

## From Sandie's Desk

### Thou Shalt Exercise and Thou Shall Feel Better— Use It or Lose It!

These are the words of Dr. George Turnbull, a man who was truly ahead of his time in more ways than one. Dr. Turnbull, a professor of physiology at the University of Dalhousie, Halifax dedicated his life to people living with Parkinson's, and healthcare professionals including physiotherapists and rehabilitation therapists. He lectured all around the world about his belief in the importance of early intervention in every aspect of management of Parkinson's including medication, speech therapy and physical therapy as he believed that the traditional approaches being used at the time (around 1990) were much too conservative.

Because early management of the condition with medication is very effective and symptoms are well controlled at the beginning, patients are lulled into a false sense of security and don't start to exercise until late in the game when they are already fairly disabled, and may have complicating factors such as a fractured hip. Ringing any bells yet?

Another mitigating factor was the fact that at that time, neurologists didn't understand the importance of early intervention and exercise either so those things were never included in the discussions during patients' appointments. If the doctor didn't mention it - it couldn't be very important. Right? Wrong!

Thanks to research within the last ten years that now proves the benefit of exercise as well as more opportunities for physical activity for people with Parkinson's, the tide has turned. Now many neurologists recommend exercise for all their patients, regardless of where you are on the continuum.

So what does the research show? Exercise can:

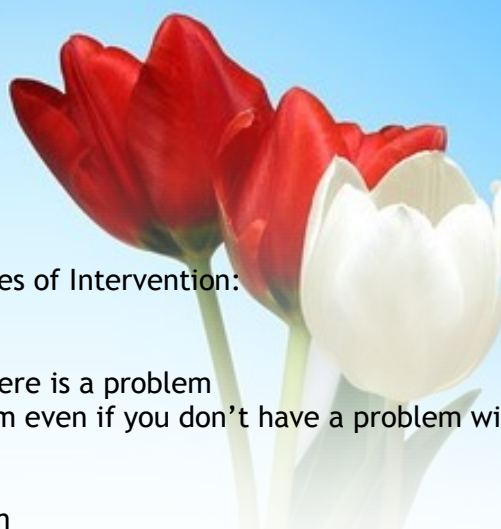
- Improve posture, strength, balance, walking ability
- Limit physical decline
- Reduce some symptoms
- May slow disease progression
- May be disease modifying
- May protect your brain from cell loss

In case you are wondering if it is ever too early or too late to start exercising, the answer is NEVER! Benefits can be seen at any stage of the disease.



### Sandie Jones

Sandie Jones trained as a registered nurse, specializing in psychiatry. In 1998, she joined Parkinson Canada, and is now an integral part of the Information & Referral team. In this role she has provided information on support, education, medical aspects, coping strategies, community services, and other information about Parkinson's disease and its management, not only to people living with Parkinson's disease and their families, but to professionals working with these people as well. This role has given her a comprehensive insight into the problems of people living with Parkinson's disease, as well as their carepartners.



There are basically 4 Stages of Intervention:

1. Pre-habilitation
  - a. Start before there is a problem
  - b. Begin a program even if you don't have a problem with stiffness and balance
2. Rehabilitation
  - a. Fix the problem
  - b. Learn how to get out of a chair, bed, improve posture, and deal with freezing
3. Preservation
  - a. Do not lose what you have
  - b. Find something you like and stick with it. Be able to do tomorrow what you can do today.
4. Prevention
  - a. Do not add new problems
  - b. May involve finding the right assistive device or doing some home modifications

***The bottom line is: you name it, you like it, and you do it!***

Now, for the Million Dollar Question: “What Exercise Should I Be Doing?”

Your exercise should be geared to whatever mobility issue is causing you the most difficulty. A general Parkinson disease program should include:

- Mind exercises—challenge your attention, reasoning, and timing
- Aerobic exercises—helps with endurance
- Balance exercises—helps with posture, and walking
- Strengthening exercises—helps with endurance and posture
- Flexibility exercises—S T R E T C H

Research is showing exciting results in the use of different types of exercise including: walking, swimming, yoga, Tai Chi, Dancing, Pilates and many others. The bottom line is: you name it, you like it, and you do it!

One thing is certain when it comes to exercise: there is no question that your specialist can clearly see the differences between those people living with Parkinson's who remain physically active, and those who are sedentary and do not—you will see the difference in yourself too!

**USE IT OR LOSE IT—IT'S YOUR CHOICE!**

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