

SPEECH AND COMMUNICATION WORKSHEET

Many people living with Parkinson's experience difficulties speaking and communicating. These challenges may show up as a quiet voice, unclear speech, trouble finding words or reduced facial expression. Review the worksheet below for ideas you can use to improve your speech and communication. Check the tips you plan to put into practice.

Speaking Tips

- Pace your words if you talk too fast.
- Begin talking by sitting up straight, taking a deep breath and opening your mouth.
- Singing is fun and helps keep your voice flexible and increases your breath support. Try karaoke or simply sing along to your favorite songs.
- Practice facial exercises like the sounds "ooh" and "ahh" with exaggeration in your mouth to reduce muscle stiffness.

Breathing Tips

- Open your chest by sitting up straight to allow for big, deep breaths. Breathing deeply helps increase your volume of speech.
- Practice deep breathing daily. Yoga, tai chi and meditation classes can all help you learn breathing exercises.

Communication Tips

- Improve communication with your care partner. A speech therapist and counselor can help with ideas such as active listening and other recommendations focused on staying engaged in communication and relationships, even when common verbal or non-verbal cues may be different because of Parkinson's.
- Get your hearing checked to ensure it is not impaired.
- Don't let conversation bypass you. If you are in a group setting, ask the group to pause, reminding them that you or your partner would like to speak and be heard!
- Use body language and hand gestures during a conversation to help tell your story, especially if your facial muscles do not express emotion like they used to.

▶ **Treatment**

- Seek out a speech therapist early in the course of Parkinson's. A speech therapist with experience working with people living with Parkinson's can help keep your speech strong before there is a problem or work with you to improve speech with any change.