



BOUNCING FROM TIGGER TO EYORE TO POOH

Fans of the children's book series "Winnie the Pooh" by AA Milne are familiar with the group of animated, stuffed-animal friends of the fictional human, Christopher Robin, depicted in the stories. Many find wisdom in the characters' philosophical conversations amongst themselves. (Whole Facebook sites contain favorite quotations.) Among others, the animals include Pooh, a cheerful bear who loves adventures; Tigger, a forever upbeat, bouncing tiger prone to knocking things over; and Eeyore, a perpetually gloomy donkey, preoccupied with whether rain will ruin any planned picnic.

LEONORE GORDON

After sixteen years living with Parkinsons, I'd like to believe that Pooh best

represents how I respond to living with Parkinson's, as I thrive on choosing upbeat adventures (and social activism) over Eeyore's gloomy pessimism. Certainly, my jumpy dyskinesias are more reminiscent of the more cheerful, forever-bouncing Tigger, (especially mid-meal, when, to my wife's great amusement, my dinner plate suddenly flips over and sails across the room!) But in truth, my daily, sometimes-unpredictable, medication-failing "Off's" can quickly bring on my internal Eeyore, worrying that I'll never "come on" again, even if my more adult 'Christopher Robin' brain knows my meds will eventually kick in, as they always do.

Common wisdom (and research) suggests that an underlying optimism breeds better health and greater contentment. Few would disagree. Still, it's less easy to choose humor when the bowl of wild rice stuffing I've just proudly prepared for my cousin's Thanksgiving dinner leaps out of my hands and onto the floor. So much depends on 'spin.' Yes, laughter allows me to rescue half of the un-spilled food and continue cooking, but when my dopamine is low, cursing comes quicker, leading to less productive tears.

With this disease, stress really does play kryptonite to the effectiveness of our PD meds, and when stressful situations disable us PWP's, our rose-colored glasses go "off," too.

Indeed, from moment to moment, our personal spins on any small challenge confronting us can be profoundly influenced by so many external factors: secure housing, financial stability, the severity of our symptoms, the quality of our sleep, the positive or negative energy of a significant other, or the loss of a loved one through illness, death or divorce. The list of potential stressors is long. Dopamine depletion also can deplete our resilience.

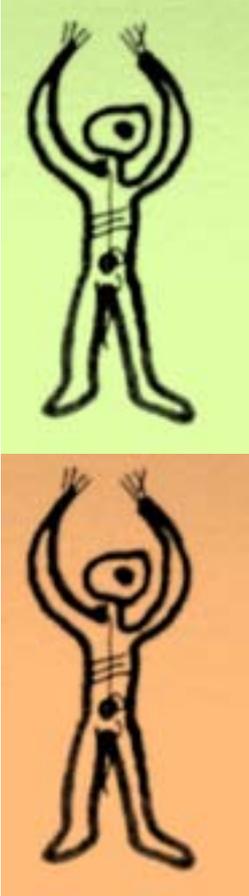
So, what strategies can enable us to shape-shift from gloomy Eeyore into a "glass half-full" Winnie the Pooh in those hours when our PD trips us up, and our med's fail, rendering us nearly immobile? For me, distraction works best. Political activism is my most successful tool; using social media to share information about PD research, web sites, or upcoming events; sending out "Action Alerts" (in the US about contacting a member of Congress about an upcoming vote affecting Disease Research funding)--in short, anything I do to effect social change seems to trigger a shot of natural dopamine, empowering me and greasing my wheels, (and friends report similar results.)



Equally distracting for me can be playing Scrabble with a friend, (in-person, or online), absorption in a good book or a favorite TV show or movie, creating photography gifts on Shutterfly, or learning something new on PBS. Laughter hugely loves conquering my inner Eeyore; whether that be watching some comedian I've recorded on tv, or allowing myself to laugh along with my wife when she compares my slow-motion reaching for a pill box to the movements of a junkie.

Last but really at the top of my list should be Exercise—my best antidote to Eeyore-Gloom. Exercise, alone and in groups--- is so vital to my better moods! Riding my recumbent bike nearly daily while watching a good movie on the television can keep my hope quotient up, and is actually an essential form of anti-depressant. Twice weekly group exercise at a free PD class is even better, as we companionably climb upon the weight-training apparatus and dance to aerobic exercise. Our Brooklyn PD community also attends weekly singing, dance and movement classes, which keeps all of our spirits up.

At the proverbial end of the day, surrounding myself with others who share my priorities to choose friendship and laughter over isolation and gloom is, above all, what keeps me alive and moving. Like the close-knit team of friends in Winnie the Pooh, it seems to me that we do best holding hands as we face the world, daily seeking adventures and pots of honey, even as we each take our respective turns giggling, skipping, weeping, and bumbling along.



PARKINSON'S UNITY WALK

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Make Every Step Count



21st Parkinson's Unity Walk (PUW)
Walk Day is Saturday, April 25, 2015 (Rain or Shine)

Join us for a gentle 1.4 mile walk in Central Park!

100% of donations go to Parkinson's disease [research](#) funded by seven major U.S. Parkinson's foundations.

In addition to raising awareness and funds for research, we are also a day of community and education! Visit informational booths which will include Ask the Healthcare Experts, and meet with representatives from sponsors and foundations sharing information and resources with members of the Parkinson's community.

Our event hashtag is [#puw2015](#). Include our hashtag in your posts and photos and also join our [Facebook event](#).

LOCATION

72nd Street [Bandshe](#), Central Park, New York, NY
 Use 72nd Street Park entrances on Fifth Avenue or Central Park West
[Google Map for Directions](#)

REGISTRATION OPEN:	8:30 am to 1:00 pm
BANDSHELL BOOTHS OPEN:	8:30 am to 2:00 pm (Team Photos and Make A Sign)
BOOTHS OPEN:	8:30 am to 2:00 pm (On Margot Zobel Way)
WALK KICK-OFF:	9:45 am
WALK BEGINS:	10:00 am
PROGRAM POST WALK:	11:00 am (Approximately)

