

Approximately 20 years ago I was diagnosed with asthma. I had a persistent cough for which I left my doctors surgery with a prescription for inhalers which I had to take for the rest of my life.

The feeling of being diagnosed with such a condition aged 25 was a mixture of surprise and disbelief. In my mind asthma was a childhood illness and I was confused as to why I had shown no symptoms when I was growing up. However I trusted the doctor, and duly took the inhalers as instructed - he knew more about these things than I did. My heart pounded at night, I was restless and hot, I felt panicky and beneath all of this I felt a kind of shame.

Since this time I have bumbled along struggling to deal with the cough, taking stronger and stronger medication, at certain times of the year finding I cannot speak for coughing, until it became persistent and constant again, affecting my work, my conversation, my laughter, my song, my sleep. It had to stop.

I had read about the Buteyko method some 10 years ago. I had a book, I tried to sleep with my mouth closed, I wanted to find a practitioner but was half-hearted about my searching, accepting the fact that I had asthma, that was just the way it had to be. Accepting that I had to take all these drugs, because that was how it had to be.

I teach, and in a new job this year I reached a point of despair, regularly coughing when I was talking to classes, barking in meetings and generally feeling out of control. I was utterly exhausted.

Online I found the Buteyko Breathing Centre and booked myself 7 Skype sessions with their lead practitioner Lynda. I can truly say it is the best money I have ever spent. I was shocked to learn that I was over breathing, hyperventilating continuously. I guess my body was in constant overload, ready for fight or flight. It is no wonder I ached and felt perpetually exhausted.

I started the course at the worst point of the year for me, under huge pressure at work, at the end of the school year with a lot of extended hours but trusted the advice to do it sooner to get things under control. Within a week I had reduced my medication by half. Suddenly my energy was back!

There is no doubt that you have to be committed at the start. The exercises are tiring and take time, but the results are worth it. I have had spells where I can truly breathe. It sounds ridiculous but I haven't had that for years. There are now consistently times where I feel I am breathing normally. I am empowered and in control of this thing. IT is not in control of me, as it was before. I have confidence to handle the tricky times and am more consistently breathing through my nose, sleeping with my mouth shut and am gradually losing the impossible tickle in my chest which starts the cough. My last session with

Lynda I realised I had not had that tickle for two weeks. What a joy!

So now I am on my way to a CP of 30 next week, aiming for 40 overall. This has been a truly life changing course and I cannot recommend it highly enough. I was in a dreadful state at the start of it and am so relieved to feel calmer and more in control. Here's to the future!

Ellie Deekes

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