



# The Parkinson's Prison and the Hero's Journey to Escape

Robert Cochrane, PhD  
Interdisciplinary Health Sciences  
Yes, And...eXercise!

If we want to be free, we've got to move

# The Soup Dragons - I'm Free (Lyrics)

[Link](#)



# Bold Opening Statement

Discovering and sharing your story can help find a cure for Parkinson's disease.

One problem:

It's impossible (examples)

Why me? My Dad was diagnosed in 2001...Boys of Summer



# Parkinsons Disease

Did you know?

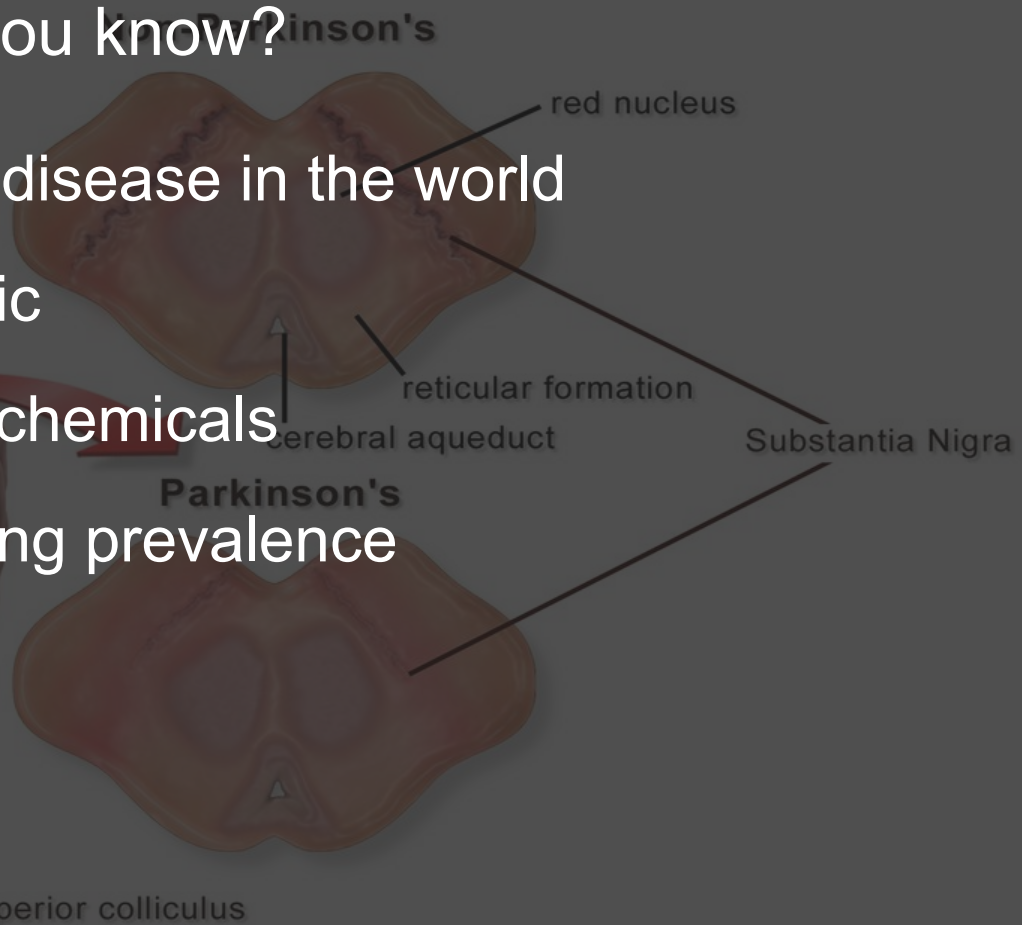
PD = fastest growing neuro disease in the world

Prevalence rates = pandemic

Smoking Gun = man-made chemicals

Path to cure starts with cutting prevalence

We caused it, we can end it



# So why don't we do something?

“Parkinson's community is too nice”

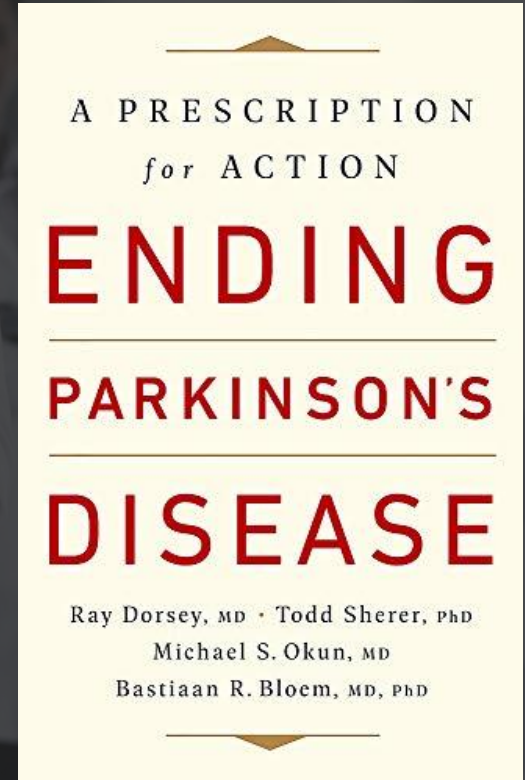
- Dr. Ray Dorsey

Misaligned stories of PD

- It's not that bad... (shame / guilt)
- You seem fine... (ignorance)
- Isn't it only older people? (pity)

We need stories - *whole* stories

Enter Day One







# Day One: The Trauma of Diagnosis

What it felt like when you heard...

The doctor's demeanor was...

Who else (if anyone) was with you?

What you did immediately afterward...

Who you told or hid it from...

Surviving vs Living

Apathy: I want to, but I can't - *The Parkinson's Prison*

*Game One: I feel...*

# What is the Parkinson's Prison?

Any mindset a person uses (consciously or not) to limit themselves.

- “I can't...”
- “I shouldn't...”
- “I'm stuck because...”

*It is possible that you're not currently aware of your self-imposed limitations. See: homeostasis.*

## How will we escape?

*We must connect (Yes, And).*

By being courageous in exploring our story

By listening and responding to others' stories

By working and playing together - building an ensemble

*Game Two: Whoosh/Bong!*

# Our Heroic Journey

Joseph Campbell

Chris Vogler

The Shawshank Connection

[John's Return with Elixir](#)





# Challenges to telling stories that make an impact



## Barriers:

- Writing is work!
- Trauma (e.g. “*you’re a bad writer*”)
- Lack of skill (“I don’t write”)
- Lack of understanding (“what is my story?”)
- Lack of confidence (“who would care?”)
- Fear of vulnerability (“If I say what I really think...”)

Stories can transform us...

*Game three: Red Ball*



# Improv can help!

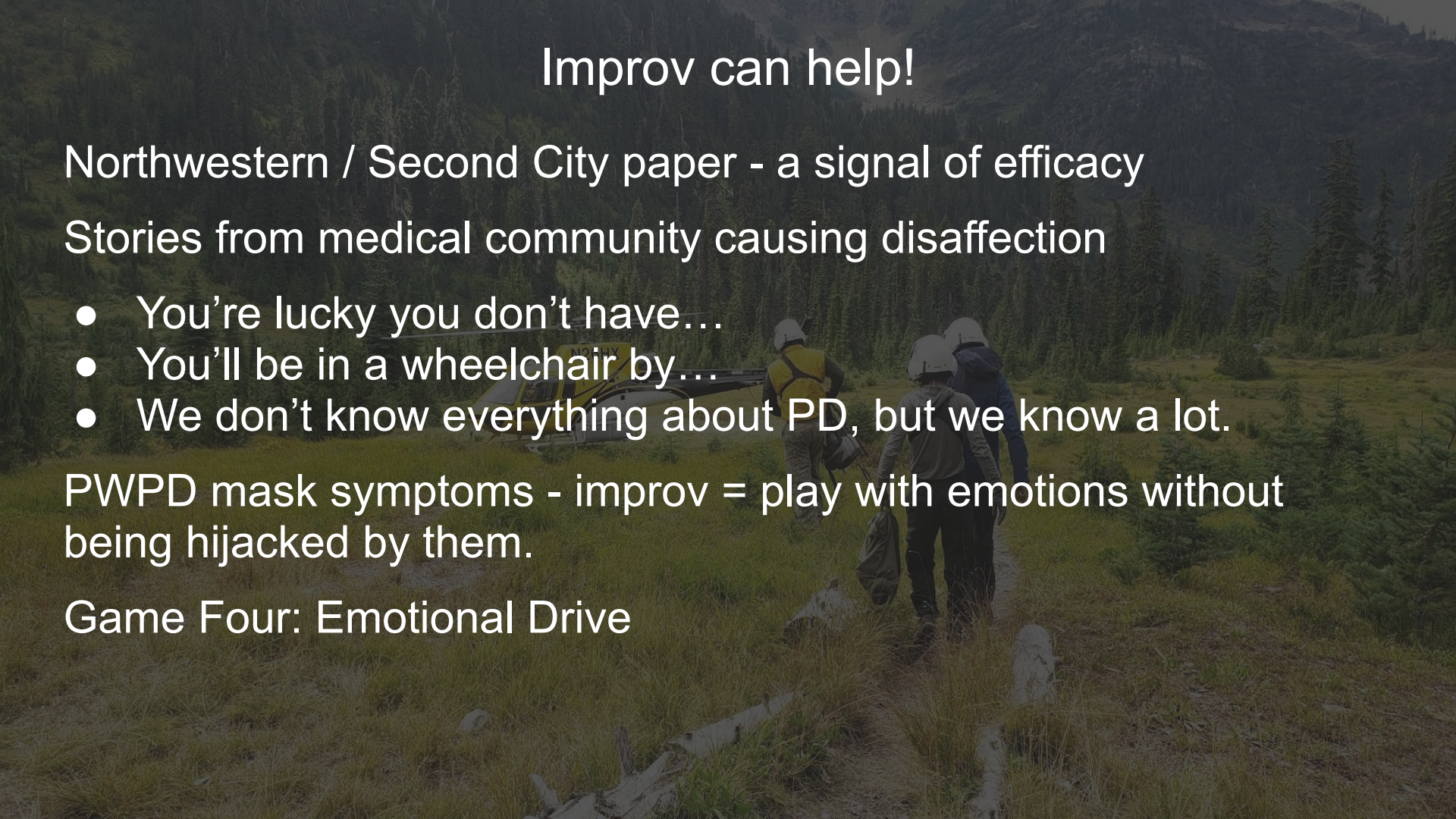
Northwestern / Second City paper - a signal of efficacy

Stories from medical community causing disaffection

- You're lucky you don't have...
- You'll be in a wheelchair by...
- We don't know everything about PD, but we know a lot.

PWPD mask symptoms - improv = play with emotions without being hijacked by them.

Game Four: Emotional Drive







## *Improv?* Not for me...

The performance problem

Making the classroom a safe,  
brave and fun space

Games that are barely games

Foundational Game: Mirror

Takeaways: leadership vs  
following, more than speech,



[Link](#)

## Storytelling and improvisation

- Builds ensemble - through trust, laughter
- Builds confidence - trusting the unknown, encouraging vulnerability as courage
- Builds creativity - they begin to see the unknown as a fun place to play, making some impossible things, possible

## Game Five: Blurt

Takeaways: No wrong answers, we know more than we think we do

# Nature of Storytelling

A photograph of two boxers in a ring. The boxer on the left is wearing blue trunks and a black shirt, while the boxer on the right is wearing red trunks and a red shirt. They are both wearing protective headgear and gloves. The boxer in blue is in a defensive stance, while the boxer in red is in an offensive stance, throwing a punch. The background is dark, and the ring ropes are visible.

Two opponents:

**BOREDOM**

- Nothing is happening
- Hero is passive
- Hero doesn't feel (or pretends not to...)
- Hero doesn't use senses
- Stakes are low / non-existent

**CONFUSION**

- Hero lacks a purpose (wish)
- Lack of foundational detail (who, what, where)
- Way too much extraneous detail
- Massive time/location/logic leaps without context



# Tech challenges to engaging

## Problem / Solution:

- Travel / Zoom to shrink distance and add convenience
- Writing / Talk to Type
- AI / to Augment not Replace

# The Call to Action

“When we deny our stories, they define us.  
When we own our stories, we get to write a  
brave new ending.”

- Brene Brown

We're raising our voices for the cure today.

Will you help us make the impossible possible?

Sign up: [www.yesandexercise.org](http://www.yesandexercise.org)

(Click: “Day One”)

Contact Robert: [yesandexercise@gmail.com](mailto:yesandexercise@gmail.com)

