Languages and cultures are so varied across the world, what is normal and comfortable for one person is almost painful to another. Don’t stand too close; stand closer; don’t hold eye contact; keep eye contact. How do we know the right approach, when you are faced with multiculturalism around the world? Is it possible to have an approach that is one size fits all? The answer in its most simplified version is no... and yes.

Let me explain. We all should know by now the steps for Positive Physical Approach™ (PPA). We learn them, we internalize them, we make them part of who we are. We must – in order for it to be real and authentic. Broken down, Positive Physical Approach simplified, is a series of steps. This is where the answer to the question above is no. Because PPA, the physical steps involved, is not a one size fits all approach. Different people, with different languages, different cultures, different comfort zones will all respond differently to PPA. But PPA is more than a breakdown of physical steps. If this is what you have been practicing, or having your learners’ practice, they may be missing the mark and they may be feeling that PPA is NOT in fact a one size fits all.

I recently had a conversation with someone in our PAC community about this exact topic and she was hoping to look at research on cultures, and how PPA may need to be adjusted for differences. She discussed how she has noticed that certain cultures do not respond well to PPA. This got me thinking of PPA as a whole. What is it? What is its purpose? Is it not just a way to focus on the person? There are specific steps to follow for the novice, but the advanced practitioner has learned that PPA is about more than the steps. It is about observation, being curious, compassionate, authentic, and empowering others. In essence, it is about the relationship. If we approach someone using PPA and are focusing on the steps of PPA, rather than the person, we are missing the point. We are focused on our agenda, of getting the approach right, rather than being present and really connecting with the person. It is so easy when first learning to change our approach to get caught in this cycle and then not feel like PPA is a one size fits all. However, at the core of PPA is the relationship, the person. The purpose of the pause at six feet, is not just for the PLwD to see us, but also for us to see them, observe them, and decide how to approach. How to adapt for that person regardless of language, culture, or any other variations we find in our humanity. So if we are taking that pause, that deep breath, and focusing on what our five senses tell us about their five senses, and really using PPA the way it was meant to be, as a tool to create relationships, then yes, PPA IS a one size fits all, and it does in fact transcend culture.

Sharon has spent her entire nursing career as an RN in Long Term Care, most of which has been focused on Behavioral Support for People Living with Dementia. She has been trained in several different philosophies of care and methods to help, but none...
resonated with her as much as PAC. She has a passion for making life better for those living with dementia and helping others to understand the disease and to truly see PLwD as precious and unique. She has recently left long term care to work solely on educating others in the PAC philosophy. In her off time, she spends time with her husband and five children, who range in age from 3 to 20 years old.