

MOTIVATION AND INITIATIVE IN PARKINSON'S DISEASE

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This article discusses an intervention, the Parkinson's Active Living program, to target apathy and difficulties in motivation and difficulties in initiation in Parkinson's Disease (PD) and other frontal-subcortical disorders.

Click the following link for .pdf version of Motivation and Initiative in Parkinson's Disease.pdf

For information regarding a Florida intervention study:

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What is apathy?

Apathy is one of the most common symptoms in individuals with damage or disease affecting the frontal-subcortical circuits of the brain. The term apathy may be defined somewhat differently in the neuropsychiatric and neurologic literature than you might expect. Individuals with elevated apathy demonstrate a reduction in self-initiation and/or motivation.

Here are some examples of apathy as it presents in Parkinson's Disease and in other neurologic conditions:

- **Difficulty with initiating activity or in learning new things**
 - **Low activity levels**
 - **Low motivation**
 - **Lack of interest in socializing**
 - **Lack of concern for issues that would have been important to you in the past**
 - **Lack of effort or reduced productivity**
 - **Not completing tasks that you have started**
 - **Needing someone else to remind you or prompt you to do things**
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Why does apathy matter?

About 40-45% of persons diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease have unusually high levels of apathy. Apathy is associated with many undesirable things and can even result in negative consequences for persons with PD or for their spouses, family members, or caregivers.

Some of the things that elevated apathy has been associated with include:

- Cognitive decline
- Impairment in occupational functioning and daily functioning
- Reduced community and social participation
- Treatment compliance
- Poor illness outcome
- Poor general health
- Caregiver depression
- Caregiver stress and burden

Many caregivers, spouses, or family members of apathetic PD patients misinterpret their loved one's apathy as depression, laziness, or stubbornness. Knowing about apathy can help loved ones recognize that apathy is a part of the disease process and does not necessarily reflect that the patient is depressed, lazy, or stubborn. Rather, they may simply have a difficult time initiating behavior, emotion, or thought content.

What is the purpose of the Parkinson's Active Living (PAL) intervention program?

Since apathy can affect PD patients in undesirable ways and can impact their caregivers, spouses, or family members, there is increasing interest in identifying treatments for apathy. Since many individuals wish to avoid dependence on an increased number of daily medications and due to the unwanted side effects of some medications, there is particular interest in learning behavioral, medication-free ways to improve their motivation and self-initiative.

The PAL research program was developed in an attempt to help persons with Parkinson's Disease to overcome their apathy through increased activity. We have incorporated several aspects that are developed out of the existing mood and motivation literature as well as the PD literature. For instance, goal setting is known to improve motivation in most people. In addition, PD patients generally benefit from the provision of external cues. We have included several factors to create external structure and external cues that will increase the likelihood for an effective program. Activity engagement is known to benefit physical, mental, and emotional health.

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About the Author:

London Butterfield, M.A. is currently in the process of collecting research data on the outcomes of the PAL intervention program as part of her doctoral studies in neuropsychology. If you reside in the North Central Florida or Central Florida area and are interested in learning if you can participate in the intervention study click on the below links for more information.