



FIGHTING BACK AGAINST PARKINSON'S

Why Rock Steady Boxing vs. Other Boxing Classes?

"Parkinson's disease is a neurological disorder whose progressive nature can be inhibited, and potentially reversed, by the rigorous program of exercise inherent in the Rock Steady Boxing program and the warm, supportive atmosphere created by Rock Steady coaches."

- Rodger, RSB Boxer, Austin, TX

- **Rock Steady Boxing (RSB) is specific to Parkinson's disease.**

Every RSB Coach has completed an intensive training and certification program developed over the last ten years that assures an understanding of Parkinson's disease and the benefits of a RSB style boxing method. As a member of the RSB Affiliate program, they receive on-going continuing education about the treatment of Parkinson's disease symptoms through non-contact, forced intense exercise, and access to symptom specific consulting which addresses individual challenges.

- **RSB classes are designed to be modified for all levels of Parkinson's, at any stage of the disease.**

Each participant is assessed before they start RSB classes, both for overall physical fitness and for the progression of Parkinson's symptoms. Class placement is designed to both challenge and allow optimal functioning with other participants of similar ability. This careful evaluation allows coaches to know not only the participant's stage of Parkinson's, but also to be aware of other health concerns that should be addressed.

RSB classes are more than just "boxing" – classes are designed to help with voice activation and manual dexterity. Many Affiliates design programs especially toward their specific boxers, ex: one of our programs hands out a quarterly questionnaire to discover where their specific boxers need improvement, i.e. buttoning a shirt, zipping up their jackets or tying their shoes.

- **Having a knowledgeable coach who understands Parkinson's can make all the difference.**

RSB Coaches are trained to identify specific PD symptoms during a workout and this is unique to the RSB method – rather than just sticking a boxer in a class and forgetting about them. Our coaches focus on Parkinson's specifically and know when and when not to push their boxers, what signs and symptoms to look for during class (too much exertion, blood pressure issues, fainting, falling, etc.).

In a conventional fitness class, a person with Parkinson's may become discouraged, unable to keep up with the routine, may have difficulty following directions without assistance, or be unable to walk, get on/off the floor without assistance, etc. Most fitness instructors are not prepared to recognize or modify exercises for a person with Parkinson's.

Traditional gyms are not built for specialized populations. Is the boxing gym handicapped accessible? Is the boxing gym insured to work with people with disabilities?

- **At Rock Steady, camaraderie among folks fighting the same disease is essential to the overall experience.**

This is a community of people who are all fighting back against Parkinson's disease. They are not training for a prize fight, trying to "get in shape," or working out for fun. They are committed to keeping their disease at bay and maintaining their quality of life as long as possible. They are "in this together."

Parkinson's is an isolating disease, and many people with Parkinson's withdraw from family and friends out of embarrassment or depression. We often hear from our PD boxers that the support and "new friends" they make among other participants who all relate to their struggles is one of the most powerful aspects of this program.

- **What about newly diagnosed, young onset Parkinson's?**

Newly diagnosed, young-onset and in-shape people with Parkinson's make up a very small percentage of the PD population, and they are often able to train among a healthy population. However, this is not always advisable. They have the same need for camaraderie and the experience of fighting back with others who truly understand the challenges.

Exercise vs. no exercise is always beneficial, but a newly diagnosed boxer needs to realize that conventional boxing gyms are not designed to address all the symptoms of the disease. For example, the Rock Steady method begins with stretching and warming up, and this is not the usual routine in a traditional boxing gym. Traditional coaches may not have the patience or knowledge to work specifically with people with PD. And, as the disease progresses, it is unlikely that the traditional coach will be prepared to modify or even recognize the symptoms that result from Parkinson's progression.



Joyce Johnson, Executive Director