**Communication!**

Effective communication is an important basis for any healthy relationship, whether romantic partners, strangers, parent-child, etc. You need to be able to express to someone your thoughts/feelings/ideas so that you can move forward to make decisions, stay on the same page, have tough discussions and advocate for yourself.

**Common Communication Challenges/Ineffective Comm. Techniques**

* One person trying to share feelings and the other responds by trying to problem solve
* Protective buffering - hiding worries, denying concerns, and yielding to one's partner in an effort to avoid disagreement and reduce partner's upset and burden
* Thinking someone can read your mind (and getting upset when they can’t)
* Avoiding uncomfortable topics and big decisions (e.g., sex, end of life care, driving)
  + You don’t want to make big decisions in times of high stress
* Your words and your non-verbal communication don’t match
* Shutting down during serious conversations
* Difficulty identifying feelings in oneself and others
* “Poo-pooing” all advice, especially when you’re asking for advice
* Automatically becoming defensive
* Make blanket accusations
* PD-specific: Changes in voice, facial expressions, movements in arms/hands/fingers, word-finding, processing speed -> a tendency to be quieter and less communicative

**Speaker Guidelines**

* Talk from your own point of view, using “I” statements: “This is what I think. This is what I feel. This is what it is like for me.”
* Be honest and open about your thoughts and feelings
* Speak in “paragraphs” - give your partner a chance to respond to one main idea at a time
* Do not let escalating emotions take over
* PD-specific: Speak loudly, try to use bigger hand movements, choose times when your meds are “on,” vocalize your feelings if your face is not showing it

**Listener Guidelines**

* Show that you understand and accept your partner’s statements
  + Before you respond, take a moment to digest what the other person just said
* Try to put yourself in your partner’s place
  + Think about the situation from his or her perspective
  + Empathize, even if you don’t understand or can’t relate
* When your partner finishes speaking, *summarize* what you heard (e.g., What I hear you saying is…)
* Do NOT…
  + Interrupt
  + Ask questions, except for clarification
  + Express your own opinion, unless it is asked for
  + Attempt to solve a problem, unless this is asked for
  + Judge what your partner has said
* PD specific: Have patience if it is taking the person awhile to collect/express your thoughts, remind them to speak louder/more clearly in a non-nagging way, choose times of the day when their meds are working

**Other**

* Look at each other when you’re talking
* Communicate when there are no other distractions
* Laugh!
* Consider individual and/or couples therapy in order to process thoughts/feelings around living with PD with an unbiased professional who can give you an outsider’s opinion and provide you with the venue and tips for better communication
* Think about your communication style – What has worked? What hasn’t worked?