



The Victory Summit® Virtual Event: Mental Health and Wellness

Welcome and Inspiration

with Polly Dawkins, Connie Carpenter Phinney, and Davis Phinney

Recorded on September 17, 2021

Davis Phinney Foundation

Polly Dawkins (Executive Director, Davis Phinney Foundation):

This Victory Summit Event is focused on mental health and wellness. I'm Polly Dawkins, the executive director of the Davis Phinney Foundation. Thank you for being here. Alrighty. I am getting ready to introduce our first speakers, Davis Phinney and Connie Carpenter Phinney are athletes or entrepreneurs are advocates, they're authors, they're parents, they're people living with Parkinson's and care partners. And one of the things that I have learned from Davis and working with Davis and Connie over the years as cofounders of the Davis Phinney Foundation, is that they are just lifelong advocates for wellbeing for our community, the Parkinson's community and beyond. And that has been really the impetus for the existence of the Davis Phinney Foundation, which they found at 17 years ago. So welcome Davis and Connie. And I'm going to turn this over to the two of you.

Connie Carpenter Phinney and Davis Phinney (Founders of Davis Phinney Foundation):

Thank you, Polly.

Davis Phinney:

I'm Davis, and this is my lovely wife Connie.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

It is. And we're really happy to be here. And just so appreciative of everybody who's taking the time on this Friday to just kind of get a health and wellness check, I think. I think that's why we're here and we can all use that. So man, we're happy to have you here and I can't believe that over half of you, this is your first time being exposed to a Victory Summit. So I'm gonna, I'm going to also maybe assume that



this is the first time half of you have been exposed to us and we're married, we've been married, our anniversary is coming up, we've been married, you know, 37, 38 years now. And you know what, half that time now we've been living with Parkinson's disease in our relationship, a very unwanted, but we're very accustomed to this guest in our relationship.

And so we wanna welcome you to the two of us. We do speak with some humor. So you know, give us a little break if the humor falls flat and we can't hear you laughing out there. So we'll do our best to keep it light.

Davis Phinney:

We'll just assume that you're laughing.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

That you're following us. But we're really happy to kick this event off. And it's so important, especially as we wrap up summer and come into this fall, where once again we find ourselves you know, here in Boulder, Colorado where live with a renewed mask mandate in order to protect ourselves from COVID and you know, it's just, it feels like tough times, right. You know, it's not an easy time to be navigating Parkinson's with a global pandemic, but we're doing it quite well. And Davis and I have actually said too, that I think some of the key traits that you've learned or learned to, you know, personified through Parkinson's have really helped with dealing with this pandemic as well. And so I think you know, we just want say thanks for being here. And I don't know if you have something you want to say right away, but otherwise I'm gonna get this going

Davis Phinney:

I mean you've got a good roll going so I don't want to stop that.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

I got a good roll going. He knows what to say. Anyway, hey, listen, I want everybody to just kind of sit with me for a second. We're going to do just a little breathing kind of visualization exercise to bring us into the here and now of the moment that we're in.

Davis Phinney:

Again, we are from Boulder. So you got to expect a little bit of...



Connie Carpenter Phinney:

You know Boulder, where, you know, I think visualization is a big part of what we're up to today with mental health and wellness, because what we really want to do is visualize a positive outcome, you know, throughout the day, throughout this morning of learning and thought to not focus on the negative, but really focused on the positive. So let's do that together. You know, we're in it together. We're here together right now in this moment and we're bending time and space a little bit to actually, you know, be together. And even those that will be listening later will be part of this togetherness. So what I really want to ask you to do now is, you know, if you can, put both your feet on the ground, maybe soften your gaze, you don't have to be looking at us through this next few minutes, but you know, maybe close your eyes and let's just all take a nice inspiration through our nose.

Let's breathe in through our nose, hold it for a second and then just let it out and really feel your shoulders drop. Feel yourself, kind of come into this present moment where we're all here together. We're taking this time together and let's breathe again inhale all together and then let it out. And when we let it out, let's imagine on the next inhale again, keeping your eyes closed. Let's imagine that we've all been airdropped into the Colorado wilderness. There's three and a half million acres of wilderness in Colorado. So I want to imagine that we've all been airdropped into the same beautiful valley. Let's take another breath then with that imagery that we're all together in this vast wilderness, we've found each other nice inspiration and let it out. I'm envisioning a mountain lake some beautiful mountains in the background, a nicely packed lunch.

Davis Phinney:

And the aspens.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

Yeah. What are the aspens doing? It's coming on middle of September, they're turning golden in Colorado. We don't get all the full colors that some of you get, but we get a lot of golden in the hills mixed in with the evergreens.

Davis Phinney:

And you can hear the leaves.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:



You can hear, they say the aspens quake, they rustled together. So just be in this moment together and think about what that means that we've come together. We're not isolated, we're out in a vast wilderness and it's actually beautiful here. We're in a beautiful place. I just want to emphasize that we're here together. We're here together and we do need a little help. So we're going to ask for help to find our way out, to find our way to another view to another place and just take that time together to do that. And so please take another breath in and imagine yourself in the most beautiful place with beautiful people and we're all helping each other, and now let's let it out, open your eyes, ah, and just be here, right?

We're all here together in this place, searching for answers. We might not even be that eager for a way out because it's so beautiful here. And that's part of shifting your mindset. That's part of what we like to do, shift our mindset. Davis and I like to every day, we're actually pretty simple in our needs and desires. And one of them is just to have a moment of awe. And so if we look outside, Davis never moves faster than when he's moving outside to take a photo of a beautiful sunset, right?

Davis Phinney:

Right.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

And you know, we just don't want to miss those moments. And so this is a day of reflection on moments, you know? And we talk a lot about that with moments of victory for Davis. And he's gonna give us a little message on that right now. But the first thing I wanted to ask him is how are you doing?

Davis Phinney:

I'm doing fine .

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

Oh, and he knows fine is not an okay answer. Don't you hate that? When people say fine, how fine could you be? You're not fine. What are you? You're better than fine.

Davis Phinney:

I'm good, I'm great.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:



You're good. And you're a great, or, you know what, if you're not great, it's okay to say that too. But I think today is great because we know we have several hundred of you listening and learning and sharing and being together. And we know that'll trickle out to, you know, to other people and other places. And we encourage you to share. It might encourage you to look for resources in your own communities as well. But this whole concept of fine is really bothersome sometimes because too often people ask us, how are you? And you say fine. And you're really not fine. Not that many of us are fine during this pandemic. So it's okay to say, not so good or today was great and maybe explain why, but lately Davis has been having some great moments and I asked him to, you know, let's talk a little bit about that. Like some of your discoveries in the last few weeks, I would say with your friend, Kevin, who also has Parkinson's. Hey Kevin, if you're out there.

Davis Phinney:

Kevin and I have both joined a very nearby to us, health club and we've created this whole essence of playfulness, which is a childlike quality, that seems pretty far away if you have Parkinson's.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

Yeah. Let's say that again. So a childlike quality that feels pretty far away when you have Parkinson's right. I mean, I think, you know, we've been living with it for a long time. We're not youngsters, but these guys have kind of reinvented play in the health club.

Davis Phinney:

So we set up all these various stations with lots of implements of that challenge our balance and our training as well as...

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

Cognition.

Davis Phinney:

Cognition. Yeah. Because when we're each standing on a half ball trying to retain our balance, while throwing a medicine ball to each other and then naming musical bands, that begin with M or B or D that's a challenge. Believe me.



Connie Carpenter Phinney:

And that's some of those you guys I used to do when you were going to rock steady boxing. I think Kevin still goes there. And so that's the thing is like challenge your body and your mind at the same time. And you know, I bet you do a lot of laughing in that.

Davis Phinney:

Well and speaking everything out loud so that we're using our voice with that too. But yeah, I mean, I've found that those are some surely moments of joy, especially when I can actually come up with a band name or else and not lose my balance.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

Yeah, please don't do that. So, I think that, you know, the, the message really with that too, is just, you know, is to mix it up, right? To seek companionship when you're out. I think that's been really helpful because isolation is, you know, is really one of our enemies as we age and especially with Parkinson's. And so to reach out and find community, you know, and it was really tough I think during the pandemic, when, you know, you couldn't go to some of the classes that you were used to going to, and you know, we all got a little bit used to zoom, but to be able to resume things safely and you guys are doing that indoors now with a mask, but that's fine, because guess what you're still together, you know, and you're still able to to do what you want to do. And so it's a question of staying safe and still working toward the future because any work that you and Kevin are doing in the gym is, you know, preserving your health and improving on your health.

Davis Phinney:

Well, right. And now, our number one mantra is no injuries.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

No injuries. Yeah. Yeah. And that's a good one. And sometimes you may need to go to you know, to go to the doctor, maybe get with a PT first and find out what you can do or what maybe you shouldn't do or what you really need to work on. And so we'd really like to encourage you to do that too, and keep your circle of care active and keep yourself active. And of course that's a big mantra of ours.



Davis Phinney:

Yeah. And also to be creative with your form of exercise.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

Yeah. Because any PT will say the best form of exercise is the one that you'll do.

Davis Phinney:

Well, the one that you do and but if you can expand on that one exercise, so you're not just in too much of a rut of doing the same thing, but challenging other aspects of your body and mind, that'll be very helpful for your Parkinson's.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

Yeah. And avoid being frustrated. Remember too, some of you, you know, we're all in this journey at different places. And so some of you are in a newly diagnosed category. Some of you have been living with Parkinson's for quite a while. Some of you are doing very well, managing well, some of you are frustrated. So I want you to remember, always that, you know, Parkinson's is this kind of tripartite of mood, physical symptoms, and cognitive symptoms, right. So it's not what most people assume from the outside, if they see a tremor that that's the extent of your Parkinson's and of course not all who have Parkinson's even have a tremor. And so in keeping all that in mind, it's like those three areas need work, you know, whether it's mood, whether it's cognition, and whether it's physical symptoms and they're all intertwined with the medicines that you take. And so the important thing is to really, you know, work in concert with your doctors and your caregivers to try to find...

Davis Phinney:

Dial it in.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

Yeah dial it in. And it's an ongoing process we've found. Yeah. Not every day is the same. If it was, that would be a little easier, although it does give you hope for even those better moments. Right.

Davis Phinney:



Yeah. Well, and as you speak about mood, it reminds me of our conversation with our great friend, the poet, Wayne Gilbert,

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

Who's probably also listening. Hi Wayne.

Davis Phinney:

Yeah. Whose wife, Alice, challenges him every morning and every evening before he goes to bed to come up with four things that he was grateful for throughout the day and what he's looking forward to in the morning. And at first, he was sort of put out by that, but then he realized that he was actually looking for moments to be grateful for and noticing things that he wasn't noticing before. And so that I would say with equating to an every victory counts type moment.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

Yeah. That's for sure. And so, you know, we talk about this whole concept of joy and happiness and how to cultivate that in your life as well, because it's not, you know, that's what all of us humans need to do, and it's not just people with Parkinson's, you know, we need to cultivate our optimism. We need to cultivate our gratitude and what better way than to actually write it down and then put it, speak it, tell people, you know, share what you're grateful for. And sometimes, it's a list of people's names. Sometimes it's events that have occurred in the day or sometimes it's a global event that's happening that you're like, oh, thank goodness, you know that everybody's okay. You know, or whatever, from a natural disaster. There's all kinds of things to be grateful for near and far.

And so we would like to challenge you to start cultivating that for yourself along with a few other things. So the concept of cultivating, you know, happiness and improving our mood also goes to kind of bringing some humor in, and as we approach the end of our 20 minutes here one of the things Davis and I like to do, because, you know, one of the really, really difficult parts of Parkinson's is facial masking. And we all, as humans rely on each other's facial expressions to read into what people are understanding or what they're thinking about us, or, and a lot of times with a flat affect that Parkinson's can cause people are misinterpreting you all the time and, or you're just a little bit slower. So you're, you know, you're not quite on the joke line or you're not able to Quip as much.



Davis Phinney:

And this is an actual facial mask, not a Co-Vid mask.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

Oh yeah, that's a good point. Oh, double masking. Oh goodness. Yes. And if you're not familiar with facial masking we also, our daughter actually did a pretty good series on that with an expert on facial masking. So that's the point when your face is just more blank. And it was actually quite interesting for Kelsey to do this because I always say that, you know, if you're, if you have Parkinson's and you have teenage children and they're trying to provoke you and your face is kind of blank, it's really irritating, to the child, but it's actually sort of a line of defense for any parent is not to be too reactive. But in any case, I digress. What we like to do is work on our facial muscles sometimes.

Davis Phinney:

Which brings in some humor.

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

Which brings in some humor because we normally do it like in the bathroom mirror, but we wanted to invite you to do it with us. Because we actually have the screen in front of us. We can pretend we're in the mirror by ourselves being silly. But it allows us to open up our face. And especially for Davis.

Davis Phinney:

That feels good, you get a certain buzz from...

Connie Carpenter Phinney:

You get a little buzz from just being goofy and just opening up those tight facial muscles. Right. And especially if you don't get to see a lot of people during the day and you're not interacting as much. So let's all just do that for just a couple more seconds and just appreciate the fact that we can laugh a little bit together.

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