Care Partner Guide for Daily Care

The First 90 Days After a Parkinson's Diagnosis: A Gentle Roadmap for Care Partners

The first weeks and months after a Parkinson's diagnosis can feel disorienting. Information comes quickly, emotions fluctuate, and many care partners feel pressure to "do everything right." In reality, the first 90 days are not about mastering Parkinson's care—they are about **stabilizing, learning, and finding your footing**.

This guide offers a gentle, realistic roadmap for the first three months after diagnosis, helping care partners focus on what matters most *now*—and what can wait.

What the First 90 Days Are (and Are Not)

Before outlining steps, it helps to reset expectations.

The first 90 days are about:

- Absorbing information slowly
- Establishing baseline routines
- Building trust with the care team
- Supporting emotional adjustment

They are *not* about:

- Making long-term care decisions
- Predicting progression
- Overhauling daily life
- Becoming an expert overnight

Giving yourself permission to move slowly reduces anxiety and prevents burnout before caregiving truly begins.

Days 1–30: Stabilize & Ground

This first phase is often the most emotional.

Helpful focus areas include:

- Attending initial neurology appointments (when helpful)
- Listening more than fixing
- Writing down questions as they arise
- Maintaining familiar routines
- Allowing emotions to surface

Shock, relief, fear, and disbelief can coexist. Care partners often feel the urge to "hold it together" for everyone else. You do not need to suppress emotions to be supportive—presence is enough.

Building the Medical Foundation

Early organization prevents later stress.

Helpful early steps include:

- Keeping a simple list of providers
- Tracking symptoms without over-monitoring
- Understanding when to call the clinic
- Asking how and when medications may be introduced

You are establishing a relationship with the care team, not managing the disease. Trust builds over time.

Days 31–60: Learn & Observe

As initial emotions settle, curiosity often grows.

During this phase, care partners may:

- Notice patterns in energy or movement

- Begin learning about motor and non-motor symptoms
- Explore education or support resources
- Attend follow-up appointments
- Ask more specific questions

Observation is valuable. You do not need to interpret or diagnose—simply noticing changes and patterns is enough.

Supporting Healthy Routines Early

Early habits support long-term well-being.

Helpful routines include:

- Regular movement or exercise
- Consistent sleep and wake times
- Balanced nutrition and hydration
- Social engagement
- Medication consistency (if started)

Stability and normalcy are protective. Parkinson's care does not need to dominate daily life at this stage.

Days 61–90: Connect & Plan Lightly

This phase is about gentle forward-looking—not heavy planning.

Helpful steps may include:

- Connecting with caregiver education or support groups
- Learning about therapy options (PT, OT, speech)
- Talking openly about how things are feeling
- Identifying one or two trusted supports

This is a time to build *connection*, not contingency plans. Knowing where help exists is often enough.

Common Questions Care Partners Ask in the First 90 Days

It's normal to wonder:

- "Am I doing enough?"
- "Should I be more worried?"
- "What should I be tracking?"
- "How fast will this change?"

Uncertainty does not mean you're unprepared—it means you're early in the journey. Most questions evolve with time and experience.

Caring for Yourself from the Start

How caregiving begins often shapes what follows.

Important reminders:

- Your health matters
- Rest is not optional
- Emotional reactions are normal
- You are allowed to ask for help early

Care partners who tend to themselves early are better able to adapt as needs change.

What Can Wait Until Later

Many decisions do not need to happen now.

These can usually wait:

- Long-term care planning
- Major home modifications

- Advanced treatment decisions
- Crisis contingency plans

There will be time for planning. Right now, steadiness matters more than speed.

Simple Tools That Help in the First 90 Days

Helpful tools include:

- A notebook or notes app for questions
- Appointment summaries
- A basic symptom journal
- Trusted educational resources
- WPA caregiver guides

Simple tools reduce cognitive overload and help you feel anchored.

A Final Thought for Care Partners

The first 90 days after diagnosis are not about strength or certainty—they are about orientation. You are learning a new landscape, and it is okay to move slowly.

You do not need to know the whole path.
You only need to take the next steady step.