

KEEP MOVING

A Parkinson's Perspective on Exercise

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“Exercise empowers me. It makes me feel like I’m doing my part to combat this disease, physically and mentally. Even better, I get to hang out with my friends, and we cheer each other on and have some laughs. Laughter is good medicine too, right?!?”

One of the most well-known facts about Parkinson's is that being active is beneficial in terms of symptom management and living well with Parkinson's. Exercise has been shown to help manage some symptoms by improving balance, mobility and strength. As such, participating in various forms of exercise is an effective tool to use for those with Parkinson's. I spoke with several individuals from various exercise classes and made a list of the most common reasons these individuals continue to come back to exercise in these group settings.

strength, and balance. Studies show that regular physical activity helps reduce common symptoms like muscle rigidity, tremors, and balance issues. By strengthening muscles and enhancing coordination, exercise reduces the risk of falls and can reduce motor fluctuations. Physical activities like walking, stretching, and even weight training can also help slow the progression of motor symptoms, allowing individuals to maintain greater independence. A quote from a participant I think sums it up well is "As someone living with Parkinson's, I can honestly say exercise has been a game-changer for me. It's not just about staying active—it's about managing my symptoms and staying as mobile as possible."

Mindset

Not only does body movement promote good physical health, but exercise also causes your body to release endorphins. Consequently, you may notice a more positive mood as this combination of "happy hormones" causes a boost in mindset. Furthermore, exercise can be used as an outlet for any negative emotions bottled up. By coming to class regularly, several individuals have noticed an enhanced state of mind. A couple of these individuals remarked that missing class had a noticeable effect on their mental health and mood. As said by one of the members, exercise "makes you feel like you are fighting back. It makes you unshakeable".

Physical Health

Exercise offers numerous physical benefits for people with Parkinson's, supporting improved mobility,



Enjoyment

Many individuals in these exercise classes also participate in exercise outside of the class quite frequently. These other activities include hiking, swimming, walking dogs, and stretching. Despite all these other options for exercise, these individuals continue to show up to the group classes to participate with their fellow peers and have a blast. Several individuals have mentioned that they look forward to these classes every week as they are a way to have fun in a positive environment. Having had the pleasure of listening in on several of these exercise classes, I can honestly say it sure sounds like they are having a lot of fun.

Community

Most important to these group classes is the community and sense of camaraderie. The supportive and positive environment encourages members to keep coming back, even on off days. As said by several members, watching each other continue to push themselves every day is extremely inspirational. These group members motivate one another to keep coming

and trying their best. Additionally, the members of these classes genuinely care for each other and are eager to have conversations to learn more. "While we are all different in our journey it's been so beneficial to know I am not alone in this journey and have the Parkinson's community around me"

If you're still on the fence about getting involved with a group exercise program, consider these words said by a member from the circuit class: "Do it. Exercise isn't a cure, but it's a tool I use every day to help me feel my best. And if you are having an off day, you do what you can do. Everyone works at their own pace and even if it changes, the classes are flexible enough to adjust". Overall, group exercise is an excellent way to improve physical health, enhance mindset and build community. All in the goal of living well with Parkinson's.



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