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## **Making plans with your loved one**

Finding time to enjoy the company of your loved one outside the confines of your caring role can be good for both of you. Here's why ...

When you're managing a lifelong illness like Parkinson's disease, it can be all too easy to get caught up in the day-to-day routine of caring.

'Often this is because following a regular routine makes life easier – and normally, health professionals recommend following a routine whenever possible,' says Health Psychology Specialist Clare Moloney.

'However, make sure your routine is not entirely made up of tasks and responsibilities. It should include regular pleasures and enjoyable activities to take your mind off Parkinson's.

'As Marie Lenstrup, the National Chair of Carers Denmark, points out, pushing the boundaries of what's possible can also lead to some memorable experiences and pleasant surprises.

'Spending time together in this way can remind you that your relationship doesn't have to be all about caring all of the time.

'Finding things you can still do together for fun and relaxation can be healthy for you both and boost your enjoyment of day-to-day life. Time spent outdoors in particular, can help ease stresses and boost quality of life.<sup>5</sup>

### **Deciding what to do**

'While the things you can do together may have changed over time, it should still be possible to do some things together for enjoyment.

'Why not consider some of the things you enjoyed doing together before Parkinson's disease and how you could adjust these activities so you can still enjoy them together again?

'For example, it may not be possible for the person you're looking after to take walks in the countryside anymore, but is it still possible for you to enjoy the countryside together another way? Can you go somewhere accessible by wheelchair, or take a riverboat cruise?

'Spending time together in this way can serve as a nice reminder that it's still important to feel "normal" and that time can be spent on activities that aren't always focused around care.

‘Just be prepared to compromise: if going out to dinner is becoming too difficult, then have lunch out instead. Swap an evening theatre performance for the matinee – keep socialising, but try and keep things more informal.’

Reference:

- 5 J. Pretty, et al., 'The Mental and Physical Health Outcomes of Green Exercise', *Int J Environ Health Res*, 15 (2005), 319-37.