

Alexander Technique Group Classes Are a Feasible and Promising Intervention for Care Partners of People living with Parkinson's disease

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Session Information

Date: [Monday, September 23, 2019](#)

Session Title: [Caregiver Burden](#)

Session Time: 1:45pm-3:15pm

Location: Les Muses Terrace, Level 3

Objective: To test an adapted Alexander technique (AT) group course to improve quality of life for care partners of people living with Parkinson's disease (PLwPD).

Background: AT is an embodied cognition approach that aims to transform harmful reactions to stress into adaptive responses, enhancing performance of daily activities while improving confidence and reducing anxiety. Previous work has demonstrated that private AT sessions can reduce neck and back pain.

Method: We delivered an adapted AT program in seven cities in North Carolina (USA); groups met 90 minutes weekly for 10 weeks. The study was held in various general community senior centers, churches and assisted living facilities. 65 participants (55 women and 10 men), aged 68 (+/-7 years) participated. Most were white, non-Hispanic college graduates caring for spouse/partners. Outcomes were assessed before and after the intervention, and 6 months later. No comparison group was included. Coursework included functional anatomy and self-management strategies, taught through verbal instructions, hands-on guidance, partnering activities, and interactive games. A unique feature of our program is that all activities are prefaced with strategic thoughts and verbal prompts to interrupt automatic reactions. These self-regulatory strategies, while neurologically sophisticated, are presented simply enough to be remembered and used independently outside of class. Outcome measures were anonymous course evaluations, executive function (Stroop and Digit Span), balance (Mini BESTest), and self-report measures (mindfulness, fatigue, pain, stress, self-efficacy, and mood).

Results: Course attendance was 83%. Retention was high (83%). On a 0-10 scale, the mean rating was 9.5 for “enjoyed the interaction with other participants,” 9.2 for “encountered new ideas,” 8.4 for “learned skills to take care of myself emotionally,” and 8.3 for “likely to use the new skills in my daily life.” Executive function improved ($p < .05$). There was strong correlation between improved self-reported mindfulness and increased self-efficacy and reduced fear and fatigue ($p < .00005$).

Conclusion: AT shows promise as a long-term self-management approach to ease caregiver burden. Group classes have the potential to provide cost-effective delivery with additional social benefits.