

WORKSHEET #4

DIFFERENT SELVES

With all the change Parkinson's brings, it is challenging at times not to feel a significant sense of loss day to day. Following feelings of loss, there is often grief and a sense of changing identity. On top of that, because Parkinson's symptoms fluctuate during the day, self-image can radically shift, sometimes moment to moment, and you may feel as if you're living on a merry-go-round. We live in a culture that provides only limited windows of time to express loss and grief. The loss of sense of self, or self-image, is only rarely acknowledged by health and social care providers. This exercise is about noticing when you feel your sense of self shift and processing feelings of loss and grief that may ensue.

Exercise 4: Different selves, loss and grief

Step one: Create space for responding to changing self-image and associated feelings of loss and grief, by answering these questions:

How do you see yourself today and why?

Do you see yourself differently at different times – if so, describe this in detail

Are there versions of you that you miss?

Can you think of an image that is symbolic of your sense of self?

If you could say two things to a past self, what would they be?

Step two: Circle any words that seem important or rouse your emotions. Arrange these words to form a poem. Remember to play around with telling your story of loss in different ways – perhaps, mixing up the order of things, looking back or writing from the future. You might like to arrange your poem around the image you have chosen as a symbol of your sense of self. For example, when I did this exercise, I chose the symbol of an autumn tree and the poem I wrote initially appeared to be a simple poem about a tree until on closer inspection the theme of loss became clear.