



THE BEST ANSWER WHEN THEY ASK "HOW ARE YOU?"

WHEN FAMILY ASKS "HOW ARE YOU?" HOW DO YOU TELL THE TRUTH?

When we connect with family members, during holidays or visits, or just during routine phone calls, it can be tough to find the right response. We caregivers tend to say *oh we're fine*.

But you know what? (and I don't mean to be harsh) that's not completely true.

Sure, you may be managing well right now, but if your partner has Parkinson's things are not entirely fine. You're going to want help, or even just a friendly listening ear, as things go on. And the things you say, when you first start to talk about the diagnosis, will tell your friends and family members whether they should ask again, and can let them know that you may be open to their help someday.

Of course, you don't want to be that "poor me" person. You feel like you should not complain, and if you speak aloud the struggles of today or the struggles you foresee, you're worried you'll be ignored or discounted. Worst of all, you don't want anyone to think of you as a reluctant caregiver for your loved one.

Still, you need a better plan than just automatically saying, "we're fine."



DON'T COUNT YOURSELF OUT

Caregiving requires a team, and as the quarterback, captain and team manager rolled up into one, you need to be scouting for other members who will help bring the best possible life to your PWP, your Partner with Parkinson's, while also honoring your need for following your own path through life.

You will need the help of professionals and of your friends and family. Don't make the mistake of seeming to build a wall. Doing that isolates you and your PWP from the community and social resources that will strengthen you both as you walk this path.

THREE STEPS TO A BETTER ANSWER

STEP ONE - Figure out what the answer is

Do you know the answer to those question? How are things? How are you?

Figure out how you are and how things seem. Asking yourself these questions will help you think more clearly about your response to what might be just a polite inquiry, but could also be a genuine offer of interest, and even help.

Are you tired, worried, overwhelmed, pissed off, grateful, contented, out of gas, drowning, or something else entirely?



STEP TWO Decide what you choose to share

Once you identify how things are today (knowing that they will change) think about what is the most important part of that truth to tell right now.

You don't want to overwhelm family or friends the whole story of PD, especially if this is your first time talking about it. So decide ahead of time that you will select a part of the current reality. What is most important for them to know?

STEP THREE Choose your words with intention.

The words you choose in answering this question are important. Make your answer respectful in three ways.

- Respectful to your PWP.
- Respectful to you.
- Respectful to your family and friends.

Read on to find some examples that will help you decide what you want to say when these questions come up. Remember The **best** answer is the one that communicates what you mean, what you need, and how you really are.



HOW TO SAY IT A CONVERSATION GUIDE

Seabury House

From Terri Pease, Ph.D.

TRY ONE OF THESE RESPONSES

To help you think about what responses you will give, when someone asks about you and your PWP, here are some specific ideas.

Each one helps you tell a part of the truth of a caregiver's current experiences and needs as a Parkinson's Caregiver while respecting her PWP's privacy and dignity, and not overwhelming the person who has asked.

- "We are fine so far but I know more changes are coming."
- "So-so. He's feeling (fill in the blank), and I'm feeling (fill in this blank too!)"
- "I'm pleased with how well I'm managing and how well he's doing."
- "Actually, it's getting to be a bit more than I feel ready for."
- "I'm glad you asked. Things have gotten harder."
- "It's really hard. I could use some help with things like picking up groceries, coming by to run and fold laundry for me or keeping up with the yard."

Answers like these, telling the truth, a little at a time, can open the door to honest communication. You can tell family and friends what's going on in a way that will leave open the opportunity for building helpful connections now and in the future.

To support you as a Parkinson's Caregiver we have more guides, tools, and resources on our website. Click [here](#) to download a guide to help your family understand the caregiving life.

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