

In 2011, Stephanie Combs et al published a paper describing the benefits of boxing training for six people with Parkinson's. The research determined that despite the progressive nature of Parkinson's, the people in the study, even those with moderate to severe Parkinson's, showed both short-term and long-term improvements in balance, walking, activities of daily living, and quality of life after boxing training,. The study also concluded that boxing training programmes were feasible and safe for people with Parkinson's.

To find out more about this research just type *Stephanie Coles and boxing training*, into the Google search bar and a number of references will come up.

The findings of this research are confirmed by my own experience. For some time I had participated in Bhanu Ramaswamy's circuit training sessions in Sheffield but when I saw my partner's daughter, Zoe, enjoying one of Mick Crofts sessions at Fitnesszoo in Attercliffe, Sheffield I decided to "up my game" and embark on boxing training myself.

I started with Mick about 5 months ago and am the first and currently the only PwP that Mick is training. He attended a course facilitated by Bhanu to help him understand the implications of Parkinson's and would be happy to have other PwP on his client list.

In combination with fitness activities, boxing training incorporates whole-body movements, with upper-extremity punching motions and lower-extremity footwork in multiple directions all performed at speed. It provides both anaerobic and aerobic exercise in one session. Each session comprises a full body workout that ensures I am getting fitter and fitter. I am especially keen on using the wall mounted Speed Ball and have become quite proficient at it. I received one for my 70th birthday recently and am really enjoying using it in my home gym.

I have read somewhere that a 60-minute boxing training session results in energy expenditure similar to that of running about 9 km (5.6 miles) in 60 minutes on a treadmill. I could not run that far on a treadmill so, if true, the boxing training gives me that level of cardiorespiratory benefit which is not immediately obvious but nonetheless real. And there is nothing quite like

pounding a heavy punch bag as hard and as fast as you can! . When I finish a session, I am physically tired but mentally very stimulated

The combination of punches that I have to deliver to the various punch bags in the gym have benefitted my hand-eye coordination and improved my strength, flexibility and balance, but the big surprise for me was the “brain training” that is also part of the package. By repeatedly moving my legs in pre-determined patterns and by punching various combinations repeatedly I am effectively training my brain and body to do this more automatically. This in turn has helped me handle concurrent multiple tasks, cognitive as well as physical. As Mick increases the combinations of punches I have to throw, it is more difficult to activate my legs and feet in conjunction with the punching, but I can see an improvement over time although it requires intense concentration! At today's training session, I lost concentration and the heaviest bag I was using swung right back at me and I instinctively moved to my left and released a sequence of punches without thinking about it– an automatic movement proven!

I have not attempted to reduce my medication – I don't have that as a goal. But I found out by accident that following a boxing training session I can, on occasion, go up to 5 hours (normal gap 4 hours after which my tremor generally reminds me) before taking my next dosage of medication. I would like to have that aspect measured, possibly by an MRI scan, to see what dopamine activity is taking place. Is it simply a case of the placebo effect from the endorphins that are released by the intensity of the exercise or is there more to it?

I must make clear that boxing training, however wonderful it is for me, is not a cure, although I believe it helps to slow down the progress of the condition. I still have off days and off periods but overall I am much stronger and fitter, and more mobile and flexible than when I started, and this has helped me going about my daily life.

The physical improvements have also led to psychological improvements which I feel are equally if not more significant for me. I am happier. I believe I can tackle most things, I am proud of my achievements, more confident about the future and am even more motivated.

Boxing Training has certainly improved my Quality of Life – why don't you try it and see what it can do for you?