

# CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER

Caring for someone with Parkinson's can be a big job, especially if that person has dyskinesia. But as a caregiver, you can't ignore your own needs. The following tips will help you maintain your own well-being and relationships, while you're taking care of your loved one.

## HOW TO STAY PHYSICALLY HEALTHY

Take breaks from caregiving when you can.

Make sure to eat when hungry, and drink plenty of water throughout the day.

Aim to sleep 8 to 10 hours per night.

Find time for your own health appointments.

Carve out time every day to relax.

Make time to exercise—at a local gym or in your home:

- Try bodyweight-based exercise.
- Practice yoga or tai chi, which not only help keep your body in shape, but also serve as effective stress-management tools.

If you're doing a lot of heavy lifting in your role as a caregiver, you'll need comfortable shoes that provide support and reinforcement.

## KEEP UP YOUR INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

Social stimulation and interaction with old friends can provide a break in routine.

Take up new activities or reengage in older ones that add joy to your life:

- Play an instrument, draw, paint, run, or take a group walk.
- Read books, watch movies you love, or listen to music.
- Consider meditation for relaxation.

## HOW TO STAY MENTALLY WELL

Track your moods and emotions every day:

- Keep notes on your emotional state—happy, sad, or in between—as well as on incidents that have upset you. This will help you formulate solutions to problems. Use a:
  - Handwritten journal.
  - Smartphone app.
  - Text-based mood monitoring system, such as Mood 24/7, on your mobile device.
  - Password-protected blog (e.g. WordPress and Wix)

Look out for signs of exhaustion, anxiety, and depression. If you feel you need help, try these strategies:

- Get professional help by asking your doctor for a referral.
- Join a local support group for Parkinson's caregivers.
- Seek out online support communities.

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS AND ASKING FOR HELP

Determine what you can do and what you need help with.

Let family members know what help you need (cooking, cleaning, and other chores).

Don't sacrifice your relationships with friends out of fear of burdening others with your challenges.

Share with others the difficulties of being a caregiver.

Establish a point person or create a public blog to provide updates for those in your circle, so that you don't need to contact everyone yourself.

Be patient with others—many don't understand what caregiving entails.

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