

Teacher Training Workshop:

Fighting the Dragon-- Parkinson's disease and Alexander technique Instruction

Instructor: Candace Cox

In this workshop Candace will offer support to the Alexander technique (AT) teacher or trainee interested in working with this population. Knowing where to start, or even simply coming into direct contact with Parkinson's disease (PD), especially with a student who is "off" - that is, when their medication is not in their system - can be intimidating for any teacher, no matter how skillful or experienced. Candace will share tips and advice on how to bring AT work to bear on symptoms of PD based on her own trial and error during hundreds of private and group lessons with People Living With Parkinson's (PLWP), their partners, and families.

Many of the symptoms of PD, like those of other chronic illnesses affecting movement, from Scleroderma to Multiple Sclerosis, follow patterns that as AT teachers we see in our 'everyday' clients. What PD seems to do is hit fast-forward on 'normal' habits of imbalance and excess tension. This is, oddly, good news for PLWP as many of the symptoms they are seeking to manage can be related to their years of poor use prior to diagnosis, right up to the present moment – and we know that poor use can change.

Candace believes that adaptive AT-based work for PLWP can impact the progression of the disease. We may not be able to slay the dragon, but we can help hold it back. Tackling any illness is daunting for any student, however learning skills to manage their own 'stuff' becomes empowering. The same can be said of teaching students who are afflicted with this terrible illness: it is both daunting, and exhilarating.

Parkinson's disease makes us 'small'. From handwriting to speech to gait to personal confidence, a Person Living With Parkinson's is constantly being diminished, and is therefore continually urged by loved ones and caregivers to be 'bigger'. The same advice may be given to AT teachers working with PLWP.

Learning Objectives for this workshop

To gain expertise and confidence in adapting AT principles and pedagogy both to People Living With Parkinson's and their partners. We will focus on areas Candace has identified as foundational to working with PLWP. This will be an active workshop, combining discussion, demonstration, and hands-on activities.

Workshop Course

10:00 - 10:05am	Outlining workshop goals
10:05 - 10:15am	Candace introduces herself and discusses her work in Edmonton with PLWP
10:15 - 10:30am	<u>Simple anatomy</u> : How misunderstanding structure impacts function
10:30 - 10:45am	<u>Physics and force</u> : How to apply Newton's Third Law to human mechanics and "up"
10:45 - 11:00am	<u>Movement</u> : How using the hip joint affects balance, forward reach, kyphosis and gait
11:00 - 11:15am	<u>Vocabulary</u> : How to simplify instructions and focus on student empowerment, as well as teaching care-givers how to be most helpful
11:15 - 11:20am	<u>Discussion</u> : The difference in the 'ends' we as AT teachers must focus on when working with PWP, as they differ somewhat from students who present with 'normal' challenges
11:20 - 11:30am	Wrap up, conclusions, and questions from participants

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