

Caregivers of Parkinson's Patients, Things to Think About

It can be very challenging to cope with the long-term degenerative effects of, and the potential loss of independence that may result from Parkinson's disease. Additionally, it can be emotionally and physically draining not only for the person with the disorder, but also for the family or caregivers of Parkinson's patients.

Most countries have only limited assistance for people suffering from debilitating illness. Therefore, care-giving often becomes the responsibility of family members. While dedicating yourself to taking care of the needs of a loved one is a kind and honorable act, it also has its pitfalls. The following tips for caregivers of Parkinson's patients may help you see how to make the best of a difficult situation.

- * Parkinson's can affect memory. Labeling drawers, cupboards and shelves with large-size labels will help your loved one find household items easily.
- * Establish a relationship with local community support groups. Many organizations offer assistance and resources to caregivers, while others are an invaluable source of practical advice and information.
- * Be practical. Parkinson's affects mobility. Older people, in particular, may not be able to traverse their homes or function as easily as they once did. Look for ways to increase safety in order to help the Parkinson's sufferer to maintain his or her independence: install grab bars and a chair in the bathroom, add foam curlers to toothbrushes, spoons, and razors to make them easier to hold. Place non-slip runners on slippery floors and stairs.
- * Order a Medic-Alert or other type of medical identification bracelet that contains medical and contact information. If your loved one suffers from memory loss and inadvertently ends up alone in a strange place, the information can help ensure a speedy return.
- * Take advantage of available respite care. Care giving is often a full-time, around the clock job. It is important to take an occasional break.
- * Don't forget to tend to yourself while tending to your loved one. It is easy to get so wrapped up in taking care of someone else that you overlook your own needs. Retain some personal time each day to treat yourself to something you enjoy. It can be something as simple as a cup of tea, exercise, a good book, or a leisurely walk.
- * Eat well and get regular exercise. This will benefit both the caregiver and care recipient. Exercise need not be vigorous to be worthwhile. Stretching, yoga, walking, or water exercises are excellent mobility and strength builders.

You might have done everything you can to create a safe and organized environment for your loved one, but there is another element that needs addressing: the emotional impact of depending on a care giver. The Parkinson's sufferer most likely does not like having to rely on someone else for simple tasks that they used to handle independently. Resentment or crankiness can result from this frustration. It is important to keep in mind that the frustration is directed at the disease, and not at the caregiver. Understanding and a sense of humor will go a long way toward a companionable coexistence.