feet.

What are AV shunts? As we know, oxygenated blood flows through our arteries which divide up into smaller arteries, arterioles and from there the blood flows into large quantities of tiny capillaries in order to provide nutrition to tissues and remove waste, and as mentioned before to regulate temperature. From the capillaries the blood flows back into small veins (venules), which connect to larger veins. The AV shunts are small valves, which form a direct connection between an arteriole and a venule. They have a thick muscle wall that can constrict (closing of the valve) or dilate (opening of the valve).

When the valves are closed, blood flow is forced into capillaries in order to dissipate heat. When the valves are open, blood flow is redirected from the capillaries in order to conserve heat.
AV shunts have excessive sensory fibres in fibromyalgia patients

What is of importance in this discovered pathology?

It is about nerve supply to the shunts, which make sure that they are open or closed. One kind of nerve supply is called sympathetic nerve, and when this one is active it causes the shunt to constrict and close. The other nerve supply is called sensory nerve, a nerve with a double function. These fibres will not only detect activity in blood vessels, but they also see to it that the shunts dilate and open.

The AMC and Intidyn scientists have discovered that AV shunts in the hands of fibromyalgia patients contain an extremely high quantity of sensory fibres. This excessive quantity provides a logical explanation for the extreme tenderness in the hands of most fibromyalgia patients. And of a greater importance, the excessive quantity of sensory nerves on the AV shunt might interfere in the regulation of the blood flow through the body, including deep tissue and muscles. This interference might result into a shortage of nutrition in the muscles during physical exercising and lead to the accumulation of lactic acid, which spreads all over the body causing pain and fatigue. Another important issue is that some molecular characteristics of the sympathetic and sensory fibres indicate that they communicate and regulate each other. Activity of the sympathetic nerve cell may reduce the activity of the sensory nerve cell and vice versa. These characteristics explain why some drugs such as Cymbals and Savella could bring some relief to fibromyalgia patients.
Discoveries From Fibromyalgia May Have Far Reaching Implications

- Research findings indicate that sensory nerve endings on arterioles and arteriole-venule shunts (AVS) play an important role in regulating dilatation.
- The shunts play a critical role in apportioning blood flow between the skin and muscle for thermal regulation (like the thermostat in a car cooling system) and management of metabolism.
- The pathologies of the AVS in fibromyalgia may result in muscle ischemia and the symptoms of widespread deep pain and fatigue.

Figure 14: functioning of AV shunts in fibromyalgia patients + difference between the AV shunts in people with and people without fibromyalgia

(Albrecht e.a., 2013), (Rice e.a., 2013)
Bowen technique and fibromyalgia

What do I want to achieve with Bowen when it comes to fibromyalgia?

I could consider myself as being my very first case. It is not that I have been my own therapist, but the Bowen technique managed to achieve something within me that has led to the fact that I have shifted my professional life into a different direction.

In 2010, I started a training course in “Bowen Technique” in the Netherlands. At that point of time, I finally saw a way of starting this training in view of helping fibromyalgia patients. This was very important to me, since I have suffered a lot of pain all over my body. The Bowen technique has been the only therapy that allowed me to restore a life as normal as possible. As I have already said before, fibromyalgia will always stay within my body, but it will no longer be in control of my body. From time to time, it will emerge again, but its impact is under control.

I learned about the Bowen technique through Peter Sinclair, who lives in Portugal. Since the results he achieved in me after only 1 week were really spectacular, I saw an opportunity and was convinced of the possibility that at some point of time I would be able to walk in a normal way again. The period back then was a very emotional one with a lot of ups and downs, but I saw it through. After September 2006, I flew over to Portugal twice, in November 2006 and in March 2007. Each time, I booked one week of therapy with Peter. Afterwards, I continued to work on myself. I received 6 treatments in total during those 3 weeks. It was a large financial burden, but it was worth it to me! I longed for a bearable life without too much aches and I wanted to be a good mother again to my children. In short, I only longed for a normal life just like everyone else.

Peter took out a whole week for me, during which I received Bowen therapy, including psychological interviews, meditation, walks and muscle building. I also followed a detoxification cure on the basis of tea with maple syrup and black pepper for blood circulation. No solid food, no coffee, nothing else but 7 days of tea. It was terribly difficult. But as said before, I wanted to get better so much that I would do anything to succeed. Peter supported me all the way through and he believed in me. I would have had a much harder time if it wasn’t for his perseverance and his will to help me.

I haven’t been back since November 2007. I contemplated my life and me, took some decisions that were tough to take, but they have drastically changed my life for the better.

I turned my condition into my profession and now it is my turn to make others happy. It really feels good to see my clients enter with a smile on their face and say: “I have so much more energy now and less pain than before, I really do feel better”, and that only after about 4 treatments. That is the reason why I am doing this, it makes me tremendously happy to actually be able to help other people.

I try to stick to Peter’s ways. I like to take my time for my clients and give them the opportunity to tell their story to me. Those two things were very important to me and I’m convinced that it accelerates the success of the Bowen technique. The fact that people can talk to a fellow-sufferer, who actually knows that the Bowen technique can make a difference in their lives, results into a lot of positive stories. Yet, I do have to make sure to respect my limits. If I fail to do so, I will have to bear the consequences and feel the pains!
Working in such an intensive way with my clients does consume a lot of energy, and also in this matter, I still have to learn a few things. Saying “no” is still hard to do for me, since I really do like to help people. This fibromyalgia feature is hard to get rid of for me, so “yes” it is a “life’s work” to find the correct balance in life.

Now, 7 years later, I have become a therapist, I treat people suffering with fibromyalgia and other pathologies. If I reflect on all of this, I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to discover this technique.

General way of approach

I obtained my certificate as Bowen practitioner on May 13, 2011. It felt good, but the real work has only just started now. It was my aim to become a therapist and my thesis would be about the Bowen technique and fibromyalgia. At first, I felt insecure, afraid of not seeing any results, but my fear proved to be totally unnecessary. People suffering pain in back and neck only needed 3 treatments for the pain to go away. Many people who came just suffered from a lack of energy and also this proved to get better soon, i.e. after only 2 treatments. In February 2012, I started treating my 1st fibromyalgia client. I was aware that it would be hard in the beginning since I had no experience at all. Over the next years, I grew stronger and more confident thanks to therapist studies and other advanced courses. Finally, I learned to believe in myself and to go for it.

Between February 2012 and June 2014, I have treated 17 clients with fibromyalgia, among which 16 women and 1 man. I am still treating 8 of them: 4 clients just had to give up, not because they didn't feel better, but they either didn't believe in this therapy or had financial problems. I have treated 5 clients during a period of between 8 and 12 months and they thought it was no longer necessary to get treatment since they felt so much better.

There are a number of generalities:

1. 16/17 went through a trauma, of which 12/17 during their childhood or teenhood when they were still living with their parents. These traumas were still deep down, causing the release of emotions during their first Bowen treatment. In 4 other clients, I discovered that they had suffered trauma during their married life. From 1 client, I have no idea whether there was a trauma or not, since the person in question never talked about it.
2. These are all people who had to prove themselves in life. They walked on the tips of their toes, they kept on going without paying attention to the signals of their body. “No” is not in their vocabulary. They all suffer from “low self-esteem”.
3. They all push their limits, and find it hard to determine them.
4. Fatigue and a total lack of energy are key factors. Pain is, of course, situated throughout the whole body, but is the worst in the upper legs and arms, shoulders and neck.

What was my approach? I advised my clients to take 3 to 5 Bowen therapy sessions in order to give the therapy the opportunity to bring about changes in their body. Since most clients complained about lack of energy, always being tired, sick of bearing constant pain, etc. I always started with the general basic treatment and kidney procedure. This in order to give more energy and improve blood- and lymphatic circulation and in this way ensure a quicker elimination of toxins from our body. In my opinion, the body needs energy in order to be able to heal.
After the 1st and 2nd treatment, I told my clients to drink a lot of water and to go out and take short walks. All of them felt tired after the treatment, so it was important to get some fresh air. If they managed to build up more energy during the week, it would be important not to lose it again, the body needs that energy to heal. If they remained with little energy, they would need to give their body some rest, but not by lying down for hours. I advised them to go outside and break out of the vicious circle of “having the need to lie down on the couch”. They followed my advice well. Everyone responded to the Bowen treatment, some experienced improvement in pain whereas others experienced more pain than before. But all of them ended up with more energy. I noticed moreover that I needed to treat my fibromyalgia clients slower than my clients with other physical problems.

After the 3rd and 4th treatment, energy became more and more prominent. My clients’ expression changed and pain gradually reduced. Moreover, my clients started to change mentally too, more emotions and stress were revealed and above all there was a predominant feeling of anger too. This anger is normal, since they started realising that their past and the traumas undealt with are a possible cause of the pain in their body. As soon as I sensed the anger in my clients I made them read 2 books so they could start a self-psychological assessment to try and find out where the anger comes from. Clients that become angry are the ones that have experienced a youth trauma or were kept under the thumb of their parents and/or educator(s), who ruled with a rod of iron. They feel unloved, unwanted, terrorised and unrespected. Many of them had been very frightened of their parents and/or educator(s). The first book I have them read is entitled “I need your love – Is that true?” by Katie Byron. The other book is a Dutch one called: “OntMoet jezelf” by Huub Verlinden, Jes Janssen-Vansprakelaar. These books allow them to start working on their confused “Me”.

After a 5th and 6th session, I noticed that energy continued following an upward trend, pains reduced and social life improved. My clients were more cheerful, they took less painkillers, cycling and hiking went a lot easier with a swifter recovery afterwards. Another remarkable thing was that they slept better, which is kind of logical since they had more exercise and engaged in more activities during day-time. Some felt so well that they went beyond their limits, which resulted into more pain, causing a relapse and more aches. Luckily, 1 Bowen session was enough to get it all back under control. It is be very important to point out to my clients that they themselves have a great responsibility in their own healing process. I can help them reset their body, but they will need to learn to live within their limits and boundaries and to listen to their body in order to avoid going into overdrive. Generally, my clients tell me that if they do overstep their boundaries, recovery periods now will be shorter than they used to be before. The Bowen therapy will reduce pain and start the healing process. Yet, healing will be hard or even impossible without the co-operation of the client, who has to adapt his life style and maintain a positive attitude.

As of the 7th session, 3 weeks pass between the different treatments and after that we continue increasing the intervals to a treatment every 4 weeks. Some clients need one treatment per month, others only need a treatment every 5 or 6 weeks.

In annex, I will discuss 7 cases. Each client has filled out an evaluation form, which I also attached in annex. The progress of the most important symptoms is represented graphically. I mainly dealt with fatigue, muscle pains, energy and mental condition.
General conclusion

Generally, I can say that the Bowen technique has a profound impact on fibromyalgia clients. Applying the Bowen technique resulted into the following effects:

- Much more energy
- Less fatigue
- Significantly reduced pain
- Life has become liveable again
- From depression to a positive view
- Stop taking antidepressants and possibly pain medication, in consultation with the physician
- Improved concentration
- Ability to take longer walks, bike rides
- ¾ reduction of recovery period
- Social life has become important again
- Etc.

For fibromyalgia clients, the Bowen technique gives a new opportunity to take life into their own hands again. But the technique will only succeed with the full co-operation of the client. Life becomes bearable again and the client gets insight into his own limits and boundaries. He starts to realize that one should listen to one’s body and going beyond the boundaries will result into muscle acidification and muscle cramps. This overload can be annoying, but the client notices that recovery period is shorter.

The last question on the evaluation form for my clients was: “How would you describe the meaning of the Bowen technique for you as briefly as possible?” These are the answers:

- I can finally be happy and I do have control over my body and mind.
- Fatigue and pain more under control. My home situation has improved a lot since I dare to stand up for myself. I can do things again that I couldn’t do before my treatments because I was too tired.
- Pain is more bearable and even less than before. I have more energy for my grandchildren.
- A significant change in my life, both physically and psychologically, and I have a new friend who only means well by me, stimulates positivity and self-esteem, that is invaluable!
- “Peace in my head”
- Learn how to live differently with what your body offers you. Learn how to think differently, thanks to my books. Learn how to communicate again. Learn to be more assertive.
- I have become a totally different person.
- I enjoy life more, dancing and having fun is part of my life again.
Sources of the texts


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Useful addresses and data

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Annex

Case 1
Miss L.W. lives in Hasselt, Limburg, Belgium. Born in 1960. Has 3 children and is Floor Manager Horeca.

First treatment with intake (09/02/2012)
Medication: natural drops, Mucoperm to restore the intestinal mucosa for leaky gut

Anamnesis:
Diagnosis: Fibromyalgia, CFS, burn-out since September 2010. No significant surgery. Start of menopause.

Symptoms:
- Waking up in the morning feeling exhausted.
- Severe pain in shoulders, radiating to arms and elbows.
- Pale face -> iron deficiency.
- Bloating stomach -> pain near Bauhin’s valve.
- Nagging and sometimes sharp pain.
- Something that looks like bruises -> cannot be touched.
- Pelvis: nagging pain all day long, numbness.
- Very, very tired.
- Constant pain.
- Mental condition: ups and downs. From a very good mood to a very bad one.
- Sleep: very good at the moment, but not in the previous years -> a lot of worries. Laying awake for nights. Doesn’t use sedatives.
- Difficult relationship with parents, who divorced 30 years ago. Oldest of 2 children. Didn’t have any contact with her father for 10 years in order to spare her mother’s feelings.
- Problems with mother, often afraid, reproaches, grief, following slavishly -> problems with lungs, hyperventilation.
- Relationship with sister OK.
- Walks on the tips of her toes.
- Maniacal cleaning.
- To many obligations.
- Constantly effaces herself.
- Hard to say “no”.
- Always tries to do the good thing.

Treatment: basic Bowen treatment and kidney procedure

2nd treatment (16/02/2012)
Reaction to previous treatment:
- Menstruated again, very strong bleeding.
- A lot of sweating.
- Pain near the lower back and general muscle ache.
- No change in fatigue.
- Diarrhoea for 2 days, than normal defecation.
- Neck pain, completely stuck.
- Tantrum, rage -> anger towards sister and mother.
- Migraine attack (2 days).
- Pain in left pelvis, left knee -> walking with a limp as a consequence.

**Treatment:** basic treatment, kidney procedure, midriff, pelvis, TMJ

**3rd treatment (28/02/2012)**

**Reaction to previous treatment:**

- After treatment, unable to lift up both arms in the air.
- Very tired.
- Muscle ache: slight improvement.
- Pelvis and knee: slight improvement.
- Sweating reduced.
- Normal defecation.
- Feels somewhat fitter when waking up in the morning.
- Better control over ups en downs.
- Feels calmer.

**Treatment:** basic treatment, kidney procedure, midriff, knee, TMJ

**4th treatment (09/03/2012)**

**Reaction to previous treatment:**

- Menstruated again (4 days).
- Pain in left knee.
- Diarrhoea and abdominal pain, often had to go to toilet.
- Pain in legs, slight blockage -> better after 4 days.
- Pain in the arms.
- General muscle ache somewhat reduced.

I realized that I had applied to many procedures during the previous treatments so that her body had a hard time to feel where it should start healing itself first. I also had the feeling that her body didn’t get time enough to heal from the previous treatment due to the fact that I treated her once every week. I decided to wait 2 weeks for the next treatment and to apply less procedures.

**Treatment:** basic treatment, kidney procedure, midriff

**5th Treatment (20/03/2012)**

**Reaction to previous treatment:** miss L. was happy and radiant, it was obvious that a lot of her aches had gone away.

- Has felt physically rather well.
- No pain in arms, knees.
- Reduced fatigue, energy from 0 -> 5.
- Defecation: quit normal and regular.
- Still hyperventilation.
- Still pain in the legs, but no longer any problem with walking.
- Still pain particularly in the shoulder blades, trapezius and shoulders.
I felt relieved. She was my 1st fibromyalgia case, with 4 treatments and a very positive result. After the experience from myself, she was the 1st person I could help.

Treatment: general basic treatment, kidney procedure, midriff, hamstrings, shoulders

6* treatment (30/03/2012)

Reaction to previous treatment:
- Feels very fine! Both physically and emotionally: her eyes shine again, colour on her face, feels calm, less tired, more energy, mentally stronger.
- General pain reduced, with now and than a burning pain.
- Recovery after a hard day only 1 day instead of 4 days.
- But a little more back ache.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure, pelvis, TMJ, sacrum

7* treatment (12/04/2012)

Reaction to previous treatment:
- Went beyond her limits -> worked too hard.
- Joints and muscles are hurting.
- Back ache right-hand side.
- Slept badly.
- Still sufficient energy.
- Fatigue is still under control.
- Mild headache for 2 to 3 days, especially above the sinuses.
Miss L. felt so well that she went beyond her limits, she still has to learn to respect her limits and to realize that her body is still in a process of healing. I have discussed this thoroughly with her.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure, pelvis, sacrum, TMJ

Final conclusion

Miss L. is still receiving treatment. She feels good with these regular treatments. From April 24, 2012 up to the end of 2012, I treated her every 3 weeks. Since then, she has received treatment once a month up to now.

What have we achieved together?
- Respect your own body.
- Learn and recognize your limits.
- General pain went from 8/10 to 3/10.
- Fatigue went from 10/10 to 4/10.
- Energy level went from 0/10 to 7/10.
- Mental condition went from 0/10 to 8/10, she has a positive view of life again.
Fig. 15: Chart “Course of the symptoms”

The chart (figure 15) shows us a decline in the intensity of fatigue (from 10 to 4) and muscle ache (from 10 to 3) and an increase in the intensity of energy (from 0 to 8) and mental condition (from 4 to 8).

Her evaluation form

1. How did you learn about the existence of the Bowen technique?
   
   Via a leaflet.

2. Were you able to tell your story during your first appointment, and if so, how did you experience it?

   Yes, I could tell my story and it felt good because there was someone listening who knew what I was talking about.

3. Did you get a good explanation on the Bowen technique and on what to expect after the first 3 treatments?

   Yes, I knew what to expect.

4. How many sessions did it take for you to experience less pain, and how much less was the pain?

   I think after the third session.

5. Did the Bowen technique change you as a person?

   - Physically? If yes, to what extent?

     I’m able to do my job again although doctors said that it would be impossible.

   - Mentally? If yes, to what extent did it change your behaviour? Towards yourself? Towards others?

     I’m cheerful again and I have less of a temper now.

   - Energy level? If yes, how do you feel about that?

     I can function normally again, but I do need to listen to my body. I experience this as a very positive thing.
6. Have you been able to better come to terms with the fact that you are suffering from fibromyalgia and has this lead to you paying more attention to your body and its possible limitations?
   Yes, I know my limits and if I go beyond them, I surely will feel it.

7. Fibromyalgia cannot be totally cured, but its symptoms can be largely reduced. Has life for you, with fibromyalgia, become liveable again and does that reflect in your social life? Do doors go open again?
   In my case, everything is possible again, as long as I bear my limitations in mind.

8. Has your therapist’s advices been useful to you? e.g. drinking water, hiking, reading specific books that give an insight in yourself, etc..
   I drink water sufficiently, I read books and seek aid.

9. Was it important to you that your therapist is suffering from fibromyalgia too? If so, why?
   It wasn’t important, but fact is that Hilde understood what I was talking about. She knows the points of pain.

10. Would you advise Bowen therapy to other people? For fibromyalgia, but also for other problems with the body?
    Yes, I will refer as many people as possible, and not only for fibromyalgia, but also for other problems.

11. Do you feel that treatments on a regular basis are necessary?
    I sure do, I can sense very well when the time has come to go for another session.

12. How would you describe the meaning of the Bowen technique for you as briefly as possible?
    I have become a totally different person.

Case 2

First treatment with intake (19/02/2012)

Medication: none

Diagnosis: CFS, fibromyalgia

Anamnesis: miss M.N. has suffered from tiredness as of the age of 17, fell asleep without any reason and suffered from severe depressions. After questioning further: abused by father between the age of 10 to 20 -> trauma. Had a 3-year psychiatric guidance, took antidepressants, followed body therapy, but there were no results.

Symptoms:
- Tremendous fatigue.
- General muscle aches, especially back, neck, shoulders are hurting, constant pain.
- Lingering pain, feels like a heavy block on neck/back/shoulders.
- Mentally: deep depressions.
- Tinglings in hands.
- Cold feet.
- Headache every 3 weeks and the headache lasts for 4 days.
- Waking up in the morning feeling exhausted.
- Drag herself through the day.
- Situations of conflict -> pain worsens.
- Energy seeps away.

Treatments, course and conclusion

Started with weekly treatments, during the first 3 sessions I applied basic treatment and kidney-procedure. The next 2 sessions, I added midriff.

Conclusion after these treatments: general feeling of pain has slightly improved from 7/10 to 5/10. Fatigue has improved slightly after the third treatment, from 10/10 to 9/10. Energy pain: from 0 to 3. She has followed my advice, drank more water and didn't give in so quickly to fatigue by going to lie down. Instead of a 3 hours’ nap in the afternoon, she rested for only half an hour. Mentally (9/10) she still has a hard time, because the Bowen technique brought a lot of emotions to the surface.

After 5 sessions, we decided to give a treatment every 2 weeks, so that her body had more time to recover better. Results improved, after her 7th treatment there actually was too much energy with the consequence that she bit off more than she can chew, she didn’t respect her limits and had a little relapse.

At the moment, she is still following treatment, be it once every 2 months. She feels happier, mentally stronger, less tired, depressions still occur but to a lesser extent and she has more energy.

![Course of the symptoms](image)

*Fig. 16: Chart “Course of the symptoms”*

The chart (figure 16) shows a decline in the intensity of fatigue (from 10 to 5) and (muscle) pain (from 8 to 3). On the other hand, intensity of energy (from 0 to 6) and mental conditions (from 0 to 6) improves as treatments progress.
Her evaluation form

1. How did you learn about the existence of the Bowen technique?
   Via therapist.

2. Were you able to tell your story during your first appointment, and if so, how did you experience it?
   Yes, a very positive experience, and also a relief that I was allowed to tell my story.

3. Did you get a good explanation on the Bowen technique and on what to expect after the first 3 treatments?
   Yes.

4. How many sessions did it take for you to experience less pain, and how much less was the pain?
   After 3 or 4 treatments.

5. Did the Bowen technique change you as a person?
   - Physically? If yes, to what extent?
     Yes, I become tired less quickly.
   - Mentally? If yes, to what extent did it change your behaviour? Towards yourself? Towards others?
     Yes, I'm more confident. I dare to speak up and tell my opinion to others.
   - Energy level? If yes, how do you feel about that?
     Yes, before I needed to stop sooner because I felt tired more quickly.

6. Have you been able to better come to terms with the fact that you are suffering from fibromyalgia and has this lead to you paying more attention to your body and its possible limitations?
   Yes, I take a pause more regularly and I've learned to say “no” when it doesn't suit me.

7. Fibromyalgia cannot be totally cured, but its symptoms can be largely reduced. Has life for you, with fibromyalgia, become liveable again and does that reflect in your social life? Do doors open again?
   Fatigue and pain are still part of my life sometimes, but now I know how to anticipate them and that works fine, also towards others.

8. Has your therapist's advice been useful to you? e.g. drinking water, hiking, reading specific books that give an insight in yourself, etc..
   Yes, I really do try to follow them.

9. Was it important to you that your therapist is suffering from fibromyalgia too? If so, why?
   Yes, she understands you better than others do.

10. Would you advise Bowen therapy to other people? For fibromyalgia, but also for other problems with the body?
    I surely would, and I do so regularly.

11. Do you feel that treatments on a regular basis are necessary?
    Yes. I go every 2 months now and it does wonders to me.

12. How would you describe the meaning of the Bowen technique for you as briefly as possible?
    Fatigue and pain better more control. My home situation has improved a lot too since I dare to stand up for myself. I can do things again that I couldn't do before my treatments because I was too tired.
Case 3

First treatment with intake (25/03/2013)
Medication: Lambipol (antiepileptic), Wellbutrin (antidepressant), medication against arrhythmia, Nexiam (stomach), vitamins, Flunitrazepam (sleep), Movicol (spastic colon).

Anamnesis:
- 1993: hysterectomy and oophorectomy.
- 2006: psychiatry: 2 or 3 times in psychiatric hospital -> manic depressive.
- 2010: fibromyalgia and CFS.
- Digestion problems, lazy stomach.
- Stopped working in 2006 -> invalidity.
- 2012 ->infiltrations in back.
- Is very very tired.
- General pain all over her body. Nagging pain that comes and goes.
- Despite 3 sleeping pills, unable to sleep. Pain wakes her up.
- Never fit.
- Little social contact -> because she is always exhausted physically.
- Concentration problems, memory defects.
- Hypersensitive to noise.
- Trauma: her mother had a cerebral infarct 15 years ago, suffers from aphasia. She was severely impacted by this, it bothers her a lot.
- Stomach problems.
- Mentally weak.

Treatment: general basic treatment and kidney procedure

2ª treatment (02/04/2013)
Reaction to previous treatment:
Felt very very tired and everything felt heavy. That same night, pain in arms and shoulders. The following day, pain in the upperbody and after that in her legs too. Drank a lot of water. Pain finally subsided, but tiredness stayed. Clear progress. Became ill: viral infection of the lungs, still takes antibiotics. Experiences a mental change, as if she can let go. 3 days after the treatment, she feels relieved and for the first time she actually enjoyed a dinner.

Treatment: general basic treatment, kidney-procedure and midriff

3ª treatment (04/09/2013)
Reaction to previous treatment: after treatment: started coughing and after that she felt better until the evening. Headache -> felt flu-like and everything felt heavy. Went to bed early. 2 days later, a tremendous amount of energy, as if she could tackle the whole world. The next
day: very tired, no pain but a feeling/sense of heaviness. Mentally: ups and downs. Sleeps better, doesn’t wake up from pain anymore.

Treatment: general basic treatment, kidney procedure, midriff, arms

4th treatment (03/06/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment: tired after treatment but recovers quicker. Is able to make a little trip. Noise has become less annoying, no pain, more energy.

Treatment: general basic treatment, kidney procedure, midriff, TMJ

5th treatment (10/06/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment: all went very well. The day after, she cycled 20 km. The day after that, she cycled 35km. Those two together was too much, overstepped her limits and didn’t manage to fully recover.

- Slept a lot.
- Went to BBQ and stayed out for a long time.
- No pain.
- Finally socially involved again.
- Proud on herself.
- Much energy.
- Changing mentally.
- Concentration improves bit by bit.

Final conclusion

Up to now, miss L.B. is still receiving treatment. For 1 year, she has come every week, despite my remark that once every 3 to 4 weeks would be sufficient. Now, since 2 months, she comes once every three weeks.

- She feels mentally strong.
- Fatigue under control.
- Lots of energy.
- Sleeps well.
- No more pain, occasionally she feels some pain but that subsides quickly.
- No more antidepressants. Can concentrate much better.
- No more pain killers.
- Still on medication for stomach.
- Sleeps well.
- Hypersensitivity to noise is gone.

Miss L.B. has reacted positively as of her 1st treatment.
Fig. 17: Chart “Course of the symptoms”

This chart (figure 17) shows a decline in the intensity of fatigue (from 10 to 4) and of (muscle) ache (from 10 to 2). Her mental condition (from 0 to 8) and intensity of energy (from 0 to 8) show an upward trend in this chart.

Her evaluation form

1. How did you learn about the existence of the Bowen technique?
   A good friend told me.

2. Were you able to tell your story during your first appointment, and if so, how did you experience it?
   I have been able to tell my story for the first time in 2013, to Hilde, who practiced Bowen therapy, and I immediately had the feeling that she understood me, she understood about the severe pains I was suffering, about my tiredness as well as psychologically. I didn’t think I would ever find something like this.

3. Did you get a good explanation on the Bowen technique and on what to expect after the first 3 treatments?
   Everything was explained very clearly to me, and the first 3 sessions were hard and painful. But my friend had already warned me that I should hang in there, and I did.

4. How many sessions did it take for you to experience less pain, and how much less was the pain?
   Well, it went very slowly for me, but I did feel changes in my body every time. Every week I went, I left more cheerful, with less pain and less tired. I knew this was it and I had to persist, this is for real.

5. Did the Bowen technique change you as a person?
   Absolutely, I feel human again. Someone who manages to go through the day with much less pain.

- Physically? If yes, to what extent?
When I came here, I almost couldn’t do anything anymore, now I can go and do fitness twice a week. Mainly I do cardio training but “dosed”.

- Mentally? If yes, to what extent did it change your behaviour? Towards yourself? Towards others?
  When I came for my 1st therapy, I was allowed to do my story on a psychological level. I felt understood. I no longer go and sit in a corner, but I go out and accompany my husband for dinner again, I go to the sauna with my friends, I stand up for myself. I have become a different person, very different from what I used to be, not the same anymore, more aware and self-assured.

- Energy level? If yes, how do you feel about that?
  I dose the energy I get. A day before a trip, I try to be energy-saving for myself so I can enjoy the day itself and I can let myself go. The day after, I will be tired, but I think differently about it now, like, OK, I’m tired, but I did have a wonderful day yesterday.

6. Have you been able to better come to terms with the fact that you are suffering from fibromyalgia and has this lead to you paying more attention to your body and its possible limitations?
  Yes, it is hard to live with fibromyalgia, but Bowen has made me more aware of “how” to deal with my body. Going on a nice bike ride and yet coming home tired and with pain, but I know after a day of rest, it will be better already.

7. Fibromyalgia cannot be totally cured, but its symptoms can be largely reduced. Has life for you, with fibromyalgia, become liveable again and does that reflect in your social life? Do doors open again?
  Doors have opened, it is bearable, who could have thought that. Friends come to visit me more regularly or they call me, and then I thing, see they are still alive. People who have always supported me are the once I now call friends, others are just acquaintances. Now I enjoy doing a lot of things for my friends, though it sometimes still takes a lot of effort.

8. Has your therapist’s advice been useful to you? e.g. drinking water, hiking, reading specific books that give an insight in yourself, etc..
  Well now, drinking water was a disaster, but I managed to hang on and I do drink more water now, also in the form of tea. I had to learn how to. Going outside and getting a breath of fresh air is literally wonderful. 2 of those books really touched me.

9. Was it important to you that your therapist is suffering from fibromyalgia too? If so, why?
  To me personally, it was important yes, since I finally could talk to someone who actually knew what I was talking about. I finally felt understood for the first time in my life and the fact that my therapist also understood me on a physical level, “yes” that is just wonderful.

10. Would you advise Bowen therapy to other people? For fibromyalgia, but also for other problems with the body?
  Absolutely. I am a patient with severe back trouble, 2 surgeries failed. Innumerous infiltrations, internal neurostimulator, but if I have back trouble and my therapist treats me, I will be able to go on, without pain.

11. Do you feel that treatments on a regular basis are necessary?
  Yes, for me they are. I have been treated once a week for almost a whole year, now I’m treated every 2 weeks and for the time being it will stay this way. It will be reduced in time, but for now I very much need the therapy and the support. I will always come on a regular basis.

12. How would you describe the meaning of the Bowen technique for you as briefly as possible?
Learn how to live differently, with what your body offers you. Learn how to think differently, thanks to those books. Learn how to communicate (again). Learn how to be assertive.

Case 4
Miss A.V., lives in Averbode, Vlaams-Brabant, Belgium. Born in 1958. For more than 66% disabled.

First treatment with intake (27/07/2013)
Medication: Nexiam 40mg (for stomach), Dafalgan 1g (against pain), Arcoxia (anti-inflammatory), Zaldiar 37.5 mg/325 mg, Zink

Anamnesis:
2000: diagnosis Fibromyalgia and CFS.
2009: stomach reduction.
2010: left knee surgery, prosthesis.
2012: right knee surgery, prosthesis.
2013: hysterectomy.

Miss A.V. was running a tavern when suddenly, in 1993, she experienced pain, a lot of pain accompanied with stiffness in the muscles and it went from bad to worse. In 1994, she sold her establishment, moved house and then everything became impossible. Her pains were so intense that she was bedridden for months. Nobody believed her, it seemed impossible that she would be immobilized. She read an article on fibromyalgia and continued seeing doctors until finally, in the year 2000 she got the diagnosis of fibromyalgia and CFS. Despite all the antibiotics, things didn’t improve, moreover she gained weight and became heavier and heavier up to a point where she could no longer walk. So much pain, Lyrica, Cymbalta, nothing seemed to work to relieve the pain. In 2009, she had a gastrectomy and lost 35-40 kg, she no longer tolerated Lyrica. The stomach reduction did make her feel better and brought back some positivity into her life. Next, she needed knee prostheses as well as orthopaedic shoes. I saw a woman who barely managed to hobble into my practice, step by step using a cane. Pain showed all over her face, yet she entered with a smile on her face.

Symptoms:
- Pain around pelvis, more on the right side with radiations to right knee and calf. It is a constant, hard to bear nagging pain.
- Both knees are hurting, especially the right knee. Left foot is worn out, also here a constant pain, splayfoot.
- Pain at middle back and sharp pain between shoulder blades, spreading to right elbow.
- Constant tingling in finger tips.
- Intestines OK, daily defecation.
- Very, very tired.

Treatment: Basic treatment, kidney procedure, pelvis, sacrum
2º Treatment (31/07/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment: the day after, tremendous pain, everywhere, right hip, foot, arms, she took an increased dose of medication. Zaldiar 37.5 mg/ 325 mg two times a day. Pain radiating to right leg became worse. I suggested using 2 crutches in order to lessen unbalance in pelvis while walking. It would prevent toddling and reduce burden on 1 side. She was tired, very tired and still didn’t have any energy.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure, pelvis, hamstring, sacrum

3º Treatment (07/08/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment: once again she felt bad for 2 days. Right arm did hurt less though. Tinglings in fingers remained. Fingers felt dead. Sometimes less pain and on those occasions she feels that she has energy. Fatigue is somewhat improved.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure, coccyx, hamstrings, sacrum

4º Treatment (19/08/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment:
- 2 days of feeling bad. Tremendous pains and tired.
- 1 full day on which totally free of pain. That was a strange sensation.
- Leg hurt less, pain radiation did cause some stings, but no longer constant pain.
- Fatigue declined, more energy.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure, pelvis, hamstring, sacrum

5º Treatment (28/08/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment: no longer sick feeling after treatment. Less trouble of fatigue, clear increase in energy. Pain is significantly better, 50% decrease -> miss A.V. walked without crutches and more stable. Tinglings in fingers remains annoying.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure, pelvis, hamstrings, sacrum

As of now, we will give treatment every 2 weeks.

6º Treatment (11/09/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment: good after treatment. Had lots of energy => overdid it, went beyond her limits.
- Went to a marriage, was even able to dance.
- Quicker recuperation after the party.
- Pain in shoulder, somewhat less in arms.
- Even tinglings in her fingers have clearly diminished.

Final conclusion

Miss A.V. is still receiving treatment today, be it only once a month. As of her 4th treatment, she started feeling progress and as of the 6th treatment, there has been a significant progress, which encouraged her to continue. She persisted and feels rather good now.
- Sufficient energy.
- Still some fatigue when she doesn’t respect her limits.
Still walks without crutches and her wheelchair often stays in the corner unused. Mentally she feels good. I am not sure if the situation can still improve for her, but to her life is liveable again.

The chart (figure 18) shows that intensity of fatigue (from 10 to 4) and muscle pain (from 10 to 5) decrease. Intensity of energy (from 0 to 6) and mental condition (from 6 to 8) shows an upward trend.

**Her evaluation form**

1. How did you learn about the existence of the Bowen technique?
   
   A colleague of my brother-in-law told me

2. Were you able to tell your story during your first appointment, and if so, how did you experience it?
   
   (didn’t give an answer)

3. Did you get a good explanation on the Bowen technique and on what to expect after the first 3 treatments?
   
   Yes

4. How many sessions did it take for you to experience less pain, and how much less was the pain?
   
   About 6 treatments I think

5. Did the Bowen technique change you as a person?
   
   No idea
   
   - Physically? If yes, to what extent?
     
     I use my cane less and pain is more bearable
   
   - Mentally? If yes, to what extent did it change your behaviour? Towards yourself?
     
     No idea, I’ve always been quiet positive
   
   - Energy level? If yes, how do you feel about that?
More energy

6. Have you been able to better come to terms with the fact that you are suffering from fibromyalgia and has this lead to you paying more attention to your body and its possible limitations?

You learn to live with it. You program pauses in between things.

7. Fibromyalgia cannot be totally cured, but its symptoms can be largely reduced. Has life for you, with fibromyalgia, become liveable again and does that reflect in your social life? Do doors open again?

Is indeed more liveable. I have sufficient social contacts, before too.

8. Has your therapist’s advices been useful to you? e.g. drinking water, hiking, reading specific books that give an insight in yourself, etc..

No idea. I cannot go hiking, I drink water

9. Was it important to you that your therapist is suffering from fibromyalgia too? If so, why?

She’ll surely understand our whining somewhat better.

10. Would you advise Bowen therapy to other people? For fibromyalgia, but also for other problems with the body?

I will for fibro, for other things, not sure

11. Do you feel that treatments on a regular basis are necessary?

I think they are

12. How would you describe the meaning of the Bowen technique for you as briefly as possible?

Pain is more bearable and even less than before too. I have more energy for my grandchildren.

Case 5

First treatment with intake (21/11/2013)

Medication: Omeprazole (inhibitor of gastric acidity), Nobiten (arrhythmia), Tetrazepam (muscle relaxer), vitamins: Supradyn 50+, Biorecord and Davitamon Femfit 50+.

Anamnesis:


Anesthetized a lot in 1999

2000: Depression

2004: Diagnosis fibromyalgia, but she, herself, is sure it already started back in 2000.

- Very emotional during her conversation with me. Her father died in 2004 and that still touches her very deeply. Relation towards her parents is good, now only her mother is still alive. Problems with her daughter, unruly behaviour, managed to put her husband up against her. Her daughter abused her. Relation ameliorated with age. Difficult relation with her husband, he is very authorative. He favoured his daughter to his son. Her relation with her son is good. Her life is sucking energy out of her, she is very sad.

- Very, very tired, both on mental and physical level.
She works 1 week 3 times per week, the other week 2 days per week. Likes her job, but it’s hard for her to concentrate.
- A lot of pain, gets worse in the evenings.
- Sleeps rather well, but sometimes is awake with pain.

I met an emotionally charged person, who is very sad and suffers a lot of pain. She is in an “I don’t know what to do anymore” state of mind.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure

2ª Treatment (28/11/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment:
- More energy during first few days.
- No longer constant pains, only jolts of pain at different spots.
- Mental condition still very hard, again very emotional.
- Headache, heavy right arm, burning pain in pelvis and legs.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure 2 times, pelvis, hamstrings

3ª Treatment (05/12/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment: treatment made her suffer a lot this week. Experienced a lot of pain, even down to her toes. Energy wasn’t well, dragged herself through the day. Very, very tired.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure twice

4ª Treatment (16/12/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment: better week. Thought things through a lot. Mentally, it was hard, accompanied by emotional pain. Physical pain was better, during day time felt only half of the pain, when evening came, pain got a bit worse (see chart). Better concentration. Still felt very tired, with little energy. She did experience some changes in the way she thought.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure 2 times, pelvis, arm

5ª Treatment (08/01/2014)

Reaction to previous treatment: had a lot of energy. Little pain. Emotionally, she managed to set things straight. Takes it easier. Changing mentality, kind of resignation. Had a lot of headache and hot flushes (menopause). Can concentrate much better and work goes smoothly again. Only starting pain when she gets up in the morning, but that passes quickly.

Especially pain in back.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure 2 times, pelvis, sacrum, TMJ

Final conclusion

She stopped treatment on April, 17th. The fibromyalgia treatment has helped her a lot and life is liveable again. She started having trouble with other physical complaints, had to see a lot of doctors, medical imagining, etc.

In general, we may state that:
- Was quiet OK.
- Fatigue under control.
- Mentally she felt much better, she can laugh again, feels stronger, …
- Concentration made a big difference, work went smoothly again.
- Doesn’t drag herself through life anymore and has a positive attitude.

![Course of the symptoms](chart.png)

*Fig. 19: Chart “Course of the symptoms”*

This is an irregular chart. In general, however, there is a downward trend in the intensity of fatigue (from 10 to 5) and in the intensity of muscle pain (from 8 to 3). There is a general increase in the intensity of energy (from 0 to 7). Both concentration (from 2 to 6) and mental condition (from 2 to 8) have increased.

**Her evaluation form**

1. How did you learn about the existence of the Bowen technique?
   - *A friend told me about it.*

2. Were you able to tell your story during your first appointment, and if so, how did you experience it?
   - *Surely. Took out a lot of time to listen to my story, also at the following appointments. Everything was released bit by bit, in one word: “liberating”.*

3. Did you get a good explanation on the Bowen technique and on what to expect after the first 3 treatments?
   - *Got a clear explanation of what would happen, especially during first treatments.*

4. How many sessions did it take for you to experience less pain, and how much less was the pain?
   - *The pain already eased from the beginning, but due to other physical issues it’s not really gone. Fatigue, on the other hand, has clearly improved after 5 sessions.*

5. Did the Bowen technique change you as a person?
   - *Yes*
   - Physically? If yes, to what extent?
To a lesser extent

- Mentally? If yes, to what extent did it change your behaviour? Towards yourself? Towards others?

My attitude has changed completely. I can let go now so stress and tension get a lesser hold on my body.

- Energy level? If yes, how do you feel about that?

Less fatigue = more energy!

6. Have you been able to better come to terms with the fact that you are suffering from fibromyalgia and has this lead to you paying more attention to your body and its possible limitations?

I have come to accept it over the years, but the “letting it go” has only just now happened.

7. Fibromyalgia cannot be totally cured, but its symptoms can be largely reduced. Has life for you, with fibromyalgia, become liveable again and does that reflect in your social life? Do doors open again?

I’m not the kind of person that keeps herself locked up and I’ve always pushed myself to maintain my social contacts. And there are a lot. And surely now at present!

8. Has your therapist’s advices been useful to you? e.g. drinking water, hiking, reading specific books that give an insight in yourself, etc..

I do drink more water, but as to going for walks not yet. I will take along the books on my next holiday. I’m looking forward to reading them.

9. Was it important to you that your therapist is suffering from fibromyalgia too? If so, why?

Very important! Recognition plays an important role. The realization that it can be different and actually seeing it in reality.

10. Would you advise Bowen therapy to other people? For fibromyalgia, but also for other problems with the body?

I think I would. I still have to find out more about its possibilities and applications.

11. Do you feel that treatments on a regular basis are necessary?

Up to now, yes. For the time being I will continue once a month. It makes me feel good.

12. How would you describe the meaning of the Bowen technique for you as briefly as possible?

“peace in my head”!

Case 6

First treatment with intake (29/10/2013)

Medication: Ledertrexate (immunosuppressive drug once a week, 20 mg), Feldene 20 mg, Medrol (4mg), supplements.

Anamnesis:

Rheumatism: around age of 25: due to streptococci infection, antibiotics for 8 to 9 weeks, streptococci were resistant to antibiotics and affected her joints. Rheumatism is severest in hands, feet and neck.

2001: surgery left foot.

2009: surgery right foot, after that, she went through a severe depression, she felt as if she had no control over her life anymore. Bad relation to her dad (authoritarian person), also to
her husband (very authoritarian person), divorced in 2005, re-married a sweet man in 2007 and now has a good relation to him. Blocked off love for 42 years, suffered a hard life as youngster. Feels great responsibility towards her brother and sister, had to take care of them. Parents have decided everything for her. When her father died, she was 42 years old and she felt relieved. After her depression, she started recovering, got a more positive attitude and had more time for herself. Felt pretty good until new surgery to foot in 2013. After surgery, she started getting mouth infections. More pain in feet, hands, neck, backside of her head, knees, back, pain in muscles.

Diagnosis: fibromyalgia in 2013. Has the feeling that she isn’t allowed to be happy. I see a woman before me who suffers a lot of pain, hands deformed with rheumatism, oedema of feet and legs. She feels very very tired, can hardly move her neck. She works in the morning and in the afternoon she needs to take a nap, totally exhausted.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure

2° treatment (05/11/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment:
- More energy.
- Pain in arm is gone.
- Pain in legs is worse.
- Misty, irritating feeling in the eyes.
- Pain backside of head.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure, midriff, TMJ

3° treatment (18/11/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment:
- More energy.
- Hands hurt more, terrible pain in elbows and wrists.
- Back: both thoracic and lumbar fatigue feeling with pain.
- Side of knees hurts.
- Fluid in ankles and legs is better.

I kept insisting that she drink 2 litres of water a day, but that was hard for her. I gave her some Epsom salt (magnesium sulphate) to take a bath after her treatment. Miss E.T. has a strong reaction during treatment, the slightest move I make, she feels in her head. Moreover, she is totally finished for 2 or 3 days after the treatment. I advised not to lay down and not to give in to her fatigue, but to go out for a walk and inhale oxygen. Since she is having such a hard time, I will adapt my next treatment.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure

4° and 5° treatment (25/11/2013 en 04/12/2013)

Reaction to previous treatment:
- A lot of pain during first 2 days.
- After bath with Epsom salt, things got better.
- Remarkable: can bend knees again.
- Ankles and lower legs: no more oedema.
- Legs still feel heavy.
- Neck is better, can bend head again from right to left and back.
- More upright position.
- Intestines feel better.
- Feeling of wanting to do things again.
- Greatly boosted energy.
- Still lots of headache.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure, midriff, hamstrings, TMJ

6° and 7° Treatment (11/12/2013 en 08/01/2014)

Reaction to previous treatment:
- Pain relatively well under control.
- Pain has become bearable.
- Legs no longer heavy feeling.
- Lots and lots of energy.
- No more pain in neck.
- Only arms and hands still hurt a lot.
- Mentally: very good. This condition has already been better after 2nd treatment.
- Sleeps better.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure, midriff, TMJ, arms

Final conclusion

Miss E.T. is still receiving treatment. She has much more energy, doesn’t take a nap anymore in the afternoon, teaching has become enjoyable again. No longer suffers headaches. Mentally, she feels freer. Plays the violin again. Stopped with treatment for 2 months and often went beyond her limits during that time. Started having a lot of troubles again, but after 1st treatment, energy already came back. She had less and less pain and regained courage.

We can say that:
- Pain in all muscles reduced by half, so situation is liveable again.
- She has much more energy.
- Mentally, she feels stronger.
- Rheumatism in hands still hurts a lot.
- Body recovers much quicker.
- No more headaches, sometimes a feeling of pressure though.
- Bikes every day for half an hour (on home trainer).

She feels better already, but there is still a long way to go.
This chart (figure 20) shows a clear boost of the intensity of energy (from 0 to 8) and of her mental condition (from 0 to 8). Intensity of fatigue (from 10 to 4) and of pain (from 10 to 5) shows a downward trend in the chart.

**Her evaluation form**

1. How did you learn about the existence of the Bowen technique?
   *From Hilde herself, thanks to her experience she convinced me to try it out.*

2. Were you able to tell your story during your first appointment, and if so, how did you experience it?
   *Yes, but it was rather a psychological conversation. I told more than I planned thanks to her patience and calmness.*

3. Did you get a good explanation on the Bowen technique and on what to expect after the first 3 treatments?
   *I did, yes, and that it would involve pain too, some days more than others.*

4. How many sessions did it take for you to experience less pain, and how much less was the pain?
   *6th?*

5. Did the Bowen technique change you as a person?
   *Absolutely!*
   - Physically? If yes, to what extent?
     *More energy, more stamina, no more naps at noon and even less pain.*
   - Mentally? If yes, to what extent did it change your behaviour? Towards yourself? Towards others?
     *Say “no” without a sense of guilt. More often do things I like to do, so I became somewhat more egoistic, letting things go.*
   - Energy level? If yes, how do you feel about that?
     *See above.*
6. Have you been able to better come to terms with the fact that you are suffering from fibromyalgia and has this lead to you paying more attention to your body and its possible limitations?
   Didn't actually come to terms with it, no. In my opinion, if you do so, your limitations will take over all the rest.

7. Fibromyalgia cannot be totally cured, but its symptoms can be largely reduced. Has life for you, with fibromyalgia, become liveable again and does that reflect in your social life? Do doors open again?
   See 5

8. Has your therapist's advices been useful to you? e.g. drinking water, hiking, reading specific books that give an insight in yourself, etc..
   Certainly! Much more physical exercise, but drinking still remains a big problem I'll have to work on, as to insights, I felt ok.

9. Was it important to you that your therapist is suffering from fibromyalgia too? If so, why?
   Actually it was, she is a living proof that Bowen works (the more so because I have known her in her hard times too).

10. Would you advise Bowen therapy to other people? For fibromyalgia, but also for other problems with the body?
    Yes, and I did so, but not everyone is on one line when it comes to believing that this therapy can change your life. Many stick to the life they are leading, don't seek but undergo.

11. Do you feel that treatments on a regular basis are necessary?
    Definitely, our habits make us return to old patterns too often.

12. How would you describe the meaning of the Bowen technique for you as briefly as possible?
    A significant change in my life, both physically and psychologically, and I have a new friend who only means well by me, stimulates positivity and self-esteem, that is invaluable!

**Case 7**
Miss S.D., lives in Genk, Limburg, Belgium. Born in 1972. She is a teacher and has 2 children.

**First treatment with intake (28/03/2014)**
Medication: food supplements, magnesium, iron, adrenal gland supplements prescribed by energy clinic Aalst.

Anamnesis:
Diagnosis: 2001, CFS, fibromyalgia diagnosed at the age of 29 years old; she already had a daughter at the time.

Miss S.D. did not have a happy childhood, she felt as if she didn't belong. She had a good relation with her father, but relation with her mother wasn't good. Her mom is super dominant. Her mother constantly asked for love, but she herself never gave it. When diagnosed with CFS and fibromyalgia, her mom didn't show any kind of understanding, her mom even told her that her depressions were due to herself, she could never do any good in her mom's eyes. Given the fact that she couldn't work due to her diagnosis, her mom kind of gave her a feeling of guilt.
A 4-years revalidation she took did help a bit, until she was pregnant again of her son at the age of 35. After that things became a disastrous: anxiety attacks, postpartum depression, muscle pain, always tired, no energy, lots of headaches, etc. Her husband enjoys her being dependent upon him.

Symptoms:

- Bad nights, sleeps only 6h per night. Doesn’t feel refreshed in the mornings.
- Goes through a rough period mentally, restless in her head.
- Getting up in the morning is associated with headaches, tension in the neck, shoulders hurt a lot and stiffness and pain in joints. Things become better after being up for about an hour. In the morning she can manage, mainly she manages to get through the morning on adrenaline. At around 2 p.m. she looses energy, worst is between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m.
- She is very very tired, goes to take a nap but doesn’t wake up by herself. Pain gets worse and stress increases. Making dinner is hard and for the rest of the evening she is stressed to such an extent that she has trouble sleeping.
- Clenches her jaws and headache above eyes increases.
- Very negative self-image
- Disorganized when it comes to her administrative work
- Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) has become worse after she had her last child. She is angry, disgruntled and once ovulating downright pessimistic.
- Has gone to work for 6 hours since 2012.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure

I have advised miss S.D. not to take a nap in the afternoon but go for a walk instead. Drink lots of water and listen to what her body is telling her.

2º Treatment (03/04/2014)

Reaction to previous treatment:

- After treatment, she felt very bad for 2 days, a lot of headache and pain in joints.
- Seemed like she had a bit more energy.
- A lot of trouble with PMS, angry, disgruntled.
- No more naps in the afternoon.
- Mentally she felt different.
- Has done a few things, made decisions and took action. She wouldn’t have done that before since she had been too tired.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure twice, TMJ, spin

3º Treatment (11/04/2014)

Reaction to previous treatment:

- A lot of pain until 2 days after treatment.
- Pain became bearable after that.
- More energy.
- Didn’t drink enough.
- No more normal breathing.
- Is angry, as if a mirror has been put in front of her.
-Feels as if she is a bad mother, is very severe for herself.
- Anxiety, chaotic in head.
- Big conflict with her mother now, feels like she starts responding differently toward her now.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure twice, midriff, TMJ

I told her to read a book that would help her with her internal conflict: ‘OntMoet Jezelf’ by Huub Verlinden and Jes Janssen-Van Sprakelaar.

4th Treatment (23/04/2014)

Reaction to previous treatment:
- Suffered a lot of headache.
- Mentally she is very much busy with herself.
- Very angry.
- A whole lot of self-criticism.
- A lot of things became clear to her (book has helped her).
- A lot of things happened in her head, she feels a major mental change, it was a very useful holiday.
- Is able to go into a confrontation with her mother.
- Muscle acidification.
- Everything hurts, especially back, but on a bearable level.
- Less fatigue.
- Energy is increasing.
- Very absent-minded.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure twice, midriff, sacrum, TMJ

5th Treatment (07/05/2014)

Reaction to previous treatment:
- All went pretty well.
- Energy is good.
- Pain under control, at times more pain because she doesn’t pay attention to her limits. Does much more things than she did in the beginning.
- Sleeps better.
- Feels as if she is coming out of a down period.
- Angriness is diminishing.
- Headaches remain lingering between eyes, but is less painful.
- Mentally she feels stronger.

Treatment: basic treatment, kidney procedure twice, midriff, sacrum, TMJ

Final conclusion

Today, miss S.D. is still getting treatments by me. She is quite well, but she still needs to work on her self-image, self-respect, … at times there is still a lot of anger, but she is working on that issue. She is learning how to say “no” and is better in monitoring
confrontations with her mother. Pain has become bearable and she recovers much quicker. Energy often is very good. She doesn’t take any naps anymore during daytime and this helped her to get out of the vicious circle. There are times that she still feels very tired. She manages to do a lot more things during daytime, she is less absent-minded and is able to concentrate better. In general, you could say that she is doing much better, but there is still a long way to go.

The chart (figure 21) shows a decrease in the intensity of fatigue (from 10 to 5) and pain (from 10 to 5). Moreover there is an increase in the intensity of energy (from 0 to 6) and mental condition (from 0 to 6).

**Her evaluation form**

1. How did you learn about the existence of the Bowen technique?
   *A colleague who had positive experience told me.*

2. Were you able to tell your story during your first appointment, and if so, how did you experience it?
   *Yes, very positive.*

3. Did you get a good explanation on the Bowen technique and on what to expect after the first 3 treatments?
   *Yes.*

4. How many sessions did it take for you to experience less pain, and how much less was the pain?
   *After 3 treatments.*
   *Always some bad days immediately after treatment. Hint: don’t sleep during daytime was very helpful.*
5. Did the Bowen technique change you as a person?
- Physically? If yes, to what extent?
  Yes, get out of the vicious circle of CFS and fibromyalgia.
- Mentally? If yes, to what extent did it change your behaviour? Towards yourself? Towards others?
  Somewhat more defendable. A bit more understanding towards myself. More assertive, in the correct way, towards others.
- Energy level? If yes, how do you feel about that?
  More energy. Deeper sleep at night. No more down feelings in the afternoon. Super important step.

6. Have you been able to better come to terms with the fact that you are suffering from fibromyalgia and has this lead to you paying more attention to your body and its possible limitations?
Surely. Finger on the key question. I have come to a better insight: my body is not something I need to fight against, it’s my guide.

7. Fibromyalgia cannot be totally cured, but its symptoms can be largely reduced. Has life for you, with fibromyalgia, become liveable again and does that reflect in your social life? Do doors open again?
Yes, life has become liveable again. A more normal rhythm. To state that doors are going open, is a bit too much.

8. Has your therapist’s advices been useful to you? e.g. drinking water, hiking, reading specific books that give an insight in yourself, etc..
  I go on my daily walk. Both books have given me a better insight in myself. “OntMoet Jezelf” and “I need your love, is that true?” have been very useful, especially the first one. Going for a walk gives you the chance to take a distance from “head”.

9. Was it important to you that your therapist is suffering from fibromyalgia too? If so, why?
  You sense right away that you are perfectly understood. So, yes.

10. Would you advise Bowen therapy to other people? For fibromyalgia, but also for other problems with the body?
  Yes.

11. Do you feel that treatments on a regular basis are necessary?
  I do. For the time being, a constant reminder is necessary, i.e. a talk to my therapist and a ‘reset’ of my body.

12. How would you describe the meaning of the Bowen technique for you as briefly as possible?
  Life is liveable again. Better sleep quality. (the beginning of everything).