

Parkinson's Warriors

The Schaefer Family

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I felt compelled to write this because I find most people think that once they are diagnosed with this terrible disease there is "no light at the end of the tunnel." My name is Will Schaefer, I'm 58 years old and I've had Parkinson's for approximately 17 years!

When I was first diagnosed, the doctor checked me over, had me do a couple tests, and told my wife and me (very bluntly) that I had Parkinson's. After I had recovered from the shock and tried to console my wife, the doctor gave me a handful of

prescriptions and told me to come back in a month. After a few appointments without improvement, she said I was more than she could handle and recommended I find another doctor.

That's where that light at the end of the tunnel first showed itself! I meet Dr. Howard Weiss! He is great! He confirmed I had the disease, adjusted my medication and things started to get a little better. To make a long story a little shorter, he showed me there were support groups, exercise, and physical therapy to help deal with the disease. He also told me about Pacing for Parkinson's. In 2015 I attempted to run my first 5k ever. Even though I walked 90% of it I found the people involved with this event were very kind and encouraging. The light was getting brighter!

In early 2016, my symptoms started getting worse. My wife and I weren't getting along very well because I couldn't do like I use to. Then one day I went to one of my appointments with Dr. Weiss and said I might be a good candidate for Deep Brain Stimulation. It sounded scary, and I didn't know it then, but the light was getting a lot brighter! I went to John's Hopkins Hospital and met Dr. Kelly Mill's (the best) with my wife. After hearing about this operation my wife decided this was more than she could handle and we eventually split after 34 years of marriage.

After what seemed to be 50 appointments, I was approved for the operation! One week before the operation I moved to a new home closer to my family in case I needed help after the operation. My son and his wife supported me; their hearts said "Dad, we will wipe your butt if we have to." With my whole family's support, on November 18, 2016 Dr. Stanley Anderson (also the best) installed 8 electrodes in my brain and on November 22nd installed the battery that runs the device.

On December 6, 2016, the light in that tunnel was blinding! After a few tests and adjustments by Dr. Mill's and Dr. Ankur Butala (also the best), I showed a 52% improvement that day! Since that moment, thanks to all of the staff, doctors, nurses (especially Nurse Practitioner Arita McCoy), and all my family,

my quality of life has steadily improved. The doctor's said exercise was very important. So I joined a gym (Anytime Fitness), and with their kindness and support I am on track to run the Whole 5k this year for P4P.

I thought there was no light at the end of the tunnel, but instead I have my life back! I couldn't shave, brush my teeth, or even cut my own food. I was stumbling and falling everywhere. But now I'm living more independently everyday! I hope my story encourages everyone with Parkinson's to see they can be a Parkinson's Warrior also!!!! Exercise, exercise, exercise!