

The Parkinson's Walking Marathon

A POETIC WALK



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BY WILL BOAG

**We are all in this together
we all are born
and
we all will die**

There is an illness that we all must face
It's terminal and 'life' is how its known,
Its cause is 'birth', can happen any place
It happens after we have lived and grown.
No matter what our fate, we all will die
In youth or aged our time is really short,
We'll all be mourned by some, for us they'll cry
As we depart with only what we brought.
But now's the time whatever is our load
Accept the ill that's joined us on this track,
And use it to enhance the path we're showed
With no regret or fear of looking back.
This is our only life, our only chance
Embrace it as we go, it's our last dance.

**But our adventures through life
are different**

Our marathon won't be defined by distance
Cause stamina's do differ with PD,
Our challenges may change within an instance
We do not have a life of certainty.

Our marathon won't say you're in or out
Won't be the one that flags you off the track,
And winning is not what it's all about
It's 'turning' up, and giving it a crack.

Our marathons do differ, they depend
On where we've been and where we're going to,
It's only us that know, we can't pretend
Not just the foot, also the type of shoe.

It's our own effort, it's 'our' marathon,
Determined mostly, by which path we're on.

**Those varied paths can be defined in many ways,
and
bring their own challenges,
in my case it is
Parkinson's Disease - (PD)**

I have a disease and it's neurological

Its name is Parkinson's and with you I'll paint,

A picture broad in brush so typical

So we can catch a glimpse without much taint.

Its silence means we may not know we're caught,

Its slowness gives us hope that there's much space,

Its persistence shows that time is gold but short,

Its weakness felt but fails to leave a trace.

The arms and legs can flail - a 'social no'

Or freezing where you cannot walk at all,

The heel won't work, you're walking on your toe

Add leaning and you're heading for a fall.

But we can change the picture and the frame,

By adding our own brush, to stake our claim.

**That change can be hampered
in a variety of ways
and
one of the main dangers lurking here is
'apathy'**

It's not the disease that's deadly, 'tis apathy

It tells you that you haven't got a chance,

Will offer you no empathy or sympathy

But takes you on quite an un-merry dance.

Your motivation lacks, purpose will go

Levels of energy will also fall,

Your passion gone but you won't feel it so

And life detachment sees no curtain call.

In some I know I've seen it change its tune

Where open curtains see the light once more,

Their time to rise and move outside the room

Assured that they will leave and close the door.

Now find your passion, let it be your 'real'

And live your life, that apathy did nearly steal.

**Try hard to not let other things
interfere
with your performance,
and
use your passion to override them**

Disabled is a hard word to define
It conjures up a feeling of despair,
There's been a public drawing of a line
In sand that's quick and sinking - that's not fair.
The old interpretation boxed us in
A burden, it was life no longer living,
Like shredded paper filling up a bin
That takes up space, it's taking but not giving.
Today there's change with opportunities
To find your passion - move beyond your fears,
And rise above these disabilities
To live life well for many, many years.
It's tough, I know, it's easy just to say
But simply start, then take it day by day.

**One of the ways you can
override those interferences
is to use our natural reward characteristic**

In most, it's just a very normal thing,
Receiving plaudits as you strive to reach
A goal, that life has helped us all to bring,
To focus on, to learn and then to teach.
For those who have a neuroplastic hole
It's harder to believe that this is right,
'Cause they believe for them there is no goal,
Why bother then, the evidence is tight.
But there's a crack, that needs a dose of will,
And laced with motivation there's a chance,
To see the value in that task until,
The pleasure and the energy enhance.
That moves you further on and then toward
That special goal, and dopamine reward.

**Dopamine
is in short supply
in people with PD
so we need to use it
wisely**

It's not so much the size of the team in the battle
For numbers don't define a win or loss,
It's the battle in the team that makes them rattle
Eventually showing who really is the boss.
So when the odds are in the others' favour
Then draw upon your wits to gain an edge,
So you can earn a victory you can savour
Which doesn't leave you hanging from a ledge.
When diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease
The loss of cells with dopamine is vast,
But with intent the last few you can please
Rewarding them with treasures that can last.
It's best to get the most out of the few,
Than mourn the loss, of those, you never knew.

Ailments

**can also interfere with
our progress**

The cartilage in my foot - degeneration

Improvement not an option so 'Doc' said,

And low BP, it came from dehydration

It sends you in a spin - a thing to dread.

And now there is degenerative spine

With osteoporosis, what a duo!

Solution they once said to lay supine

While others said it really is quite pseudo.

My prostate disappeared in one fell swoop

No semen left - at my age doesn't matter,

My blood clots interfere in the whole loop

With atrial fibrillation blood will scatter.

Now Parkinson's has put it in perspective,

Thus making me - a little more acceptive.

**There are many
PD specific symptoms
that can also hold you back**

I've tried, it's much too hard to reach my feet
And takes too long to do my buttons up,
I've got PD, can't roll beneath the sheet
Near empty is my saddened once full cup.
I don't walk anymore because I stumble
But worse than that I would quite often freeze,
I stay behind my door because I mumble
I'm lonely 'cause I'm very hard to please.
My stare, even my doc avoids my eyes
I can't control the dribble anymore,
My 'flailing' hands can't wipe away the flies
My muscles always seem to be so sore.
But I'm not there, yet I am on that road,
I'm learning though, how best reduce that load.

**Today is a
walking marathon
and no matter how fast and far you walk,
we can all be
more aware
of our own body's capabilities.**

Awareness is my one - 0 - one for living

Like water it brings life to dying cells,

For no reward it keeps forever giving

It keeps you keen, no need for warning bells.

So when you walk watch out for dangers lurking

Some snags lie in your mind and on the ground,

Awareness learnt can stay forever working

Ensuring vulnerabilities aren't found.

And when your body plays a different role

Awareness makes you preparation-ready,

So when your steady balance someone stole

It gives you tools so you remain quite steady.

Awareness is the lifeblood of our mind,

The greatest antidote that you will find.

**We can use that
awareness
to make our journey
safer and more satisfying**

I love to walk, it makes me feel alive
It gives me more than I could ever ask,
Responsible for goals for which I strive
Inspires me so and keeps me on my task.
It doesn't need a season or a time
It's ready now, and all it needs is you,
Downhill, or on the flat or you can climb
So easily done without too much ado.
It's kind to you, and doesn't cause you pain
It finds a pace to suit your own condition,
It doesn't have its own private domain
But a calming and an easy disposition.
So humble is this exercise of walking,
Out there as we speak, no need for talking.

**But
there comes a time
when we must
talk**

I'm feeling fresh, and have a wish to walk

My left leg though has gone a little tense,

Not certain, but I think it wants to talk

We took a break and lent against the fence.

"I know" it said "you want the best for me

But as you know you have this sad disease,

I hear your wish but automaticity

Has made it hard, so help a little please".

I listened as I tried another way

Increased my pace and took a smaller stride,

"This helps a lot", I heard my left leg say,

"I thought I'd gone and then at last I cried".

Back home again, we walked along as one,

Excited that - another challenge won.

**You can share your
walk
and talk with others
to make good use of what you have
learnt**

For a moment, once, I thought the very worst
A Parky's verdict not looking very good,
That moment gone, brought on a sudden thirst
That 'couldn't' gone, now was only 'could'.
With exercise we walked across the world
With confidence I'm up to giving talks,
With effort now my poetry unfurled
While writing books about our many walks,
Don't walk as fast but still my walks are strong
Don't sleep so well, and takes a bit to rise,
I shake a bit and meds don't last as long
My pen still works, a bit to my surprise.
So have your 'moment' - let it be your last,
Then Parkinson's may slow down very fast.

**This poetry
has helped me to slow down
and
concentrate on trying to change
my brain
by constructing a poem
every day**

To change our brain, it takes a lot of work,
Some hours per day and every day we need
Tense focus, it is not a job to shirk,
The 'brain' - it's hunger cries for us to feed.
But what's the nourishment it likes the best
To ease the pain that lingers deep inside,
And satiate its aching need - unrest
Then wait and watch to see what will betide.
It yearns no less, for us to learn and grow
So its potential it can there achieve,
So find your passion, let it be your flow
And slowly, surely, you may then retrieve
Those neurons that seemed lost for ever more,
May give your brain a chance, to now restore.

**This working on the brain
can enhance our creativity
which further helps to
maintain
a healthy brain**

I paint and wonder how it got so deep
Inside, a visual delight to ponder,
A dance discovered - light upon my feet
Of music I did now become much fonder.
Now words did come and dance upon my lips
I penned, not knowing how or what I wrote,
And then they rhymed and came to me in sips
A sonnet soon appeared - new words I quote.
It wasn't there before my diagnosis
'Twas Parkinson's, it's been my newest guest,
That's brought me life as well as this necrosis
Why, cells alive! although most did go west.
Those dying cells - my creativity,
Have given me, a sense of liberty.

**Be in the present
so as to nourish our being
to ensure we are prepared
for any event**

There is no way that we can see the future
Especially with Parkinson's Disease,
In later life there's going to be some torture
So move it now before you start to freeze.
Now treat your love like it's a new romance
And treat your diagnosis much the same,
Imagine this, that it is your last dance
And give it your attention not your blame.
So do it while you can - regrets don't work
And I mean every day - same attitude,
Your duty to your life you cannot shirk
Resist that ever circling PD mood.
It's the present now, that I must learn to live in,
Those future thoughts, encourage one to give in.

**So the past, present and future
come together
with acceptance**

'What was' - an opportunity gone by
A waste, or were there changes for the good?
Regret is dead or will eventually die
No longer is there room for one word - 'should'.
Acceptance is the only useful tool
It's all we've got so with it we must deal,
Ignoring it, the message from a fool
May not be good but it's the only 'real'.
And now it's time to form a new 'what is'
By looking at a different 'what can be'
Avoid the harm by falling in a tizz
Embracing change, a latent victory.
The future stems from what we've done before,
So what's done now, can save our very core.

So let's walk

A walking revolution is what's needed
It should be seen as a renewable,
Becoming automatic once it's seeded
We've learnt from birth that it is easily doable.
So then we all do shape our marathon
Like life, it can be fun, it can be tough,
At times no choice but something we must act on
Some different ways that we can huff and puff.
So walk each day no matter how you feel
You'll be surprised what difference it makes,
Will keep you on a much more steady keel
Your body and your mind it then awakes.
It's time to walk, so get up and get going,
And get the body's juices, really flowing.

**So we walk definitively
into a version of Rudyard Kipling's 'If'
which I call 'When'**

When you can make some sense of your disease
As you try to see the forest amongst the trees,
Find the hidden sunshine – feel the breeze
And keep on moving lest you quickly freeze;
When you can walk and make the most of walking,
Improve your balance to prevent a fall,
Train your chords so you can keep on talking,
And focus on your core – it'll keep you tall:
When you can set the bar at such a height
That challenges the apathy you feel,
The body, mind and soul you set to fight
And treat it like it's not a massive deal;
When you can use reward to motivate
And train the brain to change the way it thinks,
So you can keep the effort up till late
Ensuring that your purpose never shrinks:
When you create and never cease creating
Changing ways to make a better you,
Then find a passion that is stimulating
A purpose that will always stay so true;
When you can find a way to work this out
And sift through all the options that are there,
When you can earn respect so they don't shout
And show it's not just them that have to care:
When you can free yourself from any stress
And organise your life in such a way,
Suppose you do it now – avoid the mess
And make the most of every single day;
When you can share the things that you have learnt
With those that live with Parkinson's Disease,
Satisfaction with your life is what you've earned,
And then you'll see the forest, and the trees.

And what a sight that is

This Parkinson's will not define my being
It won't divert the plans that I've been hatching,
It will however stop my soul from fleeing
My mind and body now will take some catching.
My strong belief is age should make us better
So PD is my catalyst to prove it,
To gain some credit, best not be a debtor
To see my interest rise I'll need to 'move it'.
It's not so much about the quantity
About just doing lots without a thought,
It's more about the depth and quality
Refining features that from birth we brought.
We do not have to die before our death,
So try and stay alive, 'til your last breath.

