

UC Neuroscience Institute  
AT UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL


GARDNER CENTER FOR  
PARKINSON'S DISEASE  
& MOVEMENT DISORDERS

UNIVERSITY OF  
Cincinnati

## Tips for Coping with Parkinson's Disease

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## Challenges Over Time



- Physical
- Social
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Financial
- Employment
- Practical

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## Motor & Non-motor Stressors for PwP

- Tremor & Walking
- Falling & Freezing
- Speech & Dressing
- Handwriting & Daily living activities (ADLs)
- Swallowing & Salivating
- Turning in bed
- Fine motor control
- Medication side effects
- Nausea
- Constipation
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness
- Slowness
- Memory problems
- Anxiety/depression
- Social situations

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## Partners/Friends/Caregivers

- Shifting roles – my part and other's part
- Balancing 'doing for' and 'letting' PwP do for him/herself
- Hard to see the changes happening – it would be great if Parkinson's came with a time line of what comes next and when
- Talking helps validate our experience and recognize our needs

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## Emotional Challenges & Fears

- Loss of control
- Changes in self-image
- Dependency concerns
- Stigma – real and perceived
- Abandonment
- Anger
- Isolation
- Confront mortality
- Living with the new normal
- Changing relationships with family, friends, professionals

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## Potential Effects when Stress is Ignored

- Isolation
- Intolerance
- Resentment
- Loneliness
- Lashing out
- Clamming up
- Wheel spinning
- Lower sex drive
- Nagging
- Blaming
- Distrust
- Social withdrawal
- Lack of intimacy
- Score keeping

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### Three Factors Determine our Reactions to Stress

- Our ability to predict what will happen next
- Our ability to maintain a sense of control
- Maintain a sense of optimism

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### Essential Coping Skills

- Good medical and allied health care
- Education: learn and learn!
- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Social Support
- Emphasis here:  
Personal Coping Skills

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### Coping involves . . .

<p><u>Personal Skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emotions</li> <li>▪ <b>The Power of Perception: Positive Self-talk</b></li> <li>▪ Assertive Communication</li> <li>▪ <b>Coping with the Blues: Resilience</b></li> <li>▪ Transformational Coping</li> </ul>	<p><u>Interpersonal Skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Handling Change</li> <li>▪ Dealing with Conflict</li> <li>▪ Problem-solving</li> </ul>
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### Common Cognitive Distortions and Remedies

<p><u>Distortion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mind reading</li> <li>▪ Catastrophizing</li> <li>▪ The fallacy of fairness</li> <li>▪ Unrecognized expectations</li> </ul>	<p><u>Mental Remedy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Check it out</li> <li>▪ Calculate realistic odds</li> <li>▪ Think of preferences, not fairness</li> <li>▪ Be flexible</li> </ul>
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### Constructive Alternatives to Negative Thinking

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PwP slow getting ready to leave. Partner thinks...	"I can't stand waiting." "We're never on time."	"I can learn to be more patient." or "It's OK to be a few minutes late."
Driving to work for another busy day with two presentations; thinking...	"This is going to be a disaster." "I'll never get everything done."	"This looks like a busy day!" "I can manage."

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### Practicing Resilience

- Admit there is a problem
- Declare you are in charge of the problem
- Stop being self-critical
- Adopt a philosophy of uncertainty
- Reduce your 'necessities'
- Build a new definition of success and fulfillment
- Reject perfectionism
- Don't judge yourself or others
- Take risks in new areas of life
- Open up to others
- Build an attitude of gratitude.

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## Transformational Coping

- Changing a stressful event by viewing it in a broader life perspective.
- Selective ignoring magnifies the positive aspects and trivializes the noxious aspects.
- Practicing an attitude of gratitude is a sure way to happiness.
- Life is 10% what happens to us and 90% what we tell ourselves about what happens to us.

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## Summary

- Parkinson's is a journey on which the following are useful:
  - Positive self-talk
  - Resilience skills
  - Transformational coping skills

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