

Moving / Moved

by Trudy Hommel, team and process coach in Parkinson house Rosendaal, NL

During my journey in the field of care for elderly as a team and process coach today I had a spontaneous notion to take part of the class of Dance for Health, Parkinson group.

Within the symptomatology of this disease you've got related memory problems as well. The class has 11 participants (from 15 inhabitants of this institution) and they get an hour dance class from a very special lady. She comes here once a week and shares with us whole-heartedly her amazing dance qualities.

The music was very nice and worked disarmingly for all of the participants, including myself and two other volunteers. We started very softly with the hands up as if in a snowstorm; the legs moving one by one while everybody was seated. Each part of the treacherous fragile body was given attention with the tasks to collect the snow, make the snowball and throw it on somebody. Everybody was in the game, some very quietly, some enthusiastically, each according to what he needed.

Slowly there came a bit of acceleration into the movement with an Italian song, a real tango style. One of the ladies, who isn't on this world anymore with her mind for the most of the time, calls up: 'Tango D'Amore' against her neighbour. The neighbour lady calls very loudly: 'These women can seduce the best.' while her hands are wildly moving in the air.

The leader of the class catches this opportunity and takes the tango on the chair to another level: we show our beautiful legs, stretch the ankles till the end and seduce each other with these movements.

After that there is a waltz coming, where our hands join in the air together and again let go. We make a little 'hug yourself' dance: hands on your shoulders and cuddle them softly for a while. My neighbour mutters along with the music and tries to reach her shoulders with the hands heavily marked with arthritis. Softly, I help her to touch her shoulders with her crooked fingers grab mine to stay in contact. We are moving lightly together.

There are couple of new men coming and they immediately join. They are brothers of one the inhabitants of this Parkinson house, who come very often to visit and help, where needed. They are immediately moving, and making contact with the rest of the dancers. I would like to have more eyes to see this beautiful happening.

For an hour nothing reminds of any disease at all in this house, but more Rocco Granata and waltz. I feel that more and more eye contact is made. The class leader is softly dancing hand in hand with a man, who doesn't have any mimic at all anymore. She leads his hands precisely in a right tempo in the space, he goes with her.

I feel the encouraging nod from the leader to take one of other dancers into contact as well. With the help he stands up slowly and we do a dance which not even remotely reminds of waltz, but we connect to the music of Leonard Cohen and it feels just right. Slowly other man stands up from the chair as well and joins the tempo of the song with his hands; his eyes dancing as well.

What a privilege to be part of this. What richness can an hour bring to the start of another hectic week. My stamina is not the best and I have to do my best to catch up with the leader, who is nicely enthusiastic as well as supple as a ballerina (which she actually is) and can give any form to her body she would like.

For now she brought to movement not only eleven souls with Parkinson, but me as well: I feel moved.