

**TAKING CONTROL**

**Body talk – exercise & PD**

Tim Bracher

I have a background in engineering and to me the body is a hugely complex machine.

Let me relate a short story – a factory had a machine that was critical to their manufacturing output. One day it broke down and despite many people spending many hours trying to carry out repairs it just wouldn't run. The engineer that had designed and built it had been made redundant and was contracted on a consultancy basis to come back in and help to make it work. He spent a couple of hours and then took a stick of chalk out of his pocket and put an "X" on the machine indicating the part that was the problem. The machine was soon up and running so the engineer submitted his invoice - £50,001. The management team queried this and asked for a breakdown to which he replied that the £1 was for the stick of chalk. And the £50,000? Knowing where to put the "X" came the reply.

In a nut shell no one has really known where to put the X in PwP which has resulted in a bit of stagnancy with treatments, however, there are some really exciting developments with current medical research and I strongly believe that the X will soon find it's true location.

In the meantime we keep popping the pills.

Pill popping aside it has been shown that above everything else exercise has great benefits for PwP. Now I'm not a particularly good example as I tend to take things to the extreme. Remember, something is better than nothing. If I fail to exercise (work sometimes gets in the way) my body / mood sure tells me about it later in the day. My body craves exercise and if I can't do it at the gym then I have to make do with the urban gym! Whats an urban gym I hear you say..... it's called not taking the car to get the paper, walking up / down stairs rather than taking a lift or escalator, travelling on a bus – try going up stairs when it's moving, great for balance, don't phone a colleague – pop over and talk face to face. Go for a lunch-break walk. You get the idea, something is better than nothing. Keep on moving!

Your body is actually a great communicator of what it needs. Unfortunately we are not great listeners and sometimes don't interpret the signals clearly enough. For example – you feel hungry. Nine times out of ten you are more than likely to be thirsty. Have a glass of water and if you still feel hungry ten minutes later chances are that your body needs food. It's a similar thing with exercise, your body needs periods of increased metabolism and pays you back by leaving a feeling good sensation where you'll be more alert (you might feel a bit tired to start).

Try exercising / walking to music, it sometimes seems to create a brain circuit by-pass that somehow makes it all seem possible. Alternatively if you belong to a gym have a go at group exercise classes and ask if you can have music playing while you exercise. The audible / visual stimulation you get from a class can be really beneficial.

Just a quick note about hydration. Maintaining the correct fluid balance in our bodies is so important and has a significant effect on how it performs. After exercise rehydrate properly and look to replace salts/minerals. Sorry about this but you should pee a champagne colour, darker and you are de-hydrated, lighter and you are nearly drowning!

There are lots of exercise alternatives, it's all about finding something that you enjoy and works for you. Try different things and listen to what your body is saying.

<b>Tai Chi</b>	<b>Group</b>
<b>Hydrotherapy / Aqua Aerobics</b>	<b>Group</b>
<b>Nintendo Wii</b>	<b>Group</b>
	<b>or solo</b>
<b>Gym Classes</b>	<b>Group</b>
<b>(a trainer will help personalise a routine for you)</b>	
<b>Dancing</b>	<b>Group</b>
<b>Cycling</b>	<b>Group</b>
	<b>or solo</b>

Interestingly all the exercises listed above are generally group based and all offer audible and visual stimulation.

So, exercise is great for PwP, can possibly slow progression, is possibly neuroprotective, improves posture and works for mind, body and soul. Go for it!

Before you begin an exercise regime consult a doctor or your specialist and they'll be able to give you advice based on your medical history.

Tim is 52 and suffered ET for several years prior to being diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2007. In the past Tim has been a motor cycle and scuba diving instructor (not at the same time). Tim works in the health and nutrition sector and enjoys photography and exercise. He made it to the summit of Kilimanjaro on 13th October 2011. His head is still in the clouds!

