

# Building an Effective Parkinson's Exercise Program



YOUR 7-ELEMENT

CHECKLIST

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PHYSICAL THERAPY & WELLNESS

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## YOUR 7-ELEMENT CHECKLIST



Over the years, I've found that my clients who **prioritize** exercise and exercise **effectively** for Parkinson's see the best results.



They are:

- More mobile and independent
- Less at risk for falls
- Less impacted by their symptoms
- Take less medication, and
- Report less depression

It's not just my clients who see these results. Research supports exercise as the **#1 way** to keep Parkinson's symptoms at bay for the long run.

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There are a few points about exercise to really emphasize here:

1. It starts at **diagnosis**.
2. It's for **life**. It's a marathon, not a sprint.
3. It's as **important** if not **more important** than taking your medication. You wouldn't miss a dose of your medication, and you should prioritize exercise the same way. Medication helps with symptoms in the short-term, but exercise is the only treatment method shown to improve symptoms for the long term.

Most people understand why exercise is so important and they get really excited about starting a program. They go out and are active, but often don't see the results they want. Why?

Because they aren't exercising **effectively**.

I don't want this to be you! Your time is precious and I want you to be getting the most bang for your exercise buck.

After all, time is the only thing we really have at the end of the day.





Today, I want to go over the **7 KEY ELEMENTS** to exercising **EFFECTIVELY** for Parkinson's:

### **BIG, POWERFUL MOVEMENTS**



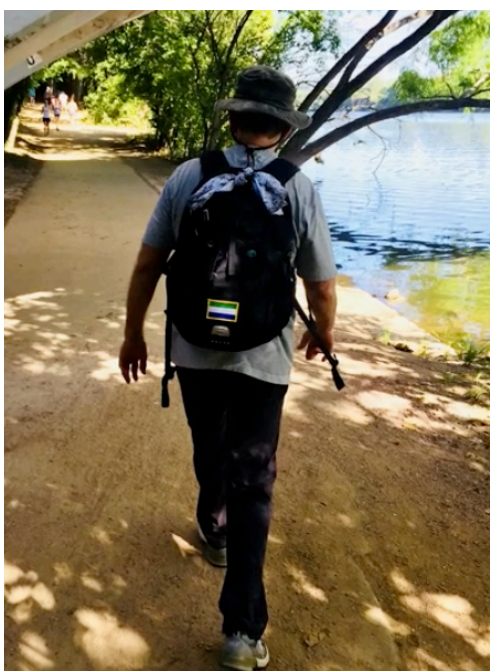
When you use BIG movements, you're working specifically to counteract the small, slow movements that come with reduced levels of dopamine.

Consciously retraining your brain in large ranges of motion starts to create new movement patterns and changes the way your brain sends signals to your body. This is called **neuroplasticity** and requires lots of practice, practice, practice!



This concept builds the foundation of programs like LSVT BIG & LOUD, and the PWR! Program, but it can be applied to any exercise you're doing as part of your program.

## PHYSICALLY CHALLENGING



My favorite quote is: ***"If it's not challenging you, it ain't changing you."***

Having a program that is physically challenging means that your muscles get tired, you get out of breath. It's not comfortable. It's hard but it doesn't hurt. There's a difference!

**You can measure the physical challenge of your program in two ways:**

1. Track your Heart Rate
2. Use the Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale ([here](#))

**NOTE:** Make sure to check with your healthcare team before starting any intense exercise program.



### MENTALLY CHALLENGING

Parkinson's is a unique diagnosis as symptoms seem to fluctuate greatly with the level of attentiveness you're giving to the task at hand. Therefore, your exercise program needs to incorporate activities that make you multi-task and challenge your mind and body at the same time.

There are a variety of ways to do this. Playing games with a variety of rules, layers, tasks and challenges is a great place to start. Also incorporating exercises that are new to you where you have to concentrate fully on learning the form and execution is wonderful when it comes to strengthening mind-body connection.



### SPECIFIC TO YOUR PARKINSON'S SYMPTOMS

Certain symptoms that are specific to Parkinson's — rigidity, stooped posture, freezing, small movements, lack of arm swing when walking, etc. — are most effectively treated with specific exercise strategies.

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These include (*but aren't limited to*) exercises that focus on:

1. spinal flexibility
2. weight shifting
3. rotation
4. multi-directional stepping
5. proprioceptive overload (*whoa, fancy words!*), and so forth...

Make sure that whatever program you're working on (*or person you're working with*) is familiar with what needs to be included in your exercise program.

**NOTE:** While Parkinson's comes with some common symptoms overall, every person is different. This is where it's so important to work with a Parkinson's trained PT to give you a personalized program for your specific symptoms/challenges, and then check in every 6-12 months for an update to your program.

## SOCIAL

We need a **tribe**. Our brains were designed to thrive when we're surrounded by people, and research supports we're healthier, happier and are more likely to achieve our goals when we're part of a group. It also brings a sense of connection and belonging.

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## YOUR 7-ELEMENT CHECKLIST



### Ways to get connected:

1. Join a group fitness class (*preferably one that's PD-specific*) in your area.
2. Ask a friend, neighbor, or family member to meet up with you for a few workouts or walks each week.
3. Hire a personal trainer or PT to come to your house (*if you can't go to them*) for a workout. Invite friends!



If all else fails, use technology to connect with a tribe online. I'd love to have you join our amazing crew inside **The Invigorated Community**, our private Facebook group.





### FUN

There's a reason why kids' brains develop so quickly — **they play!** When we play, our brains respond quickly because its one of the most potent ways to learn new movements and skills. Plus, laughter and smiles boost your mood and can actually be addictive (*in a good way!*) so that you're more likely to exercise again.



Give yourself permission to have fun when you're working out. It will pay dividends.

### ACCOUNTABLE



**Apathy** can be a strong foe so it's important to have someone checking in on you and helping you stay accountable to your exercise program. Typically, I suggest this person shouldn't be your spouse or closest family member as this can create some tensions that are hard to overcome.

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### Ways to stay on track:

1. Set goals that you want to achieve in the next 3-4 weeks that are meaningful to you. Write them down and revisit them when you're trying to find some motivation to move.
2. Set up challenges with family members, friends, or other PWP. Fitness bets can be very effective! Put some money on working out every day, achieving a certain number of steps daily (*measured by a pedometer or FitBit*), or attending fitness classes.

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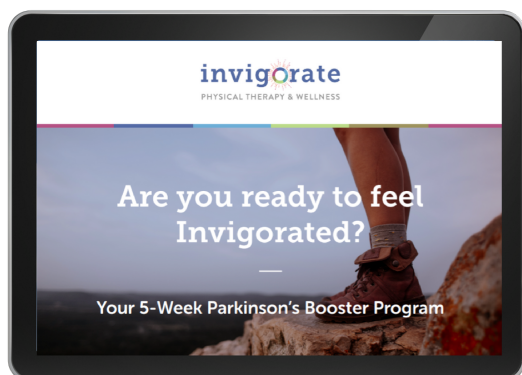
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How does your exercise program stack up? Are you missing any of these elements?

**My challenge to you: Aim to incorporate at least 5 of these 7 elements in every workout session you do this week, making sure to hit all 7 elements throughout the month.**

**If you're struggling with exercising effectively and think that you need some outside help, I want to invite you to learn more about the online exercise program I created that incorporates these 7 elements (*plus some serious real person support from me*) that you need to be successful (*now and for the long run*).**



The **Booster Program** may be for you if you want to:

- Slow the progression of your symptoms
- Restore your strength, balance, endurance
- Feel better, more energized and more enthusiastic about the future
- AND you want serious, real-person support the entire way through

You can learn more about how this powerful program can give your brain, body, and self-confidence a boost at [www.InvigoratePT.com/Booster](http://www.InvigoratePT.com/Booster).

Thanks, as always, for trusting me on your Parkinson's journey. Keep moving and big hugs!

My very best,

*Sarah*

