



FOR CARE PARTNERS

Support Groups for Care Partners

Finding connection, practical ideas and encouragement while caring for someone with Parkinson's

THE MAIN IDEA

Caregiving can be meaningful and exhausting at the same time. A well-run support group offers a confidential place to be understood, learn from others and reduce isolation. It complements—not replaces—medical care, counseling or emergency help.

What a support group can provide

- **People who understand.** Members may recognize the stress, grief, uncertainty and changing roles that are difficult to explain elsewhere.
- **Practical experience.** Care partners share questions to ask, local services, communication ideas, home-safety strategies and lessons learned through different stages of Parkinson's.
- **Encouragement and perspective.** Hearing how others adapt can make problems feel more manageable and reduce the sense of facing them alone.
- **A path to more help.** Facilitators and members may identify respite, counseling, transportation, benefits, therapy and community resources.

Choose the format that fits

- **Care-partner-only group.** Creates space to speak candidly without worrying about upsetting the person receiving care.
- **Stage- or topic-specific group.** Groups may focus on newly diagnosed families, young-onset Parkinson's, advanced disease, dementia, bereavement or veterans.
- **In-person group.** Offers local relationships and resource sharing but requires travel, time and substitute care.
- **Virtual or telephone group.** Can reduce transportation barriers and connect people with a better-matched group beyond their immediate area.
- **Peer mentor or one-to-one support.** A trained peer relationship may fit someone who is uncomfortable in groups or needs more individualized connection.

IT MAY TAKE MORE THAN ONE TRY

Groups have different personalities, topics and leadership styles. Attend two or three meetings if possible, then try another group or format if the first one does not feel useful or safe.

Find and evaluate a group

1. **Start with trusted sources:** Ask the movement-disorder clinic, hospital social worker, Parkinson's Foundation, local Area Agency on Aging, VA Caregiver Support team, faith community and other care partners.
2. **Confirm the basics:** Ask who may attend, whether registration is required, meeting schedule, location or video platform, cost, accessibility and whether respite is available.
3. **Ask how the group is led:** Find out whether the facilitator is a trained volunteer, social worker, clinician or peer and how difficult conversations, misinformation and conflict are handled.
4. **Review privacy expectations:** A group can request confidentiality but cannot guarantee that every member will comply. Share only information you are comfortable discussing.
5. **Try the meeting:** Notice whether participants are welcomed, conversation is balanced, differing experiences are respected and resource claims are checked.
6. **Reassess the fit:** A useful group should leave you feeling heard or better informed—not pressured, shamed, frightened or responsible for fixing everyone else.

Questions to ask the organizer

- **Is this group specifically for care partners?** Ask whether the person with Parkinson's attends and whether separate discussion time is offered.
- **What are the group agreements?** Clarify privacy, respectful language, attendance, sales solicitations, political or religious discussion, and advice-giving.
- **How are urgent concerns handled?** The leader should be able to direct members to crisis, mental-health, abuse or medical resources rather than asking the group to manage emergencies.
- **Can I listen before sharing?** A respectful group allows new members to participate at their own pace.

Use the group safely

- **Treat stories as experiences—not prescriptions.** A treatment, benefit strategy or caregiving method that helped one family may be unsafe or unsuitable for another.
- **Protect personal information.** Avoid sharing account numbers, full birth dates, passwords, Social Security numbers or detailed identifying health information in public online spaces.
- **Check medical claims.** Bring treatment, supplement or medication suggestions to the neurologist, pharmacist or other qualified clinician before acting.

RED FLAGS

Leave or seek guidance if a group pressures members to buy products, stop prescribed treatment, reveal private information, lend money, use one "cure," distrust all professionals, or remain silent about abuse or danger.

Printable support-group comparison

Care partner: _____ What I most want from a group: _____

Use one row for each group. Contact the organizer to confirm current meeting details before attending.

Group / contact	Who attends	Format / schedule	Good fit because...	Questions / next step
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

After a trial meeting

- ☐ Yes ☐ Not sure ☐ No I felt welcomed and respected.
- ☐ Yes ☐ Not sure ☐ No The discussion was relevant to my caregiving needs.
- ☐ Yes ☐ Not sure ☐ No Members had balanced time to speak and listen.
- ☐ Yes ☐ Not sure ☐ No The leader corrected unsafe advice or misinformation.
- ☐ Yes ☐ Not sure ☐ No Privacy and boundaries were discussed and respected.
- ☐ Yes ☐ Not sure ☐ No I learned at least one useful next step or resource.
- ☐ Yes ☐ Not sure ☐ No The schedule and format are realistic for me.
- ☐ Yes ☐ Not sure ☐ No I would feel comfortable returning or contacting the leader.

My participation plan

Group I will try: _____

Next meeting date / time: _____ How I will attend: _____

Who can provide care or respite while I attend: _____

One question or topic I may bring: _____

Know when a group is not enough

- **Professional counseling.** Individual, couples or family therapy may be appropriate for persistent anxiety, depression, grief, conflict, trauma, sleep problems or difficulty functioning.
- **Caregiver assessment and respite.** Ask a clinician, social worker or aging-services program to evaluate caregiver strain and help arrange breaks or practical support.
- **Urgent safety help.** Contact a clinician promptly for severe caregiver exhaustion, worsening depression, unsafe lifting, neglect concerns or inability to continue care safely.

CRISIS OR IMMEDIATE DANGER

Call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the United States. Call 911 for immediate danger, violence, a medical emergency or when someone cannot be kept safe. Suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation may also be reported to Adult Protective Services.

Support for veteran caregivers

- **VA Caregiver Support Program.** Local teams offer education, coaching, resources and connections for caregivers of enrolled Veterans; eligibility differs by program.
- **Peer Support Mentoring.** VA caregivers may connect one-to-one or through groups with peers who share caregiving experience.
- **REACH VA and other programs.** Structured coaching or group calls may help with stress management, problem solving and condition-specific caregiving challenges.
- **Military and Veteran Caregiver Network.** The American Red Cross network offers online community, peer mentoring and support groups for military and veteran caregivers.

Trusted places to start

- **Parkinson's Foundation — Find Local Support:** <https://www.parkinson.org/resources-support>
- **Parkinson's Foundation — Online PD Community:** <https://www.parkinson.org/resources-support/helpline/online-pd-community>
- **Family Caregiver Alliance:** <https://www.caregiver.org/connecting-caregivers/> • 1-800-445-8106
- **Eldercare Locator:** <https://eldercare.acl.gov/> • 1-800-677-1116
- **VA Caregiver Support Line:** <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/> • 1-855-260-3274
- **Parkinson's Foundation Helpline:** 1-800-4PD-INFO (1-800-473-4636)

Recovery Health Tech contact: Val Brown • 1-504-450-6279 • val@recoveryhealthtech.com