

NO HEALTH WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Start with one small step

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The link between physical health and mental health is complex and often misunderstood, with many people considering the mind and the body two separate entities. The fact is these two entities need to work together for our own health and well-being. Our physical health can directly affect our mental health and vice versa. Living with Parkinson's is more than managing physical symptoms, it is a journey that touches every part of life, including your emotional and mental well-being. It is easy to overlook how much Parkinson's can impact mood, motivation, energy, or even relationships until you, or someone you love start feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or withdrawn. Understanding that these experiences are real, valid, and can be connected to the disease itself is the first step toward getting the support you need. The second step is finding

the mental health support(s) that are right for you.

Statistically, we know that 10-15% of seniors suffer from depression, approximately 50% of people living with Parkinson's will experience some level of depression, and around 40% will struggle with anxiety during their journey. These aren't just emotional side effects; they are real, neurological pieces of the disease. Parkinson's impacts the brain chemicals that regulate mood, energy, motivation, and outlook.

You may be feeling angry, sad, or defeated. You might find yourself pulling away from the things you once loved or the people in your life. Maybe you avoid travel or social settings. You might even

consider retiring early or avoiding conversations not because you want to, but because it suddenly feels too overwhelming. And just like that, your world starts to shrink.

And we absolutely cannot forget Care Partners. Your experience matters just as much. This disease doesn't just affect one person, it can reshape family dynamics, roles and expectations. As a Care Partner, you might feel stress, burnout, grief, even resentment and yes, love, too. All of it is real. All of it is human. You deserve support just as much as your loved one with Parkinson's. Not just when things get "bad," but in the everyday moments of this challenging journey.



But here's what I want you to hear loud and clear, you don't have to do this alone! There are professionals out there who are skilled, compassionate, and committed. Who are ready to walk this journey beside you. Let's go over who these mental health professionals are and how they can help support your mental health.

First is a psychiatrist, they are a medical doctor who specializes in the diagnoses and treatment of mental health conditions, often through medication. If you're living with Parkinson's, this could mean getting help with managing depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, or even hallucinations.

A psychologist, on the other hand, is a clinical counsellor. They offer different types of talk and behavioral therapies. This can look like talking through the emotional impact of Parkinson's, building coping strategies, and helping you take back some control. They are also there for the grief, the fear, and the day-to-day emotional fatigue that can quietly wear you down. A psychologist can also help provide family or relationship counselling and support other areas of mental health to cope with issues that are causing distress or concern.

Social workers also play a vital role in managing mental health and accessing support. Some social workers are also clinical counsellors and can provide the same or similar services as a psychologist. Even those who are not clinical counsellors can help with supportive counselling, providing coping strategies, system

navigation, and emotional support for both you and your loved ones.

Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs) are mental health professionals you'll find in hospitals or community clinics. They often work closely with doctors, therapists, and social workers to support mental wellness—especially when anxiety, mood shifts, or stress show up.

Here at Parkinson Association of Alberta, we are also here to support your mental health. Our Client Services Coordinators are trained to listen, guide, and support you in any way they can. They offer tools, system navigation, and connection to other health professionals and community resources. For more information on our Client Services Team see page 6.

Sometimes support comes in forms outside the health and social system. For many a spiritual team plays an important role, this could be your pastor, priest, rabbi or any spiritual figure. They are often those who've walked with us through life's chapters and bring a distinct kind of wisdom, comfort, and grounding.

It is important note there are public and private options for the mental health professionals above. These might be accessed publicly at hospitals or community clinics. Some community clinics offer free or low-cost/sliding scale counseling services, so it's worth exploring what's available in your area. Also, many extended healthcare plans cover a set dollar amount or a set number of therapy sessions per year. For help finding what is available in your

area we at Parkinson Association of Alberta are happy to help.

To sum it all up, there is no health without mental health. And even though it can be scary or intimidating to ask for help, start with one small step. Reach out. You are not alone. ■

