

Boxing “*Therapy*” Workout

on Weds Mornings?

By; Frank Paolini - SELF Wellness Director



You can imagine the raised eyebrows when I first introduced this program on the schedule at The Grand Estate at Londonderry. It generated even some snickers when I posted it as “Boxing THERAPY Workouts.” Here are some of the reactions, “how is *that* therapeutic,” and the best one, “you mean...we are actually going to have us put on gloves and spar???” As entertaining as the last one sounds, for me at least, no there is no sparring each other. We have gloves, focus mitts, cordless jump ropes, an electronic round timer, and a striking dummy. There are many forms of conventional exercise programs out there as well as offered here at the Grand Estate. Personally, I have always understood the cardiovascular, muscular endurance, and weight reduction benefits to a Boxing style workout having spent some of this myself in my teens and early twenties. I also understood when we get stressed how beneficial it is to go out and strike something inanimate that won’t hit back. I have advocated these workouts or portions of them in the past years for some of my clients I have trained on the outside. However, it may come as a surprise to discover that boxing training is now being used as a form of therapy for people who already have Parkinson's disease. A fact I only discovered in 2015.

For those who do not know, Parkinson's a neurodegenerative disorder, is caused by the death or deterioration of brain cells that produce dopamine, a neurotransmitter (aka brain chemical) that helps regulate movement, coordination and emotional responses. This can lead to motor symptoms such as tremors, slowness of movement (or bradykinesia), muscle rigidity or stiffness, postural instability or impaired balance or coordination, and problems with speech, as well as non-motor symptoms such as loss of smell, sleep disturbances and mood disorders.

In a 2013 study involving 31 adults with Parkinson's, researchers from the University of Indianapolis compared the effects of two to three 90-minute sessions per week of boxing training or traditional exercise (stretching, aerobics and resistance workouts). After 12 weeks, those in the boxing group gained significant improvements in their walking speed and endurance, but the traditional exercise group didn't (they did, however, gain greater confidence with their balance).

A small 2011 study by the same researchers found that boxing training helped people with Parkinson's improve their balance, gait, activities of daily living and quality of life after 36 weeks. "We hope we're slowing progression of the disease," says lead author Stephanie Combs-Miller, an associate professor of physical therapy and director of research at the College of Health Sciences at the University of Indianapolis. "In a two-year study, we found that they didn't get worse, which is positive considering it's a progressive neuromuscular disorder in which there is no known cure."



The trend started after former Indiana prosecutor Scott Newman, who was diagnosed with early-onset Parkinson's at age 40, began training one-on-one with a boxing coach and noticed dramatic improvements in his physical health, agility and daily functioning. In 2006, Newman founded Rock Steady Boxing, a program that uses modified professional boxing techniques to help people with Parkinson's in Indianapolis. "I lost my ability to sign my name due to the tremors, and to type. My balance has been devastated. I know there is no cure for my condition, but since I began the boxing program, the symptoms have been reduced. I can sign my name again and I can type. My balance has improved, as well as my over-all coordination."

So if your looking to try a new exercise program that is proven to improve your health, balance, coordination, stress reduction, cardiovascular endurance, weight loss every Weds morning at 10:00AM in the 3rd floor Yoga Room and you'll be glad you did!

"The facts don't lie." ~ Clarence Darrow