

# Navigating Hallucinations and Delusions



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Living with Parkinson's disease presents a unique set of challenges among them, hallucinations and delusions can significantly impact the quality of life for both people with Parkinson's and their loved ones. These non-motor symptoms, although distressing, can be managed and distress reduced with the right strategies and support. We will explore practical ways for people with Parkinson's and their loved ones to cope with hallucinations and delusions.

Hallucinations are sensory experiences that seem real but are not based on external stimuli, these can be seeing, hearing, feeling, or smelling something that is not there. Delusions involve holding strong beliefs that are not grounded in reality. These can be thoughts or ideas such as the belief someone is in the house, or someone has taken an action but did not. These symptoms can occur as a side effect of Parkinson's medications, particularly dopamine agonists or due to changes in the brain due to Parkinson's progression.

## Communication and Education:

**Open Dialogue:** Encourage open and honest communication between those involved. This helps create a safe and supportive environment where all concerns and experiences can be shared without judgment. This dialogue can help in managing the distress caused and aid in getting effective help and support to manage hallucinations and delusions or pinpoint the causes.

**Educate Yourself:** Learn about Parkinson's disease, its progression, and the associated non-motor symptoms such as hallucinations and delusions. Understanding the underlying causes and common triggers will help

you respond empathetically and effectively to yourself or someone else experiencing these.

**Seek Professional Guidance:** Consult with healthcare professionals experienced in Parkinson's disease, such as neurologists or movement disorder specialists. They can provide tailored advice, medication adjustments, and recommend therapeutic interventions to address these symptoms. You may also wish to seek out support from a counsellor to help manage any distress or anxiety hallucinations and delusions are causing.

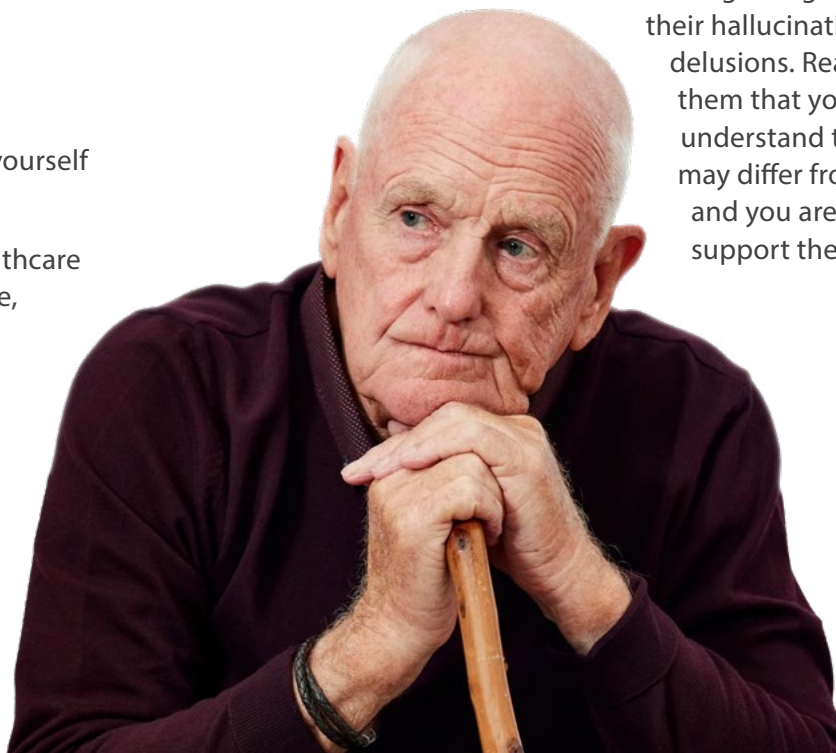
## Practical Strategies:

**Maintain a Structured Routine:** Setting up a consistent daily routine can help reduce anxiety and confusion, providing a sense of stability to reduce the frequency or severity of hallucinations and delusions. Stick to regular mealtimes, medication schedules, and engage in activities that promote mental and physical well-being. Schedule important appointments or activities around the hallucination or delusion pattern/triggers. For example, if evenings are difficult arrange to have lunch with friend's vs supper.

**Understand Triggers:** Each individual's hallucinations and delusions may be triggered by different events, stimuli, or timing. Recognizing the individual triggers can help manage these symptoms and reduce the stress caused by them. Some common triggers are low lighting, fatigue, medications, and stress. These symptoms may also become worse in the evening or during nighttime.

**Create a Calm Environment:** Reduce or limit where interactions with triggers. Such as dim lights/shadows or excessive noise. Maintain a well-lit and clutter-free living space that promotes relaxation and safety. This creates a more calming environment and reduces stress.

**Validate Experiences:** Acknowledge the experiences and emotions you are having around hallucinations and delusions. If it is your loved one experiencing these validate the experience and emotions without dismissing or arguing against their hallucinations or delusions. Reassure them that you understand their reality may differ from yours, and you are there to support them.



**Engage in Reality-Oriented Activities:** Encourage participation in activities that ground the individual in reality. Reading, puzzles, and engaging in conversations about current events can redirect attention and reinforce their connection to the present.

**Ensure Optimal Medication Management:** Work closely with the healthcare team to find the right balance of medications that can minimize hallucinations and delusions without compromising the management of other symptoms. Regularly review medications to assess their effectiveness and potential side effects. Make notes between appointments about possible triggers, changes in symptoms and how the medication is working. This can help prepare you for appointments and help you communicate to your health team.

**Supportive Therapies:** Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and counseling can provide individuals with coping strategies and help them manage the emotional impact of hallucinations and delusions. Consider seeking counselling to develop personalized techniques to navigate these symptoms.

**Safety Measures:** Take precautions to ensure the safety of all individuals involved. If you or your loved one becomes upset or disorientated during these times remove potential hazards, such as sharp objects or tripping hazards, and consider assistive devices or home modifications as needed.

Hallucinations and delusions can be challenging for individuals with Parkinson's disease and their families to manage. By fostering understanding, maintaining open communication, and implementing practical strategies, it is possible to navigate these symptoms effectively. Remember, seeking professional advice and support is essential in developing a comprehensive management plan tailored to an individual's unique needs. Together people with Parkinson's and their loved ones can work towards improving their quality of life and promoting overall well-being.