



PANC

UPDATE

Parkinson Association of Northern California

Community for the Journey -- August 2025

PANC SUPPORT GROUPS HERE

If you would like to facilitate a group in your area, PANC will help.
Contact [Jen Westoby here](#) if interested.

"Being in the same room with people and creating something together is a good thing." – *Robin Williams*



Keynote speaker Kat Hill shares about the upcoming event! [Click here to listen to a Podcast](#) with Kat and the Davis Phinney Foundation about being alone at home with Parkinson's

PANC Conference Is Just 2 Months Aways!

Saturday, October 18 from 8 to 3 pm
Roebbelen Center, Roseville

In-person (includes lunch) Early-bird -- \$40 (through 9/30)

Zoom Early-bird rate -- \$25 (through 9/30)

Reserved Table for 8 -- \$400

YOU ARE NOT ALONE! MEET. LEARN. LAUGH. CRY. EXPERIENCE IT!

CONFERENCE FACTS

- The theme is "Attitude is Everything: Strategies for Success"
- ADA friendly event center with ample parking
- Designated drop-off and pick-up zone with qualified PT's and OT's to help
- Over 60 vendors anticipated

- Attend for a while or the whole day
- Event recording provided for all registrants
- [Website Link](#)
- [Flyer to send to family & friends](#)

Registered exhibitors to date: [A Therapeutic Alternative](#), [AbbVie](#), [Acadia Pharmaceuticals](#), [Advanced Hospice](#), [Amevian Home Care](#), [Amneal Pharmaceuticals](#), [Bened Life](#), [Boston Scientific DBS](#), [California Parkinson's Disease Registry](#), [Care Patrol --Sacramento Foothills](#), [Cimino Care](#), [Dance for Parkinson's](#), [Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center](#), [Elder Care Management](#), [Eldervibe LLC](#), [Geriatric Wellness & Caregiving](#), [Hope in Your Corner](#), [Insightec](#), [Kaiser Permanente](#), [Kyowa Kirin](#), [Lions Project for Canine Companions](#), [McIlwain Mobility Solutions](#), [Medtronic](#), [Merz Therapeutics](#), [Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma America](#), [Music Therapy Impact Fund - North State Therapy Choir](#), [Northern California Care Planning Council](#), [NYNSOBIOMetrix](#), [Parkinson's Foundation](#), [Placer County Veterans Services](#), [Quinn's Gym](#), [Sage Eldercare Solutions](#), [Senior Care Solutions](#), [Senior Safety Specialist - Dot Boyd](#), [St. Michael's Episcopal Church](#), [Summerset Senior Living](#), [Supernus](#), [Sutter Health Valley Area](#), [The Neptune Sailing Project](#), [The Park at Laguna Springs](#), [UC Davis](#)

[Sponsor and Exhibitor Opportunities Here](#)

[Conference Register and Information Here](#)

Good News About Parkinson's Is Here

*by Susan E. Whitaker, M.A., CCC-SLP
2025 PANC Conference Speaker*



So, you have been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, and you want to know about the "Good News."

What is good when all you have probably heard is that it is, "progressive", "incurable", "degenerative" and maybe that the symptoms will "worsen over time"? It can often make you feel as if it is hopeless and that there is nothing you can do about it. However, you have more control than you think. But, to take control, you must become pro-active, purposeful, deliberate and intentional. The first step in accomplishing these goals is to become educated about what YOU CAN DO.

Luckily, the human body is amazing and appears to have a default system if something goes wrong. This holds true for our brain as we not only have an automatic motor system but also, an intentional motor system. At the time of a Parkinson's diagnosis, 60-80% of the dopamine producing cells can be lost. These dopamine producing cells are essential for accomplishing automatic motor movements such as swinging your arms when you walk, getting up out of a chair, or picking up a fork when eating. Thus, the automatic motor system, requires dopamine to accomplish these tasks and that's why many automatic movements such as walking, writing or even speaking can be diminished.

Here's the good news; Our brain also contains an intentional motor system which does not require as much dopamine to accomplish these automatic movements. Actually, we have used the intentional motor system all of our lives. For example, during a job interview you probably were deliberate when you sat up straight, had a firm handshake and used clear, audible speech which could easily be understood. You were intentional and deliberate in how you presented yourself during the interview. But because the automatic

motor system took responsibility for accomplishing all of the daily automatic movements, you never had to activate the intentional motor system to accomplish those tasks. Now, with a Parkinson's diagnosis, you will need to practice ensuring that you use the intentional motor system all of the time.

There are two very important automatic movements that can be negatively impacted with Parkinson's disease – speech and swallowing. If you are experiencing difficulty with your speech, your speech may not be loud enough or as clear and crisp as it was previously or you may be having swallowing problems including coughing, drooling, and choking. More good news is that you can take control of these two automatic motor tasks and be better tomorrow than you are today! It does take effort and time to become educated about what can be done, learning the techniques needed to improve your speech and swallowing and most importantly, a daily practice to prevail against the progressive nature of Parkinson's.

Luckily, Parkinson Voice Project, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, has made it their mission to help people with Parkinson's and related disorders REGAIN and RETAIN their speech and swallowing. They not only treat patients in-person and online through their Texas clinic but also train speech-language pathologists and graduate students worldwide (like me!) in their highly effective SPEAK OUT! Therapy Program.

As a speech-language pathologist certified to provide SPEAK OUT! therapy, I am excited to share this information at the PANC Conference in October and help you live again with INTENT and take back control of your body and improved voice, speech, and swallow function. I'll share more good news about this topic that will supplement the plethora of information and resources available to attendees of the event. I look forward to seeing you there!

MORE New PANC Website Pages

PANC Volunteer Opportunities

Do you want to help PANC serve our constituents? It does take a village. We now have a volunteer opportunities page if you or someone that you know wants to participate. The page will be updated with new opportunities as they become available. The link is on the top front page of our website at panctoday.org. Conference help is especially needed for now (a perfect opportunity for the students in your life to get in their volunteer hours).

[Click here to learn more.](#)

Equipment Exchange

PANC receives numerous calls regarding equipment needs and donations, so we are happy to support a webpage for individuals in our Parkinson's community who want to connect and share mobility-related items in the NorCal region. If you're looking for a new or gently used item, or you have items that could help others find independence and support, the platform is available to facilitate **exchanges to buy, sell, or giveaway**.

[Click here to learn more.](#) The site is like a Pennysaver ad -- you post your item(s), and the public can search and will contact you directly. To ensure a positive and respectful experience for all participants, please review the guidelines before posting or searching for items [on this page here](#). PANC assumes no liability for items posted or sold through the site.

If you want a more immediate option to donate goods, [click here](#) for a list of other available donation opportunities.



New Feature!

Harry's Corner: Making The Rounds for PANC

Since my term as President of this incredible organization started in May, I've had a personal goal to attend every PANC Support Group in Northern California during my term. I can gladly say, that for the ones I've attended thus far, each is unique with their own flavor and inspiration. As an individual myself living with Parkinson's, opportunities to learn how various groups support and provide for others has been deeply gratifying.

Visiting the Brentwood Parkinson Support Group recently was a deeply moving experience — one that left a lasting impression on me and felt especially meaningful. From the moment I walked into the room, I was struck by the warmth and resilience that radiated from the group. There's a kind of unspoken understanding among everyone in the Brentwood group and a shared strength that binds them together. It's not just about managing Parkinson's—it's about living fully, supporting one another, and finding joy in the everyday.

I feel incredibly fortunate to be able to share in these moments with such inspiring individuals. Each Support Group visit reminds me of the power of community and the importance of showing up—not just physically, but emotionally too. The Brentwood group reaffirmed why this journey matters to me. It's not about ticking off locations on a map; it's about connecting with people, learning from their experiences, and being part of something bigger than myself. I left feeling humbled, energized, and more committed than ever to continuing this path with you and for you. There is much more work for us to do at PANC, and myself, our Directors, staff, volunteers, and community are here for it!



For Grown-Ups: *Third Act*, Online Movie Screening August 28 from 5 to 6:40 pm PST

[Click here to login to the event](#) at movie time. Can log in early to test sound.

Generations of artists call Robert A. Nakamura "the godfather of Asian American media," but filmmaker Tadashi Nakamura calls him Dad. What begins as a documentary about his father's career takes a turn with a Parkinson's Disease diagnosis, and evolves into an

Finding Resilience When Care Partnering is Hard

by Lisa Mooney MSW, LCSW, UC Davis Health
PANC Conference Speaker
Part 2 of 2



Assisting and caring for a loved one with Parkinson's Disease can be HARD. The World Health Organization points to neurological conditions as one of the greatest threats to public health and the symptoms and disabilities associated with neurological conditions have a major impact on individuals, their families and caregivers and health care service use. These impacts can often lead to emotional, physical, and financial distress for the entire family, especially care partners.

In last month's issue, I shared high and low resilience practices. Here are some resilience recommendations that should help too:

- Have a sleep routine to ensure better quality rest (minimize caffeine, avoid tv or electronics in bed)
- Take breaks during the day
- Consider 3–5-minute meditations to alleviate anxiety, stress, and frustration and lower blood pressure. Consider--*Smell the Roses* (inhale through the nose/mouth for 2-3 seconds), then *Blow out the Candle* (exhale slowly through mouth). Do this 2-3 times as needed
- Maintain social activities and relationships (even if your PD loved one cannot)
- Laugh as much as possible (watch funny shows/movies/YouTube clips) and find ways to laugh everyday
- Exercise. If your PD loved one is able, include them. Ways to incorporate this into your busy day are:
 1. Do stretches or balance exercises during commercial breaks
 2. Before each meal do some chair exercises/stretchers
 3. Stretch before bed or when waking up
 4. Yoga, walking, gym, Rock Steady, and bootcamps are all good ways to get blood flowing which supports brain health as well as manage stress, depression, anxiety, etc.
 5. Use Smart Watches to track blood pressure, heart rate, activity level which helps awareness of how much activity you are getting
- ASK for what you need and want
- Keep a running list of things you need done, but maybe don't have time or know how to do. That way when someone asks, "how can I help", you can reference your list and ask something like, "I need my weeds pulled and milk/eggs from store. Can you please assist with either of those?" "Can you help me fill out these forms?" Get creative. People WANT to help if they are offering.
- Explore NEW ways to make memories within the changes the family is experiencing. Maybe instead of a big holiday party, you do PJ night with family with a movie, quiet games, and favorite snacks.
- Go for a walk together, talk about or point out the color of the leaves, and sounds of animals. This is called walking meditation and can lower depression, anxiety, irritability and stress.



Social connectedness

Maintaining healthy relationships with family, friends, PD community

Prioritize healthy relationships

Join support groups or interest groups

Avoid negative, energy depleting relationships or social events

Help others when you can

Investing in yourself

Finding time to care for self

Finding time to relax or enjoy time alone

Practice mindfulness/gratitude, positive self talk

Be proactive—Ask for help, utilize the help

Believe and remind yourself of all the times you have overcome hard times

Educate and Plan

Keep things in perspective

Accept change and hard things will HAPPEN

Adapt and Adjust as needed

Learn from past – what has worked well for you? What has not worked well?

Set future goals for yourself, family

Plan a family outing or fun event

Professional Assistance

Medical Care

Mental Health Care

PD Center of Excellence Medical Care

Parkinson Association of Northern California (PANC)

Read part 1 of this article for resilience recommendations in the [July Update Here](#)

The Harmonica and PD: Breathing New Life into Therapy

Parkinson's disease (PD) affects movement, coordination, and voice. While medication and traditional therapies form the cornerstone of treatment, recent research and anecdotal evidence suggest that alternative, music-based intervention, such as harmonica playing, can offer significant therapeutic benefits. In fact, playing the harmonica may be more than just a creative outlet for people with PD; it may also support physical, emotional, and neurological well-being.



How Does Harmonica Playing Help People with PD?

1. **Respiratory Health and Breath Control** -- One of the most notable benefits of harmonica playing is its impact on respiratory function. PD often weakens the muscles involved in breathing, speaking, and swallowing. Playing the harmonica requires controlled inhalation and exhalation, effectively giving the lungs and diaphragm a workout.
2. **Oral-Motor Coordination and Swallowing** -- Harmonica playing also engages the muscles of the mouth and face. Regular use can help maintain or improve lip strength and tongue coordination, chewing and swallowing abilities, and articulation in speech
3. **Fine Motor Skills and Hand Dexterity** -- Although tremors and rigidity can make fine motor movements challenging, learning to hold and play a harmonica engages the fingers, wrists, and arms in a coordinated way that may encourage neuroplasticity, slow the decline in fine motor skills, and improve finger agility and grip strength
4. **Cognitive Engagement and Memory**-- Learning songs, remembering note sequences, and practicing rhythm involve multiple brain areas. This mental stimulation can help improve attention span and focus, support working memory and processing and encourage pattern recognition and cognitive flexibility
5. **Emotional and Social Well-being** -- Living with PD can take a toll on mental health, often contributing to depression, anxiety, and social isolation. Harmonica playing

offers a sense of accomplishment and purpose, opportunities for creative expression, a social activity when done in groups or harmonica club, and a meditative quality that may reduce stress

Organizations like the American Parkinson Disease Association (APDA) have supported harmonica classes as part of broader therapeutic programs. A small but growing body of research backs the benefits of harmonica playing, with some studies noting improvements in respiratory function, motor coordination, and quality of life in participants with PD. While it's not a cure or a replacement for standard treatments, harmonica playing can be a powerful adjunct therapy—one that brings enjoyment along with measurable physical and emotional benefits.

No prior musical experience is required to begin. Many PD support groups now offer harmonica classes, either in person or online, led by music therapists or trained facilitators. Beginners are usually encouraged to start with a simple diatonic harmonica, which costs about \$12 (often in the key of C), and basic exercises focus on breathing and simple melodies. Contact the [Hawaii Parkinson Association](#) or the [North State Therapy Choir](#) for upcoming free classes!

In the realm of Parkinson's therapy, the harmonica might seem an unlikely ally. Yet this small, pocket-sized instrument offers big benefits: strengthening the body, stimulating the mind, and soothing the soul. As more people with Parkinson's discover the harmonica, it's clear that music, once again, proves to be a healing force.



Clinical Study

BlueRock Develops Avenue to Engineer Dopaminergic Neurons from Stem Cells

It's a case of so far, so good for BlueRock Therapeutics' first clinical trial of Parkinson's disease therapy bemdaneprocel, with no major safety issues reported after a year in patients who received the transplanted cells.

The Bayer subsidiary presented results from the ongoing phase 1 study at the recent International Congress of Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders (MDS) in Copenhagen, which showed no serious adverse events in 12 patients treated with low and high doses of bemdaneprocel (BRT-DA01), as well as preliminary evidence from PET imaging that the transplanted cells were surviving and growing in the brain.

Bemdaneprocel is administered by surgical transplantation into a part of the brain known as the putamen, in the hope of grafting dopamine-producing cells that can bolster the depleted levels of the neurotransmitter seen in Parkinson's.

While the data is still very early, the company said patients showed signs of clinical improvement, measured using the MDS-Unified Parkinson's Disease Rating Scale and patients' own symptom diary records.

If you are interested in participating in the second clinical trial, [click here for information](#).

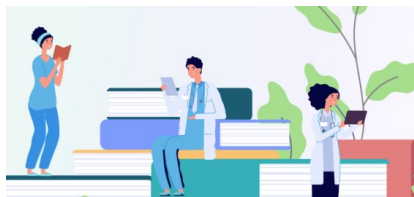


Free Audio Books from the Braille and Talking Book Library

Do you know that there is a library that offers free audiobooks by mail or download to anyone who is unable to read standard sized print due to a physical, visual, or print disability?



Come to this Zoom session and hear about the 160,000 audiobooks and magazines available for free through the Braille and Talking Book Library on **Tuesday, August 26 from 9:30 to 10:30 am**. [Click here for when it starts](#).



UC Davis' Parkinson's CME Modules for Providers

Are you a clinical provider working with people affected by Parkinson's disease and want to learn more?

The UC Davis Department of Neurology and Neurological Surgery's Center for Movement Disorders and Neurorestoration has developed a modular asynchronous CME education program that covers a variety of topics related to the clinical management of Parkinson's.

Each of the five modules are designed to be completed during short periods of learning (60 - 75 minutes each). Enrollment is offered at no cost in 2025 thanks to a grant from the Parkinson's Foundation. [Click here to learn more](#).

August Free Webinars

Wednesday, August 20 at 10am

Genetics & Parkinson's with the Parkinson's Foundation

The basics of genetics and PD, and explore how genetic changes may influence PD risk and how symptoms progress. Learn more about PD GENERation: Mapping the Future of Parkinson's Disease, and why participation is helping to improve our understanding of PD

and contribute to better care for individuals.

[Info and Register Here](#)

Wednesday, August 20 at 2:30pm

Complementary Therapies & Parkinson's: Myths, Facts, and What Actually Works with the Parkinson Society of British Columbia

The speaker will separate fact from fiction in the world of complementary therapies for PD. He will explore common myths and provide evidence-informed insights into therapies that may (or may not) support symptom management and improve quality of life.

[Info and Register Here](#)

Thursday, August 21 at 9am

Advances in Stem Cell Science for Parkinson's with the Michael J Fox Foundation

Experts will discuss the latest in stem cell research and the potential to treat Parkinson's.

[Register and Info Here](#)

Thursday, August 21 at noon

Introducing The Parkinson's Plan: A New Path to Prevention & Treatment with PMD Alliance

The speakers are the co-authors of "The Parkinson's Plan." The book includes "Parkinson's 25," a checklist to manage existing symptoms or lower the risk of Parkinson's through food, water, air, and lifestyle.

[Info and Register Here](#)

Tuesday, August 26 from 4 to 5:30pm

Meet the co-Author of The Parkinson's Plan with the Parkinson's Social Network

The Parkinson's Plan is a research-backed guide that empowers readers to take action to lower their risk of PD. The author, Ray Dorsey, will share information from the book and answer listener questions.

[Info and Register Here](#)

Thursday, August 28 at 11:30am

Kaizen Rocks for Women with PD with Twitchy Woman

One of the speakers just announced he has PD in a "LA Times" front page article. He will talk about Kaizen Rocks, which combines boxing and martial arts to improve the lives of people with PD, along with his Kaizen Rocks coach.

[Info and Register Here](#)

Thursday, August 28 from 3-4:30pm

PSP and CBD Overview with Stanford Memory Disorders Center

An overview of progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP) and corticobasal degeneration (CBD). She will cover how PSP and CBD are diagnosed, the most common symptoms, and how these symptoms can be treated.

[At meeting time, click here](#)

Thank you to Stanford Parkinson's Community Outreach for providing information in this section.

How did you like this email?



* Contact Jan Whitney [here](#) if you are interested in placing a sponsor article in the *Update*.

Parkinson Association of Northern California | 1024 Iron Point Rd., Ste 1046 | Folsom, CA 95630
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