



Depression & Self Care - Parkinson's

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Non-Movement Signs and Symptoms of Parkinson's

- **Movement related symptoms – gait, balance, stiffness, tremor, etc.**
- **Non-Movement Symptoms**
 - **Early signs**
 - **Loss of smell**
 - **Constipation**
 - **REM sleep changes**
 - **Later Signs**
 - **Depression and Anxiety**
 - **Cognitive changes**
 - **Apathy**
 - **Fatigue**



Parkinson's and Mental Health

- **Caring for mental health is extremely important in Parkinson's disease (PD). Research estimates that at least 50% of people with PD will experience some form of depression during their Parkinson's journey and up to 40% will experience an anxiety disorder.**
- **50% of people with PD will experience some form of depression.**
- **40% of people with Parkinson's will experience an anxiety disorder.**



Depression

Depressive disorder, or **depression**, is a common mental health condition that can happen to anyone. It is characterized by a low mood or loss of pleasure or interest in activities for long periods of time. This is different from regular mood changes and feelings about everyday life (World Health Organization, 2025).



Depression

- Everyone experiences sadness at times. But depression is something more. Depression is extreme sadness or despair that lasts more than days. It interferes with the activities of daily life and can cause physical symptoms such as pain, weight loss or gain, sleeping pattern disruptions, or lack of energy.
- People with depression may also experience an inability to concentrate, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide.
- Depression is a common mental disorder. Fortunately, depression is treatable. A combination of therapy and antidepressant medication can help ensure recovery (American Psychological Association, 2025).



Diagnostic Criteria

What are the diagnostic criteria for depression APA?

- Feeling sad, irritable, empty and/or hopeless.
- Losing interest or pleasure in activities you once enjoyed.
- A significant change in appetite (eating much less or more than usual) and/or weight (notable loss or gain unrelated to dieting).
- Sleeping too little or too much.



Signs and Symptoms

- **Anhedonia** — not feeling pleasure, difficulty enjoying things one used to enjoy
- **Dysphoria** - feeling very unhappy, uneasy, or dissatisfied. It's the opposite of euphoria, which is a state of extreme happiness.
 - Discontent
 - Irritability
 - Aggression
 - Feelings of anger, guilt, or failure



Grief and Adjustment Disorder

- Adjustment disorder is a mental health condition that occurs when someone has an excessive or unhealthy emotional or behavioral reaction to a **stressful event or change in their life**. The reaction must occur within three months of the event, but can continue longer if the stressor persists
- Symptoms usually end once the stressor ends, or the person adjusts to it.



Trauma

- Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, crime, natural disaster, physical or emotional abuse, neglect, experiencing or witnessing violence, death of a loved one, war, and more. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical.
- Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea.
- While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives.



Depression and Grief are Different

- Grief is the anguish experienced after significant loss, usually the death of a beloved person.
- Grief often includes physiological distress, separation anxiety, confusion, yearning, obsessive dwelling on the past, and apprehension about the future. Intense grief can become life-threatening through disruption of the immune system, self-neglect, and suicidal thoughts.
- Grief may also take the form of regret for something lost, remorse for something done, or sorrow for a mishap to oneself.
- **Grief is Transitory**



Depression & Parkinson's

- Depression is a part of Parkinson's itself, resulting from disability, grief, loss and changes in brain functions.
- PD-related changes also occur in brain chemistry. Parkinson's impacts areas of the brain that produce dopamine, norepinephrine and serotonin — *chemicals involved in regulating mood, energy, motivation, appetite and sleep.*
- People with PD have an imbalance of certain neurotransmitters (brain chemicals) that regulate mood. This is thought to play a major role in depression.



Depression and Dopamine

- Depression is a part of Parkinson's itself, resulting from PD-related changes in brain chemistry. Parkinson's impacts areas of the brain that produce dopamine, norepinephrine and serotonin — chemicals involved in regulating mood, energy, motivation, appetite and sleep.



NEUROTRANSMITTERS *Chart*

Neurotransmitters	Functions
<u>Dopamine</u>	Reward and pleasure, motivation, motor control and learning
<u>Serotonin</u>	Regulates mood, appetite, sleep, contributes to feelings of happiness & well-being
<u>Acetylcholine</u>	Learning, memory, muscle contraction and attention
<u>Norepinephrine</u>	Attention, arousal, stress response, helps regulate heart rate & blood pressure



Dopamine

Dopamine Not Just the Pleasure Chemical



Dopamine Functions

Coordination & Movement

Pleasure/Reward

Motivation

Immunity

Wakefulness

Inflammation & Pain

Attention, Memory and Learning

Symptoms of Imbalance

Sleep disturbances

Restless Legs Syndrome

Psychotic Symptoms

Apathy / Depression

Carbohydrate and Fat Cravings

ADHD Symptoms



Depression & Parkinson's- Psychological, Biological and Environmental Causes

• Psychological Factors

Negative thoughts — living with a chronic illness can lead to feelings of sadness, helplessness and hopelessness. Dwelling on these feelings may make a person more vulnerable to depression.

Social isolation or a lack of a supportive social network that can result from a more restricted lifestyle. Early retirement or loss of independence can increase depression risk, too.



Depression & Parkinson's- Psychological, Biological and Environmental Causes

• Biological Factors

A history of mental health issues — research suggests many people with PD experience depression or anxiety two to five years before a Parkinson's diagnosis. This may mean depression is not simply a psychological reaction to the disease, but rather a part of the underlying disease process.

Brain changes — PD and depression affect the same parts of the brain involved in thinking and emotion. Both conditions also impact levels of three important neurotransmitters (dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine) that influence mood and movement.



Depression & Parkinson's- Psychological, Biological and Environmental Causes

• Environmental Causes

Severe stress, such as ongoing distress from living with chronic illness, can trigger depression for some people.

Medication side effects — certain prescription drugs can cause symptoms that mimic depression. Also, some side effects may cause physical signs that are alarming or depressing

e.g. tardive dyskinesia



Caregiving

Tips for Care Partners

- Offer help only when asked.
- Prompt the person — for example, instead of asking, “Did anyone call?” ask, “Did Linda call?”
- Say the name of the person and make eye contact when speaking to gain and hold attention.
- Put reminder notes and lists in a prominent place.
- Keep things in routine places.
- To ensure medications are taken on time, provide a dispenser, perhaps with a built-in alarm.
- Use photos on cell phone contact entries to prompt face-name association.
- If the person is searching for a word, provide a cue, such as, “the word you are looking for probably begins with ‘d’.”
- Do not finish the sentences of a person who needs more time to put them together.



Self Care for Depression

Experiencing depression can be very difficult. But there are steps you can take to help yourself. Some ideas:

- Talk to someone you trust
- Peer support
- Exercise
- Mindfulness
- Take care of yourself
- Spend time in nature
- Try something new
- Do something creative
- Write a journal



Talk to someone you trust

- It might feel hard to talk about how you're feeling. But many people find that sharing their experiences can help them feel better. Having someone listen and show they care can help in itself.
- You might not feel like you can open up to someone close to you. But you could call a helpline to speak to someone confidentially.



Peer Support

- Peer support brings together people with shared experiences, to support each other. Many people find it helps them to share ideas about how to stay well, connect with others and feel less alone.
- Peer Support Groups have demonstrable effects on mood.
- Social networks are huge factors in maintaining a positive outlook.



Exercise and Depression

- ***The Exercise Effect***
- Exercising starts a biological cascade of events that results in many health benefits, improving sleep, and lowering blood pressure.
- High-intensity exercise releases the body's feel-good chemicals called endorphins, resulting in the "runner's high" that runners report.
- But for most of us, the real value is in **low-intensity exercise** sustained over time. That kind of activity spurs the release of proteins called neurotrophic or growth factors, which cause nerve cells to grow and make new connections. The improvement in brain function makes you feel better. "In people who are depressed, neuroscientists have noticed that the hippocampus in the brain—the region that helps regulate mood—is smaller. Exercise supports nerve cell growth in the hippocampus, improving nerve cell connections, which helps relieve depression.



Adaptive Exercise for Parkinson's

- **Adaptive exercises** for Parkinson's disease typically focus on improving balance, flexibility, strength, and coordination through activities like Tai Chi, yoga, walking, swimming, cycling, resistance training, dance classes, and specific exercises that target posture and gait, often incorporating large, exaggerated movements to combat the disease's motor symptoms.
- Adaptive exercise can include **Pickle Ball** – ask John Mylius!



Adaptive Exercise for Parkinson's

Key elements of adaptive exercise for Parkinson's

- **Aerobic exercise:**
 - Brisk walking, stationary cycling, swimming to improve cardiovascular health and overall endurance.
- **Strength training:**
 - Using weights, resistance bands, or bodyweight exercises to maintain muscle strength and function.
- **Balance exercises:**
 - Tai Chi, standing on one leg, heel raises, and other activities that challenge balance and stability.
- **Flexibility exercises:**
 - Stretching routines from yoga or other sources to improve range of motion and reduce stiffness.



Caring for the Caregiver

- **Burnout and**
- **Compassion Fatigue**

Burnout is a psychological state of exhaustion and disinterest in work.

Compassion Fatigue is a state of emotional and mental exhaustion caused by helping others.



Dealing with Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is a mental and physical state of exhaustion that can affect people who work in helping professions

Feeling Another's Pain

Empathy is a valuable trait for caregivers, first responders, health care professionals, therapists, and advocates for victims of domestic abuse.

When individuals open themselves up to others' illness, trauma or suffering, the more likely **they will come to share those victims' feelings** of heartbreak and devastation. This sapped ability to cope with secondary trauma can lead to total exhaustion of one's mental and physical state.





Caregiver Burnout is common with people who work with individuals with Parkinson's or other challenges.

What Is Caregiver Burnout?

Caregiver burnout is a feeling of being overwhelmed physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually when taking care of someone with major health issues. It occurs when people experience an extended period of stress associated with their role as a caregiver. They may not be aware it is happening because they are focused on the person they are taking care of rather than themselves.

SELF CARE

TIME OFF

Common Signs of Caregiving Burnout



Easily flustered or frustrated



Forgetful or foggy



Quick to anger



Anxious or depressed



Uninterested in things they used to enjoy



Hopeless or helpless

Compassion Satisfaction



Compassion Satisfaction

- **Compassion satisfaction** is the feeling of pleasure or fulfillment that comes from helping others. It can be experienced by people who work in caring professions, such as nursing, teaching, and healthcare

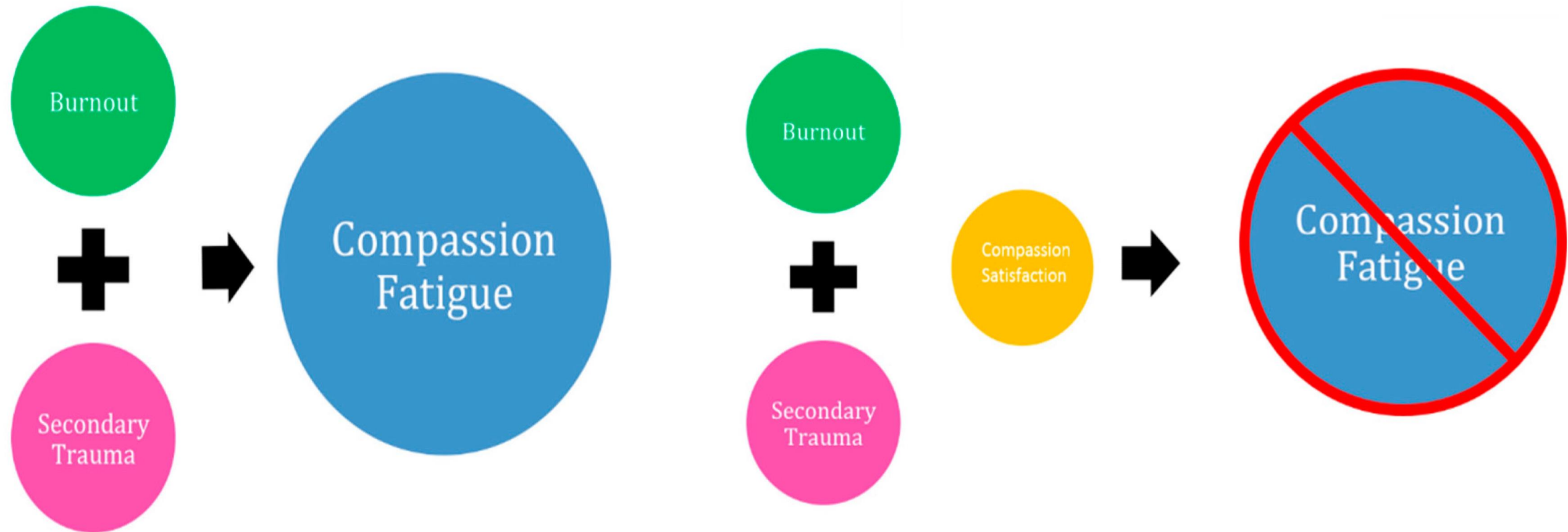


How to increase compassion satisfaction

- **Practice self-care:** Use self-care strategies to manage stress and defend against compassion fatigue.
- **Prioritize challenges:** Take stock of your challenges and prioritize them.
- **Share challenges:** Share your challenges and potential solutions with others.
- **Create a sleep schedule:** Create a sleep schedule that works for you and unwind before bed.



COMPASSION SATISFACTION



Key points for caregivers

- Prioritize self-care:
- Regular breaks: Schedule time for yourself to relax and recharge, even if it's just a short walk or a phone call with a friend.
- Exercise: Engage in physical activity you enjoy, like walking, swimming, or yoga.
- Healthy diet: Eat nutritious meals and stay hydrated.
- Sleep hygiene: Aim for enough sleep each night.
- Stress management: Practice relaxation techniques like meditation or deep breathing.



Seek Support

- **Family and friends:** Don't hesitate to ask for help from loved ones, even if it's just for a few hours.
- **Support groups:** Join a caregiver support group to connect with others facing similar challenges.
- **Professional help:** Consider therapy if you're struggling with stress, anxiety, or depression.



Managing caregiving responsibilities

- **Assess needs:** Understand the specific needs of the person you're caring for and create a care plan.
- **Delegate tasks:** Ask for assistance from family members or consider hiring professional help when necessary.
- **Stay informed:** Educate yourself about the condition you're caring for and available resources.



How to Use Mindfulness to Help with Caregiver Stress and Burnout

Taking mindful space for yourself will keep you grounded and peaceful while you help take care of a loved one.

- Take deep breaths.
- Be present.
- Be kind to yourself.
- Practice gratitude
- Connect to others
- Sit outside, even if it's on a sidewalk bench. Get some sun on your face, be with your breath, and watch the world go by.





THANK YOU

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