

A photograph of a yellow building facade. A window with dark shutters is visible, and a flower box with red and pink flowers is mounted below it. The text "Parkinsons Recovery Magazine" and "January 2011" is overlaid on the image.

**Parkinsons Recovery Magazine**  
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## **How Can You Stay Positive When You Have Parkinson's Disease?**

*By Richard London*

The emotions I experienced when I was first diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease were a mixture of shock, fear, and relief. The relief came from finally knowing the cause of the symptoms I had been experiencing for years and in getting medication that actually helped control them. It has been five years since that diagnosis and I have learned a lot about Parkinson's Disease (PD) in that time, more than I ever wanted to know.

Chances are that you already know that PD is a degenerative neurological disease with a variety of symptoms that can be quite frustrating, and sometimes debilitating. Everyone is affected by PD differently, but I believe that there is one thing in common that all of the people I have met with PD have who are still getting out and enjoying their lives. They *choose* to have a good attitude and make the most of every day. When I say that they choose to make the most of every day I mean exactly that. I know people with PD who seem to always smile and are a joy to be around. They seek out new activities so they can continue to feel productive in their lives.

We can all be overwhelmed by life's challenges at times. I know there have been times that I have felt like I deserved a good pity party. When you feel that way I have some advice that might surprise you. My suggestion is to have your pity party. Have a real good one. Spend ten minutes complaining to yourself about all of the problems in your life. Make a list of all of the things that frustrate you, but limit yourself to

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exactly ten minutes. Then start a list of all of the positive things you have in your life. Write down the names of the people around you who love and support you. Write down all the activities you enjoy that you can still do. Take stock of your blessings and remember that there is always someone out there who has it worse than you do.

Then look back at the list of things that frustrate you and ask yourself how important each item is in the big scheme of life. For those issues that really bother you ask yourself, “What can I do about this?”

Remember the Serenity prayer, “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. The courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Accept the things you cannot change. There’s no sense frustrating yourself by trying to change them. Acknowledge that some things in life are outside of your control and focus on what you *can* do.

One of the things that has worked wonders for me is staying physically active. I can’t do everything that I used to do, but I push myself to do what I can. Find an activity that you enjoy and push yourself to do well in it. My wife and I started taking ballroom dancing lessons. She loves it and I do the best I can. Tai Chi is a wonderful activity to develop balance, coordination and mental focus. Whatever you decide to do, do it on a regular basis to keep your body and mind active.

Another choice that you have is to volunteer to help others rather than focusing on yourself. Remember what I said, there’s always someone out there who has it worse than you do. By focusing on someone else I found that besides my having the satisfaction that I am helping another person, I am more conscious of the blessings in my life.

In summary, choose to live every day to the fullest. Stay active to keep your body and mind sharp. Take your eyes off of yourself by helping others. In short find a way to enjoy life to the fullest every day. I think you'll agree that it's better than the alternative.

*Richard London is a person with Parkinson's, seven year cancer survivor and has had nine surgeries following a life changing automobile accident. He is a public speaker and author of [A Handbook for Life: A Practical Guide to Success and Happiness](#) ([www.AHandbookForLife.com](http://www.AHandbookForLife.com)), has a commercial pilot's license and third degree black belt.*



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