

***"You are
not alone."***



Parkinson Partners' Mission Statement:
To encourage, educate and support those with Parkinson's disease, their caregivers and loved ones as they cope with the challenges of disease. Exploring better resources, services and outcomes for people with PD.

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Please remember Parkinson Partners in your estate planning. Your gift can ensure that local services and support continue for the Erie PD community.

Encompass Health Rehabilitation Hospital of Erie Provided Walking Evaluations for People with PD

For those of you who have been to recent events or are simply active in the Parkinson's Partners' community, you may have heard about the opportunity to receive a free walking evaluation from a licensed physical or occupational therapist. We wanted to provide this little article to the community to help demystify what that means, as well as give you instructions regarding how to get one scheduled. We are very excited about this new program and hope that we get a lot of participation!

A walking evaluation is a short survey that helps to determine balance confidence, as well as a brief series of functional tests that show both you and the therapist areas of strengths and weaknesses in activities that you likely perform each day. Some examples of these activities include standing up from a chair, walking forwards and backwards, stepping over and around objects, going up and down stairs, changing speed while walking, looking around while walking, negotiating turns, and walking longer distances. The functional tests are carefully selected and standardized, so they can reveal if a person has a risk for falling. Additionally, they provide insight into whether or not a person is safe for activities offered by Parkinson's Partners, such as the Dance Group and the new Forest Bathing program. There is no "passing," "failing," judgment, or pressure involved in the testing. This is simply a tool to provide insight into your potential fall risk, strengths, weaknesses, and what programs offered by Parkinson's Partners might be the best fit for you as an individual.

The walking evaluations are provided by licensed physical and occupational therapists at Encompass Rehabilitation Hospital of Erie. These therapists have specialized trainings and certifications in both Parkinson's Disease and neurology, so have full understanding of the challenges you face and are equipped to provide insights into potential improvements for quality of movement to decrease fall risk. We intend to keep the experience as brief as possible while making it meaningful at about 30 minutes per person.

If you or a loved one is interested, please call and leave a message at the Encompass Health of Erie Therapy Department: (814)-878-1372. The contact person for this program is Mary Kingston. That's me! I'll be happy to give you a call back and get you scheduled for a walking evaluation at your convenience. The evaluations will be located on the first floor of Encompass Rehabilitation Hospital of Erie, and again are free of charge. I will provide more details when we talk! Thank you for considering this new program, as we believe it will provide a lot of wonderful benefits and insights to people battling Parkinson's Disease.

Written by Mary Kingston, PT, DPT, NCS, AVPT, CSCS, APTA Board Certified Neurologic Specialist



News and Notes

🎵 **Winter/Spring Purposeful Movement & Wellness Classes—**
Tentative Dates: For those of you interested in signing up for our Winter/Spring PD Wellness classes, please note that our tentative start date is Tuesday, January 27th through March 24th from 2:30-4:00 PM at the Salvation Army, 1022 Liberty Street. Cost is \$100. The session will go 8 weeks (one week off for Gannon's Spring Break). We will also work in a "snow makeup day" (March 31st) in case we need it. These dates are set on our end, but we are still waiting for official approval from the Salvation Army. Watch your emails and the January newsletter for the confirmed dates. Yes, you can reach out to your neurologist's office for a signed medical release but **please do not send in your application until we can confirm the date/time.**

🎵 **Findley Lake PD Presentation:** Join me on Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 1:00 PM as I present "Parkinson's 101" at the Findley Lake Community Connection meeting. The meeting is held at the Findley Lake Township Building (the old elementary school) located at 2883 North Rd, Findley Lake, NY 14736. If you live out that way, please plan on coming!

🎵 **Community Presentations:** Is there a community organization that you think should learn more about PD? What about a senior care facility or other service agency that you wish understood more about PD? Reach out to our office and working together, we can offer the presentation. The more those that serve people with PD know about the disease, the better they can care for you and others in the PD community.

Best Wishes for those with Special Celebrations

Happy Birthday and
Happy Anniversary!

To have your birthday or
anniversary added to our
list call 814-899-3030 or
email:
info@ParkinsonPartners.org

November

1—Suzanne Scheuer-
Leone

December

2—Rita Jandt
15 – Pat Weidner

January

1—Robin
Caravaglia, Dave
Yarnell
7—Sandra Barron
9—Mary Kirkpatrick
15—Bill Mason
25—Patricia Hall

Five Ways to Keep the Holidays Happy with PD

December 12, 2019— www.MichaelJFox.org/news--For many, the holidays are a joyful time to gather with loved ones and friends, reflect on the past year and think about what's to come. But for some with recently diagnosed or with progressing Parkinson's or with depression or anxiety, it can be a stressful or lonely time. Visiting with others can bring worry or increased symptoms, and not attending social events can bring feelings of isolation. These are natural and common reactions. To help, consider these tips to make the most of the upcoming holidays:

Open up to someone you trust. The holidays might not be a particularly happy time because of common Parkinson's symptoms such as depression or anxiety. Or, walking and balance, speech, or thinking and memory (cognitive) changes might make it difficult to participate in large gatherings. Tell a loved one what you're experiencing and how they can help: by listening, checking in with you periodically, or organizing a low-key get-together instead. And remember to watch for others in your community who may seem sad, worried or withdrawn. "How are you?" or "I've been thinking about you" can go a long way.

Choose your social events thoughtfully. You don't have to go to every celebration, but there may be some events you can't miss. Think about your stressors (an undisclosed diagnosis, family dynamics or difficulties communicating in crowds, for example) and set limits. Leave after one drink, pivot if certain topics arise in conversation, or commit to no more than two engagements each week. But don't avoid socializing altogether. In general, people who are more connected live happier, more fulfilled lives. And in Parkinson's, talking with others may benefit cognition, and positive relationships can boost mood.

Give yourself a break. Parkinson's, like life, will bring good days and bad days. The holidays can be stressful, and Parkinson's can make them even more so. Don't try to do everything. Can a potluck be just as fun as hosting an entire dinner? Will anyone mind if you don't make all your cookies from scratch? It's okay to say, "I can't tonight" or "No, thank you."

Allow extra time. When going out, always plan more time than you think necessary to get ready and get to your destination. Parkinson's, holiday traffic and weather can be unpredictable. Give yourself a cushion to remove any pressure from potentially getting lost or running late that would otherwise create worry and worsen symptoms.

Put yourself first. Exercise, eat and sleep well, and manage stress. It's easier said than done, but even harder when you're busy with a long to-do list. Make yourself and your health a priority. Schedule exercise, alone or with others (a way to get in social activity, too!), to ease mood changes and other Parkinson's symptoms. Enjoy holiday treats in moderation but try to stick to a generally healthy diet. And find ways to reduce stress, such as meditation or talk therapy.

Stress and the Holidays: Coping Strategies to Keep Caregivers Sane

Article sourced from <https://utahparentcenter.org/caregiver-self-care/>

The holiday season often brings joy, connection, and celebration—but for caregivers, it can also bring added pressure, tight schedules, and emotional overwhelm. Caregivers of loved one often shoulder more responsibilities than most. When the expectations of the season rise, so can the stress. Self-care isn't a luxury. It's a vital part of staying grounded, keeping your energy steady, and supporting your family in a sustainable way. This guide offers simple, realistic strategies to help you navigate the holidays with more ease and compassion.

Allow Yourself to Simplify: The holidays can easily become a never-ending to-do list. Community events, medical appointments, family gatherings and social expectations can make the season feel overwhelming. It's okay—truly—to adjust, modify, or completely skip traditions that no longer serve you and your loved one.

Ways to Simplify Your Holiday Season:

- Prioritize what matters most. Choose 1–2 meaningful traditions and let the rest go.
- Say “no” without guilt. Declining invitations or events that add stress protects your well-being.
- Choose low-effort alternatives. Store-bought meals, online shopping or shorter outings are all valid.
- Create your own timeline. Celebrate a holiday on a quieter day rather than forcing everything into the calendar.
- Let go of perfection. A peaceful home is far more important than a perfect holiday.
- Simplifying your plans can open space for rest, comfort and moments of joy on your terms.

Create Moments of Calm: Caregivers rarely get large pockets of uninterrupted time, especially during busy seasons. But small, intentional pauses throughout your day can make a big impact on your emotional balance. You don't need a full hour for self-care—a few minutes of grounding can reset your nervous system. Here are some **Quick Moments of Calm** you can try:

- Two minutes of deep breathing to slow your heart rate.
- Step outside for 60 seconds to change scenery and get fresh air.
- Pause with a warm drink while your loved one rests or watches a show.
- Use a calming scent like lavender or eucalyptus for a quick sensory break.
- Listen to a favorite song for a mini mood lift.
- Practice a simple grounding exercise like naming five things you can see.
- These micro-breaks help calm overwhelm and support emotional regulation throughout a hectic season.

Reach Out for Support: Caregiving is meaningful, important, and deeply relational work—but it shouldn't be done alone. Most caregivers benefit enormously from connecting with people who understand their experiences, struggles, and wins. Support networks can ease isolation and help you feel more equipped to navigate challenges.

Ways to Access Support: You deserve connection, community and help—especially during emotionally demanding seasons.

- Lean on trusted friends or family for help, even small things like grocery pickup or a 30-minute break.
- Join an online or in-person caregiver support group.
- Work with care coordinators or service providers to lighten your load.
- Connect with other spouses/family members who have loved one with similar needs.

Be Kind to Yourself: Caregivers often give endlessly to others while ignoring their own needs. This can lead to burnout, guilt, and a feeling of emotional exhaustion. The holidays can amplify this pressure, making self-compassion more important than ever. Here are some ways to practice self-kindness this season:

- Acknowledge your effort. You do more in a day than many people realize.
- Celebrate small wins. Finishing a task, helping your loved one through a hard moment, or simply making it through the day counts.
- Talk to yourself with the same gentleness you use with your loved one or another caregiver.
- Permit yourself to rest.
- Let “good enough” be enough.
- Kindness toward yourself creates space for resilience, healing, and renewed strength.

Look for Opportunities to Recharge: Even short forms of self-care can help you feel more like yourself again. Every caregiver's needs look different—so choose what works for your life, energy level, and bandwidth. Here are some ideas:

- A short walk
- Listening to an audiobook
- Stretching or light movement
- Journaling or quick reflection
- Enjoying a creative hobby (even for 10 minutes)
- Delegating tasks, big or small
- Remember: self-care doesn't have to be fancy. It simply needs to support your physical and emotional well-being.

Permit Yourself to Do Less: Some seasons require more rest, more flexibility, and more compassion. It's perfectly valid if your holidays look different from others'. **You are not falling short—you are doing your best to care for your loved one. And that is enough!**

This holiday season, may you find moments of rest, meaningful connection, and renewed strength for the path ahead.

Parkinson Partners of NW PA, Inc.

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info@ParkinsonPartners.org

DONATIONS:

Checks should be made payable to "Parkinson Partners" and mailed to the address above. Donations can also be made via PayPal on our website.



Parkinson Partners of NW PA, Inc.
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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.ParkinsonPartners.org

DISCLAIMER: The material presented in this issue is solely for the information of the reader. It is not intended for treatment purposes, but rather as a basis for discussion with the patient's physician.

Support Group Meeting Schedules

Remember: all events are also listed on our Events Calendar on our website including live links to Zoom meetings. **Make sure to sign up for our emails so you are alerted to any last-minute changes. Questions? Call or text 814-899-3030.**

ZOOM MEETINGS:

- **Parkinson Partners Support Group Meeting on Wednesday, January 14th (2nd Wed. of the month) at 1:00 PM.** Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/93010770942?pwd=bzhTYTgxVElXV0pONnYwbEt5TnZzZz09>
- **Caregiver Only Zoom Meeting on January 22nd (4th Thurs. of the month) at 1:30 PM.** Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/96391675305>

IN-PERSON MEETINGS:

- **Eastside YMCA PD Support Group: Wed., January 7th (1st Wed. of the month) at 1:00 PM** at Eastside YMCA, 2101 Nagle Road. All are welcome!
- **Care Partner Only Lunch: Monday, January 26th (4th Mon. of the month) at 11:30 AM** at Wegman's Café, 6143 Peach Street.
- **Evening PD Support Group: Tuesday, January 13th at 6:00 PM** at Springhill, 2323 Edinboro Rd. **Please bring a dish and drink if you'd like to join in on a potluck dinner.**