

In Touch Newsletter January 2026

Support Group Online Meetings

We have several online meetings for support groups. Find out all the latest information about how you can join in.

Support Group Leadership Zoom

Monday, 16 February 2026

Time: 10am – 11am (AEDT)

The first Zoom for the year will be an opportunity to reconnect, especially if you haven't been able to attend a meeting in a while, or if you are a new leader and haven't yet been to a meeting.

Terri Herlings, our Community Engagement and Support Coordinator, will be joining us, as will Natalee Robotham, our Direct Marketing Officer, to share a few awareness raising opportunities in the first half of this year.

Link to

register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/h7w777hiSQiSG3CAugR-QA>

Suitable for: support group leaders and committee members

Let's Talk Parkinson's: Building your health care team and preparing for your appointments

Suitable for: people living with Parkinson's, carers, spouses, health professionals

Thursday, 19 February 2026

11.30am – 12.30pm

The meeting will be facilitated by our InfoLine registered nurse, Melanie Ledbury.

Melanie will share helpful tips and resources and you are also invited to share your own during the discussion.

Link to

register: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/j3XZNj1ISeKORqTjPNHG_Q

Young Onset Parkinson's: Apps, Techs and Tools

Thursday, 12 February 2026

4pm – 5pm

Apps, Techs and Tools presented by Andreas Buchmueller, Access Technology Specialist and Occupational Therapist at Vision Australia.

He will cover off keyboards, voice typing tools, smart home devices and a range of others! There will also be plenty of time for you all to share your own apps, techs and tools.

Link to

register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/1uBdadmBTxCdsC43FdZXRw>

Suitable for: people living with young onset Parkinson's, family members and health professionals

Carers Chat with Parkinson's NSW Counsellors

Monday 9th February 2026

10am – 11am

Parkinson's NSW Counsellor, Shushan Movsessian, will be chatting about:

- Letting go of 2025
- What would you like to bring into 2026
- Staying in the present moment

Link to

register: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/KZ4VFpbvREGmXitAcl_R5A

For carers and spouses only

Ten self care strategies

Stress affects nearly everyone at some point and over time. It can lead to serious health issues like heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Practicing self-care regularly can help you relieve stress and boost your health.

There are a few major goals of self-care methods:

- Check in with your mind and body. Self-care allows us to check in with ourselves and attune to all parts of our being that may need some extra attention — mind, body, and spirit.
- Rest and recharge. Self-care is also an opportunity for us to recharge, replenish, and renew after a period of hard work.
- Bring the focus back to yourself. We find ourselves so often pouring into other's cups (family, work, partners etc.) that we forget ourselves. Each time you practice self-care you are telling yourself 'I am important'.

With those goals in mind, here are ten tips for practicing self-care to live a happy, healthy life.

1. Declutter your space

Your environment will impact your mental health. This means that being in a clean, organised environment can help you feel calmer and more focused. This may be especially helpful if you work from home, but it's also nice to simply relax in a clean, decluttered room. When things are already chaotic in our brains, visually seeing things as chaotic doesn't help either. Try your best to organize your space in the best way you can.

2. Meditate

Meditating has so many spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical benefits. For example, meditation can give your brain a chance to rest and recharge, using techniques like being aware of the present, checking in with your body and focusing on your breathing. All of these techniques support balance, grounding, and reduction in anxiety and depression symptoms. A 2014 review found that people who participated in mindfulness meditation programs saw improvements in their symptoms of anxiety, depression, and to a lesser extent stress.

3. Go for a Walk or Run

Going for a walk or run is a great option for daily self-care because it gives you a chance to go outside, get fresh air, and move your body. A 2015 review of seven studies found that aerobic exercise, like walking or running, can reduce anxiety symptoms for people with anxiety disorders. This may be because doing aerobic exercise releases endorphins in your brain, which can boost your mood.

4. Say no

It's easy to get into a pattern of always saying yes to social plans, extra work activities, or other people's requests, even if you don't have enough time or energy to really engage. Saying no to certain obligations can help free up time for yourself — self-care requires that we reserve enough time for the activities and relationships that are deeply replenishing. If we fill our calendars with things we dislike, we don't have enough room for the things that truly bring us joy.

5. Go on a weekend trip

When you're used to following your busy daily routine, it's easy to get burnt out and not notice. Weekend trips can provide a much-needed change of pace and the visual shift in scenery can offer a kind of newness that inspires creativity, wonder, and openness. It can be hard to find time or money for a full vacation, but even a short trip to the next town over or to a nearby nature reserve can help you feel renewed and boost your energy upon return.

6. Spend time in nature

Taking a walk in a natural environment like a forest or a park can help clear your mind and act as a reset during the day.

7. Do yoga

Yoga is a great self-care tool because it encourages mind, body, and spirit alignment. Yoga can help decrease anxiety and depression symptoms. This is because yoga can help reduce overactivity in your nervous system and regulates the stress hormone cortisol. Yoga is extremely beneficial for all those who wish to deeply connect to their bodies while being meditative and present.

8. Try journaling

Writing in a journal can be a great way to slow down and connect with your thoughts and feelings. And it doesn't take long to see results. Here are a few journaling techniques you can try:

- Write a list of things you're grateful for.
- Write down all your negative thoughts and feelings, then throw away the paper.
- Write down how you feel each day, then look back at your entries to see patterns in your mood.
- If you don't know what to write, just write any thoughts that come into your head, no matter how minor.

9. Eat fruits and vegetables

When you're especially busy, it can be easier to grab the quickest or easiest foods to eat, which are often pre-packaged and not the healthiest. Taking a moment to make yourself a fresh fruit bowl or chopped veggies can give you a boost of nutrients like anthocyanins that boost brain function. Eating raw fruits and veggies like carrots, bananas, and spinach helps to decrease depression symptoms.

10. Watch something funny

If you spend a lot of free time reading grim news stories, taking a break to watch a funny show or clip can be a great self-care tool. Laughing feels good emotionally, but it's also good for your physical health.

Some of the benefits of laughter include:

- Calming your stress response
- Decreasing your blood pressure (after a short-term increase while you laugh)
- Relaxing your muscles
- Increasing your blood circulation

Source

EAP Assist (Employee Assistance Program)

Parliamentary Friends of Parkinson's Online Launch

We invite you to join us online for our Parliamentary Friends Of Parkinson's Launch Event.

Thursday 5 February 1.30 - 3pm

Watch the Livestream on the Parkinson's NSW YouTube Channel.

Livestream link - <https://www.youtube.com/live/688t-b34FJM>

New AI Powered Speech Screening Tool

Computer scientists at the University of Rochester have developed an Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered, speech-based screening tool to detect signs of Parkinson's disease.

It uses digital audio recordings to scan for subtle vocal patterns associated with the disease. The user simply records two short sentences into their computer's microphone and artificial intelligence flags warning signs, if there are any.

"These acoustic models are trained on millions of recordings. They have access to a lot of the recordings available online, not specifically of people with Parkinson's, but of speech generally," said Abdelrahman Abdelkader, one of the two lead authors of a study on the tool.

After testing it, researchers said they found that the tool had an 85% accuracy rate.

Changes in the voice are one of the earliest signs of Parkinson's disease, according to the Parkinson's Foundation. They can include soft speech, monotone voice, slurring, and difficulty finding the right word. Limited facial expressions can also affect non-verbal communication.

The researchers' goal is to combine this tool with early screenings for other symptoms involving motor control.

The study's authors emphasise that their AI-based tool should not be used as a substitute for a clinical diagnosis. But they hope it will be an easy way for people, including those who live in remote areas, to detect potential changes that could warrant an evaluation by a neurologist.

Source:

The [study](#) was published in the journal *NPJ Parkinson's Disease*.

Walking in Parkinson's - Let's Get Moving

If you or someone you love is living with Parkinson's disease, you probably know that walking can be a bit of a challenge. Sometimes there's shuffling, freezing, or your feet aren't doing what you want them to do.

But here's the good news: the right kind of exercise can make a big difference. We're not just talking about any exercise (although all will help) but specific, intentional movement that helps the brain and body work better together.

The best styles of exercise that can help walking when you have Parkinson's are firstly, to think big and step bigger! For example, taking big steps, doing wide arm swings, or even exaggerated sit-to-stands will all help fight off the small, slow movements that Parkinson's can cause.

Visit a Parkinson's-trained exercise specialist to help learn more about doing big, exaggerated movements and then put them into your regular exercise routine.

Dance (especially the tango) has also been shown to help improve walking by improving balance, coordination, and gait in people with Parkinson's. The rhythm and partner-based structure of tango helps with timing and stride, and it's also fun.

Walking on a treadmill (even at slow speeds) is a safe and steady exercise that really helps people with Parkinson's improve their gait steadiness and walking endurance. It's like giving the brain a metronome or rhythm to walk to, which helps regulate and reduce missteps or freezing.

Tai Chi is like moving meditation. It's gentle, flowy, and perfect for building balance and core strength. Several studies have shown that Tai Chi helps reduce the number of falls and improves walking steadiness in people with Parkinson's. It also helps with focus and relaxation, which is great because stress tends to make Parkinson's symptoms worse.

Practicing walking using anything with a beat such as a metronome, clapping, or music with a steady rhythm. These rhythmic cues help the brain stay in sync with the body, making walking smoother. It's called Rhythmic Auditory Stimulation (RAS) and it's been proven to improve step timing and gait in Parkinson's patients.

So, which one is the best? All of them. Do all the different type of exercise to improve your walking but doing the one you enjoy regularly and sticking with it is the best – the best for you.

So, whether that's a tango class once a week, a daily walk on the treadmill, or a few minutes of Tai Chi in the morning, consistency is key. And always check in with your Parkinson's exercise specialist or doctor before starting any new activity. They can help tailor a safe plan just for you.

Parkinson's makes walking harder but if you do a variety of exercise, you're not just improving your walking, you're boosting your brain health, your confidence, and your independence. So start moving those feet, pick your groove, and get moving. Every step counts – literally.

References:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16283401/> Training BIG to move faster: The application of the speed–amplitude relation as a rehabilitation strategy for people with Parkinson's disease

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19479161/> Effects of dance on movement control in Parkinson's disease: A comparison of Argentine tango and American ballroom.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22316445/> Tai Chi and postural stability in patients with Parkinson's disease

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8684391/> Rhythmic auditory stimulation in gait training for Parkinson's disease patients.

Gold4Good Campaign

The fundraising team of Parkinson's NSW has conceived an innovative appeal for its autumn campaign this year. It's called *Gold4Good* and seeks to recycle unwanted jewellery.

Most of us have old or damaged jewellery tucked away – broken clasps, single earrings, tangled chains, or pieces we simply no longer wear. So this year, fundraisers are inviting you to turn those forgotten items into something truly meaningful.

Simply donate unwanted or old pieces of broken gold or silver jewellery and they will be transformed into support that helps to ensure no one faces Parkinson's alone.

By donating through Gold4Good, your generosity will help Parkinson's NSW meet the ever-growing need for our support to people living with Parkinson's, their care partners and families.

It's a great time to embrace a season of renewal, declutter, and refresh your space. Donating your broken gold or silver jewellery is a simple way to make a difference.

Your donations will help provide programs which include:

- Counselling services
- Support Groups across the state
- The 1800 InfoLine service staffed by Registered Parkinson's Nurses and specialist health professionals
- Parkinson's Specialist Nurses placed in rural and regional areas of NSW
- Education and information programs

You can request a free Gold4Good pack [here](#).

Parkinson's Symposium

Our Parkinson's Symposium will be held on Tuesday, 31 March at the Sydney Masonic Centre.

To register please follow the link <https://events.humanitix.com/parkinson-s-nsw-symposium-31-march-2026>

For evidence-based information and advice call the Parkinson's NSW InfoLine

1800 727 567

Parkinson's NSW InfoLine

Email: pnsw@parkinsonsnsw.org.au

Web: www.parkinsonsnsw.org.au