

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Stretch & Strengthen: Low-Impact Exercise Series** | Thursdays, January 5, 12, 19, 26, & February 2, 9, 16, 23
 Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/stretch-23>
- **Improv for Parkinson's: Laughter is the Best Medicine** | Wednesdays, January 18 – April 5
 Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/laughterimprov-23>
- **Improv for Parkinson's: Performance Troupe** | Wednesdays, January 18 – April 5
 Registration coming soon.
- **Group Voice Therapy Class** | Tuesdays, February 7, 14, 21, 28
 Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/groupvoice-23>
- **New Diagnosis Workshop Series**

 - **Parkinson's Disease: Etiology, Diagnosis, and Symptoms** | Tuesday, February 7
 - **PD Management and Treatment: Medications, Alternative and Advanced PD Therapies, Non-Motor Symptoms Treatment** | Wednesday, February 8
 - **Living Well with Parkinson's Disease** | Tuesday, February 14
 - **How Can a Social Worker, SLP, and OT help?** | Thursday, February 23
 Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/newdiagnosis-23>
- **Ask the Expert Webinar: Intimacy and Parkinson's** | Monday, February 13
 Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/intimacyandpd-23>
- **DOPABEATS Drumming with Doug Pickard**

 - **February/March Sessions** | Wednesdays, February 22, & March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
 Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/dopa1-23>
 - **April/May Sessions** | Wednesdays, April 5, 12, 19, 26, & May 3, 10
 Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/dopa2-23>
- **SongShine with Joani**

 - **March/April Sessions** | Thursdays, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, & April 6
 Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/songshine-23>
 - **April/May Sessions** | Thursdays, April 13, 20, 27, & May 4, 11, 18
 Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/songshine2-23>
- **Global Symposium Series**

- **Impact of Exercise on Cognition in PD** | Monday, March 13
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/globalsymposium1-23>
- **New Research: Exercise Hormones and Future Disease Modifying Therapies for Parkinson's Disease** | Wednesday, March 22
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/globalsymposium2-23>
- **Impact of Exercise on PD Progression** | Wednesday, March 29
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/globalsymposium3-23>
- **New Approaches to Daily Activities Applying the Alexander Technique** | Tuesdays, March 7, 14, 21, 28, & April 4, 11, 18, 25
Learn more & join waitlist: <https://bit.ly/AlexanderTechniquewaitlist>
- **PD Warrior Level 1 + 2 Certification Course** | Saturday, March 25
Learn more & join waitlist: <https://bit.ly/PDWarriorwaitlist>

UPCOMING FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Champions for Parkinson's

- Donate a Car Canada: Ongoing (read more: <http://bit.ly/2ORTuJn>)

We're looking for more Champions!

Do you want to help fund research, grow support networks, and improve quality of life for those living with Parkinson's disease (PD)? Become a Champion for Parkinson's and plan your own independent community fundraising event! Contact us at events@parkinson.bc.ca or 1-800-668-3330.

TIP JAR

The Tip Jar is where we share advice from Parkinson's community members on a wide range of topics from daily lifestyle hacks to safety. This month we share a tip on **adaptive clothing!**

Adaptive clothing is clothing designed to be functional (i.e. magnetic snaps, pants with side openings, shirts with openings, etc.) for those with disabilities, mobility issues, and accessibility needs, so they can get around easier and don't have difficulty getting ready.

Check out this tip:

"If struggling to use buttons on clothing, seek out adaptive clothing shirts that have magnets for buttons. They work easy and the magnets look like real buttons on a shirt." - From a Cranbrook Parkinson Society BC Support Group Member

The real-life look of these buttons means you won't have to sacrifice style for functionality – you can have both, while maintaining efficiency and comfort. Some stores that carry adaptive clothing include: London Drugs, Walmart, Silverts, and online stores as well.

Do you have any tips or tricks that you would like to share with the Parkinson's community? These can be tips from something that works well, to eating and dressing, to getting out of bed or travelling! All tips and tricks are welcome! Please share your ideas at info@parkinson.bc.ca.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Virtual Gardening Group looking for facilitator

Our Virtual Gardening Group is looking for a group facilitator to lead our sessions, which will be ongoing from March through September. The facilitator does not need to be an expert on the topic of gardening, however, they must be comfortable with using Zoom. If interested please contact Alana Dhillon by email at adhillon@parkinson.bc.ca.

We are hiring for a Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Parkinson Society BC currently has an opening for a Marketing & Communications Coordinator position. To view job responsibilities and qualifications, please visit:

<https://www.parkinson.bc.ca/about-us/job-opportunities/>

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Intimacy and Emotional Health

Discussion Questions

1. How has Parkinson's disease (PD) affected intimacy in your relationships (romantic, friendships, family, etc.)? What are some steps you've taken to strengthen your intimacy with others?

2. What are some pillars of intimacy that you can work on (trust, acceptance, honesty, safety, compassion, affection, and/or communication)?
3. What are some ways you tend to your emotional health and wellbeing?

This month, we are discussing intimacy and emotional health – but what exactly is intimacy, and how does it connect to our emotional health?

Intimacy can be described as the “closeness between people in personal relationships [that] builds over time as you connect with someone, grow to care about each other, and feel more and more comfortable during your time together” (Johnson, 2019). Spending this intimate time with another person allows your emotional health to flourish because it alleviates feelings of loneliness and feeds our need for socialization as human beings.

We can find intimacy in many different areas of our lives – romantic relationships, friendships, family, co-workers, self-care, following passions, pursuing hobbies, and more.

Moreover, it is important to note that intimacy does not always equal sex or physicality. The definition can be expanded to include “mutual respect for each other’s spirit and autonomy” (“Intimacy and PD”, n.d.).

The 7 Aspects of Intimacy

There are seven pillars of intimacy, these include:

- Trust
- Acceptance
- Honesty
- Safety
- Compassion
- Affection
- Communication

Courtesy of: <https://www.healthline.com/health/intimacy#7-key-factors>

These pillars are what build intimacy in any type of healthy relationship, and must be consistently met and cultivated over time to have a truly meaningful connection. One of the main ways these pillars are met are through conversation – sharing experiences you’ve been through, both good and bad, the way it made you feel, and then receiving compassion and understanding from the other party.

Opening yourself up and being vulnerable with another person is not an easy task, especially for those who have had their trust broken in the past, so the amount of time it takes to build intimacy with a person will be dependent on the individuals involved and their past experiences.

Intimacy and Parkinson’s Disease (PD)

Dealing with PD can certainly change the intimate dynamics of any type of relationship, especially romantic and sexual ones. It is important to discover new ways to connect and communicate with your significant other to keep the physical and emotional intimacy present. Some tips include:

- **Communication:** Speak openly and honestly about your feelings with your partner regarding sexuality and intimacy –use your words and not solely rely on nonverbal modes of communication such as look or touch. It is easier for misunderstandings to happen when direct verbal communication is not used because many people with Parkinson’s experience “facial masking”. Facial masking is when “the stiffness and slowness that can impact walking and other activities impacts the muscles in the face of someone with PD” (“Intimacy and PD”, n.d.), which makes it hard to read the facial expressions of an individual and can even be perceived as a lack of interest. Be honest with one another and share any frustrations you have in a respectful and loving manner.
- **Words of affirmation:** Going hand-in-hand with communication, is consistent positive reinforcement and words of affirmation for your partner regarding the things you love about them. This can also help alleviate feelings of insecurity and stress regarding the physical changes PD may be having on an individual and can also provide emotional comfort.

- **Quality time:** Everyone has a hectic schedule and life gets busy from time to time. Carving out uninterrupted time to spend with one another is extremely important, even if it's just watching an episode of a favorite TV show in the evening or enjoying a cup of tea before bed.
- **Patience and understanding:** The struggles of PD, accompanied with the realities of getting older, means your body won't look, feel, or respond the way it did when you were younger. Depending on the way you deal with this, it can bring you closer to your partner or be a cause of immense emotional stress and distance. It may be helpful to place your focus on enjoying each other and being comfortable, as opposed to performance ("Intimacy and PD", n.d.). Think about your bond prior to Parkinson's, and be patient with one another as you learn to navigate the physical and emotional challenges of intimacy together.
- **Asking for help:** Sexual dysfunction with Parkinson's can be attributed to symptoms such as "pain, limitation of movement, fatigue, and sleep disorders – coupled with emotional challenges such as anxiety and depression – as well as medication side effects" ("Intimacy and PD", n.d.). It is important to not feel embarrassed about any issues you may be dealing with around physical intimacy and sex, and have an open dialogue with your healthcare professional who may be able to answer questions and offer solutions.

Sexual Dysfunction & PD

Physically, women may experience loss of lubrication and men may experience erectile dysfunction (Bronner et al., 2011) because "sexual functioning is a complex process that requires functioning of the body's autonomic, sensory and motor systems, and depends on the neurological, vascular and endocrine systems, allowing sufficient blood supply to and from genital organs, a balanced hormonal system and a healthy emotional state" (Verschuren et al., 2010).

Mentally, there are influencing factors like a person's self-esteem, religious background, closeness with their romantic partner, and life experiences (Verschuren et al., 2010).

The symptoms of Parkinson's can cause many issues around sexual dysfunction. Statistics show that "one out of every six people with PD taking a dopamine agonist drug will [also] develop compulsive behaviors" ("Intimacy and PD", 2010).

These behaviors (i.e. impulse control disorders) can include hoarding, shopping, gambling, and hypersexuality. Many people with Parkinson's also experience a loss of sexual desire and overall dissatisfaction with their intimate life.

How to Maintain Emotional Wellbeing

There are many things one can do to maintain their emotional wellbeing, if they find themselves struggling with different issues in their life, including sex and physical intimacy with a partner.

- **Get quality sleep each night:** If you are constantly tired/fatigued and running on empty it will be hard for you to concentrate throughout the day and be productive. Make sure you create a regular schedule for yourself on when you rise and go to bed – eliminate blue lights from technology a few hours before bed and create an enjoyable nighttime routine to motivate you to get your sleep.
- **Socialize:** It is important to maintain and nurture friendships and meaningful connections outside of your romantic relationship. Do your best to enjoy your time with friends, have good conversations, laugh, try new things, share a meal, or do a mutually-enjoyed shared activity.
- **Develop coping skills & resilience:** Stress and unfortunate situations are normal things to arise from time to time. Make sure you have healthy ways of coping with your emotions, such as journaling, talking to a trusted friend, meditation, spiritual practice, asking for professional help if needed, etc.
- **Discover yourself:** With the busyness of everyday life, oftentimes we put making time for fun on the back burner. What did you enjoy doing as a child that you would like to do again? What is something creative you've wanted to try just for the sake of trying it and pure enjoyment? Developing hobbies is important because they give you something to look forward to and a meaningful way to spend your time. Maybe you want to try your

hand at watercolor painting, origami, writing a short story, or watching nature documentaries – the possibilities are endless.

Tips courtesy of: <https://www.nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>

In conclusion, issues around intimacy should be treated with care, compassion, and open communication between partners. If troubles with physical intimacy are distressing, please consult a healthcare professional for a personalized treatment plan. Counselling is also available through Parkinson Society BC. You can contact us by email at info@parkinson.bc.ca or by phone at 604-662-3240 and 1-800-668-3330.

Additional Resources

- Sexual Intimacy and Parkinson's [\[view helpsheet\]](#)
- September Symposium Series | Sexual Wellbeing and Parkinson's Disease: The Male Experience | Shea Hocaloski, RN, BtechN [\[view video\]](#)
- Carepartner Connect: Maintaining Sexual Intimacy While Coping with Parkinson's [\[view video\]](#)
- Vancouver Regional Conference | Intimacy and Sexual Health | Shannon Griffin [\[view video\]](#)

Sources

Bronner, G., & Vodusek, D. B. (2011). *Management of sexual dysfunction in Parkinson's disease. Therapeutic advances in neurological disorders*, 4(6), 375–383.

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Intimacy and PD. Parkinson's Foundation. (n.d.). Retrieved January 24, 2023, from <https://www.parkinson.org/library/fact-sheets/intimacy>

Johnson, M. (2019, April 16). *How to Understand and Build Intimacy in Every Relationship*. Healthline. Retrieved January 24, 2023, from <https://www.healthline.com/health/intimacy#obstacles>

Verschuren, J. E., Enzlin, P., Dijkstra, P. U., Geertzen, J. H., & Dekker, R. (2010). Chronic disease and sexuality: A generic Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Sex Research*, 47(2-3), 153–170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224491003658227>