

The *Handbook Parkinson's Intimacy and Sexual Health* is set to be released in the fall of 2025

Foreword

8th April 2025

Sexuality is one of the most fundamental expressions of our humanity. It shapes how we connect emotionally and physically, how we experience intimacy and love, and how we affirm our sense of self. Yet, when a neurological condition like Parkinson's enters the picture, the terrain of intimacy can suddenly feel complicated, uncertain, and sometimes even out of reach. This handbook is a courageous and vital step toward reclaiming that territory — toward reminding us, that sexual satisfaction and emotional closeness are not luxuries, but essential aspects of living fully and thriving, even in the face of Parkinson's.

As a senior sex therapist and an expert in sexual rehabilitation for people with neurological conditions, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact that Parkinson's can have on intimate relationships. Motor symptoms like tremors, slowness, rigidity, and balance issues are often the most visible challenges, which disturb the ability to touch and hug. More and beyond, there are the hidden struggles - the changes in desire and arousal, difficulties with orgasm, reduced motivation, and emotional disconnect - that can create the deepest fractures in relationships. Add to that the side effects of medications, fatigue, and mood changes, and it's no surprise that many individuals and couples feel at a loss when it comes to maintaining a satisfying intimate life.

But here's the crucial truth: intimacy and sexual activity are not just about having sex and orgasms— they are powerful contributors to both mental and physical health. Research consistently shows that engaging in satisfying sexual activity and maintaining a close, emotionally connected relationship can reduce stress, improve mood, and even boost immune function. Endorphin (the brain's natural pain reliever) and oxytocin (the so-called "love hormone") released during physical touch and sexual arousal and orgasm, enhances emotional bonding and lowers cortisol levels, helping to combat anxiety and depression — both of which are more prevalent in people with Parkinson's. Moreover, maintaining sexual activity and intimate touch can improve sleep quality and

increase pain tolerance. Emotional closeness and physical intimacy also provide a buffer against the feelings of isolation and loss of identity that often accompany chronic illness.

People with Parkinson's and their partners often face unique challenges in this area — but the subject of sex is rarely discussed openly by healthcare professionals. It's hard to talk about intimacy, even when everything is going well — and when Parkinson's enters the picture, it can feel almost impossible. But here's the good news: it gets easier once you start the conversation. And that's exactly what this book is here to help with.

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This handbook tackles the complex realities of intimacy and sexual health with honesty, clarity, and compassion. It talks openly about many possible problems - and, more importantly, about solutions. Because there are solutions. Improvement is possible for most people - I've seen it happen countless times in my own clinical practice. Even when physical challenges persist, couples who learn to communicate and adapt often discover new and deeply satisfying forms of intimacy.

What makes this handbook so valuable is not just its content, but also the unique voice behind it. The author, Monique Thoosen is a Dutch expert in sensory processing, a pedagogue, consultant and trainer and the person behind this important handbook. Monique, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's at the age of 50, combines her professional expertise with the insights of lived experience. She knows this terrain from both sides — as a clinician and as someone navigating the daily realities of Parkinson's. This combination makes her advice practical, relatable, and deeply authentic. Monique has the rare gift of translating complicated material into layman's terms, making it accessible without losing depth — and adding a touch of humor where it's needed most. After her successful *Handbook Parkinson's Symptoms*, this is another essential work of reference.

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This handbook is not just for people with Parkinson's and their partners — it's also for healthcare professionals. Based on my professional experience with Parkinson's (>30 years), I found that most professionals need some help on this subject too. The truth is, sex and intimacy are rarely spoken in neurological settings and often treated as "secondary" issues in clinical care. For many couples, reclaiming intimacy is the key to improving overall quality of life. And this is their basic right.

What makes this handbook truly special is its tone of empowerment. It doesn't shy away from the difficult truths, but it also refuses to accept them as permanent barriers. It reminds us that intimacy and sexuality are not only possible with Parkinson's — they can evolve and even deepen when approached with understanding and creativity.

Whether you are living with Parkinson's, supporting a partner, or working in the field of healthcare, this handbook offers something invaluable: a roadmap to reclaiming intimacy, pleasure, and connection. It's an invitation to have open conversations, to explore new forms of closeness, and to embrace the evolving nature of desire.

So, let's talk about sex. Let's normalize the conversation. And let's reclaim the joy and satisfaction that every person - with or without Parkinson's - deserves.

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