

TAKING CHARGE: PLANNING AND PARKINSON'S

Planning is important for each one of us, whether Parkinson's is part of the picture or not. The diagnosis of Parkinson's reminds us that we cannot predict the future and that it is wise to plan.

Now is the time to take stock of your life. Realize what is important to you and plan accordingly. The following are considerations for ALL adults:

LIFE PLANNING

An estate lawyer with Parkinson's has suggested that each person needs to define their priorities, whether that is enjoying life now, retiring early, preparing for the potential needs of future care, or making provisions for your family, etc.

- *Consider*
 - How will Parkinson's affect my life plans?
- *Discuss or write* out plans, dividing them into short and long term categories.
 - What is really important to me?
 - Family
 - Finances
 - Work
 - Home
 - Travel
 - Other?
- *Brainstorm* options:
 - What can I do now to meet those goals?
 - For example, some people and their families plan to pay off their mortgage sooner so that they can take early retirement and have more freedom for things like travel.

FINANCES

- Do you have an extended health plan? What about an insurance plan? Check into the terms of your plans and what they cover.
- Look into any tax benefits or other programs you might qualify for through the provincial or federal government.
- Meet with a financial planner to talk about how Parkinson's might affect your finances. Ask for a thorough review of your present and future financial picture.

Think about the following questions:

- How will you pay for any medical costs that arise?
- If you are currently working, how will you financially plan if you decide to retire early?

- NOTE: Before changing your work situation because of Parkinson's (reducing hours to part time, taking early retirement or a less stressful position, etc.), consult with a knowledgeable professional. There are many restrictions around access to benefits.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

- Get to know your healthcare team and community organizations.
- If Parkinson's is affecting your activities of daily living, check into both government and charities for services. There are many services that can make life easier!
- A Power of Attorney for Property and a Power of Attorney for Personal Care are two important documents, which will allow someone you wish to act on your behalf, should you not be capable of communicating your wishes.

We cannot control how Parkinson's will progress, but planning for the future is one way of taking back control.

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