

Who might benefit?

Have you ever felt like there was something you really wanted to achieve, an issue you wanted to resolve, or a question you wanted to answer, but you weren't sure how or even who to have that conversation with? Maybe you want to find ways to

- Make sense of your TM/ADEM/NMO experience
- Adjust to living with TM/ADEM/NMO or being the carer
- Take back control
- Develop your independence
- Finding non-medical ways to manage symptoms (pain, fatigue, etc.)
- Regain your confidence after experiencing all these changes
- Manage stress
- Go back into education or work
- Deal with issues at work that are bothering you (or maybe you want to go for a promotion or new role)
- Change your career
- Positively deal with the impact TM/ADEM/NMO has had on your family and relationships
- Increase your independence and wellbeing
- Get back into your favourite hobbies and activities or find new ones
- Look after yourself as a way to manage your symptoms
- Focus on yourself as the carer
- Figure out what you want out of life

If you are in that position and would like to speak to someone in confidence, the service of *coaching* is available for TM Society members whether you have TM, ADEM, NMO or ON yourself, are a carer, or a parent of a child with TM/ADEM/NMO/ON.

What is coaching?

Coaching is about unlocking your potential to maximise your own performance; it's about helping you to learn rather than someone else teaching or telling you what you should or ought to do. This is done via a series of confidential purposeful conversations between you and a coach over an agreed period of time. Together you identify what you want to achieve for yourself, you set some overall goals and agree how you want to work together. Each coaching session then focuses on an aspect of your overall goals and what you can do and be to help you achieve them.

During the conversations you will develop a greater awareness of your situation, create goals and new ways to resolve issues. You will leave each session with some actions to take in-between sessions that will move you towards what you want for yourself. You will find that the coach does not tell you what to do; the coach's job is not about giving you the solution, answer, advice or teaching you. Coaching assumes you have the answers somewhere inside of you and the coach works with you in helping you find them.

The coach supports you in this process by listening attentively and non-judgmentally, reflecting back to you what you say and do (and do not), asking questions that make you think, challenging your assumptions and current ways of doing things, being your sounding board, and keeping you on track for what you want to achieve. The focus throughout the coaching is on your agenda. The details of the conversations you have with your coach are confidential.

Coaching is forward looking, results oriented, and enables you to produce better results in your life (and work). So coaching does not delve into your childhood or past to look find the reasons for present-day issues. Coaching is not counselling/therapy nor does it involve the diagnosis or treatment of mental health issues.

How does the Coaching Bursary work?

The Coaching Bursary is open to members of the TM Society. All coaching will be in English so you must have a good command of spoken English.

The Coaching Bursary consists of 6 hours of coaching with an experienced coach who has received additional training to work with people who have long-term conditions/serious illness through an organisation called the Medical Coaching Institute.

Members of the TM Society pay the coach £5 per hour. Payment takes place in advance of the coaching starting. The TM Society pays the balance to the coach.

In the first instance, email Barbara Babcock at barbara.babcock@myelitis.org.uk. She will arrange a time to speak with you on the phone. Barbara is a qualified coach and can help you determine if coaching will best meet your needs and explain how the coaching process works.

If coaching can help and you wish to proceed, you and Barbara arrange dates for your sessions. You then pay in full for the coaching prior to the first session starting.

Coaching sessions can take place over the phone or on Skype/Facetime. If you live near the coach, they can take place face-to-face if that is mutually convenient.

What have members who have tried it said?

Some members of the TM Society have had coaching and this is what they had to say.

“Before I started coaching, I thought I had come to terms with my TM. But during support group meetings, I generally got upset when I talked about my health. Coaching was suggested but I was not receptive to it, believing I had a handle on things. The second time coaching was suggested, this time via Skype because of distances, I decided to give it a go. I never had any form of counselling or coaching before. The differences were explained and I liked the idea that it was forward looking rather than past-focused. I realised quite quickly that I wasn't coping that well. I always think I am a 'glass half full' person, but my glass was half empty. The surprising thing was how recognising this was empowering. I started to view myself and my TM differently and became more self-aware. I began accepting more help from my family and stopped seeing this as a failure on my part. It helped me manage my residual symptoms better, the seasonal adjustments, and medication. Coaching encouraged me to consider where I wanted to be and how I could get there, it enabled me to take back control. I would recommend coaching to anyone who is struggling with a long-term health condition. You need an open mind, think a different approach could help you, commit to the process to get the most out of it, and want to make changes. If not, coaching is probably not for you. It was such a positive experience for me. It turned my thinking and understanding around and, two years on, I've remained in that better place.”

– H.L., TM since 2006

“I was unhappy with my life following the diagnosis of TM; I had lost all sense of direction or purpose. I knew there were issues that needed to be dealt with given the impact TM was having on me and those around me but I didn't know how to start. Coaching helped me learn that even if I have goals, whatever I do is enough, that I don't have to beat myself up if I don't get everything done; to treat myself more kindly; that I should respond to rather than react to things/situations. I am calmer as I don't stress about things that are out of my control. I realised that the way I reacted to certain things or situations stemmed from old habits that were restrictive rather than helpful, and in many ways were stopping me from becoming the person I wanted to be.”

– J.M., TM since 2009

“As a carer for my Mum, who has TM, we were having some issues with inversion of roles. We had reached a point where we needed help and coaching came along at exactly the right moment. Coaching helped my mum and I create a new balance within our relationship and also get to a point where we were able to understand each other's perspective better. The coaching had a knock on effect on other family relationships leading to clearer boundaries and less unnecessary stress, as well as throughout my life rather than just my care role. I think coaching is good for anyone actively looking to make a change in their life. If you aren't willing to take a look at your life and do the work necessary to change it, then coaching might not be for you. Overall, coaching was a really helpful experience that I am still benefiting from today.”

– C.M., Carer

You can also read a case study of Wendy from York who had coaching with Barbara about improving how to live with the impact of TM [here](#).