



Parenting With Parkinson's: Raising Children With Honesty, Reassurance, and Stability

Parenting with Parkinson's is both deeply challenging and deeply meaningful. While Parkinson's may change *how* some things are done, it does not change your role as a loving, capable parent.

Parenting with Parkinson's asks for **honesty balanced with reassurance**, emotional openness paired with protection, consistent routines, and a commitment to preserving childhood joy. With thoughtful communication and support, families can remain grounded, connected, and secure.

Why Honest Communication Matters

Children are perceptive. They notice changes in movement, energy, mood, and routines—often before adults realize how visible those changes have become.

When Parkinson's is avoided as a topic, children may create their own explanations, which can increase anxiety or misunderstanding.

Narrative guidance:

Age-appropriate honesty builds trust, reduces fear, and strengthens family communication. Children cope best when they feel informed, reassured, and emotionally safe.

Talking to Young Children About Parkinson's

Young children think concretely and benefit from simple explanations that are repeated over time.

Key Communication Principles

- Use simple, clear language
- Avoid medical jargon

- Emphasize that Parkinson's is **not contagious**
- Reassure them that you are still their parent

Young children often worry most about *who will take care of them*. Repeated reassurance that you are still present, loving, and dependable is essential—even when symptoms fluctuate.

Talking to Teens About Parkinson's

Teenagers can understand illness more fully and often think ahead—sometimes far ahead.

Key Principles for Teens

- Invite questions openly and regularly
- Be honest about uncertainty and unpredictability
- Encourage emotional expression without trying to “fix” feelings

Teens may experience fear, anger, sadness, embarrassment, or guilt. These emotions are normal and should be validated without judgment. Honest conversations help teens feel respected and included rather than excluded or burdened.

Key Family Strategies for Stability

Keep Routines Consistent

Consistency creates emotional safety for children.

Helpful anchors include:

- Regular school schedules
- Consistent meal times
- Preserved bedtime rituals
- Familiar weekend rhythms

Routines reassure children that life remains predictable—even when health introduces uncertainty.

Allow Children to Help—Without Making Them Caregivers

- Encourage small, optional ways to help
- Never make children responsible for medical care
- Protect their identity as children first

Helping should build connection, not responsibility. Children thrive when they are allowed to be supportive *without* being burdened.

Protect Family Joy

- Maintain play, laughter, and celebration
- Continue family traditions whenever possible
- Engage in shared activities that foster connection

Joy is not frivolous—it supports emotional regulation, family bonding, and resilience for both children and parents.

Emotional Challenges Children May Experience

Children may express distress in many ways.

Possible responses include:

- Worry about the future
- Fear of being different from peers
- Guilt or self-blame
- Emotional withdrawal or behavior changes

Support may include individual counseling, school guidance services, family therapy, or peer support programs. Early support helps children process emotions before they become overwhelming.

A Message to Parents Living With Parkinson's

You are still a guide, protector, teacher, and source of comfort.

Your children need your **presence**, not physical perfection.

Adaptation allows you to continue nurturing your family with love, stability, and emotional safety—even as circumstances change.

When to Seek Additional Family Support

Consider professional support if you notice:

- Persistent anxiety or fear in a child
- Behavioral changes or withdrawal
- Declining academic performance
- Increased family tension or conflict
- Ongoing communication difficulties

Seeking support is a proactive act of care for your entire family.

A Final Thought

Parenting with Parkinson's is not about doing everything the same—it is about staying connected, honest, and emotionally available. With reassurance, routine, and compassion, children can grow up feeling secure, loved, and resilient.

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