



## Gentle Exercise

You don't have to have competitive drive or the heart of an athlete to work out if you have a neurologic condition. Many gentle fitness routines are available, including stretches, dancing, yoga, tai chi for people in wheelchairs, and many more. Carol Enseki, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease (PD) in 2000, went to her first Dance for PD® class when she retired from her job as president of the Brooklyn Children's Museum in 2010. Inspired by friends—some of whom were in their 80s—she began to dance regularly and recently participated in her first performance at the Mark Morris Dance Group in Brooklyn. “You can benefit even if you've been a couch potato all your life,” Enseki says.

Dancing motivated her to increase her stamina and abilities by lifting weights and adding aerobics to her routine. “Dance helped me realize that I am not defined by PD,” says Carol, who is a member of the Brooklyn Parkinson Group. At 59, she is one of the youngest dancers who recently participated in a public performance. Three of the performers are older than 85, and one has had PD for more than 25 years. “We feel like a group of

dancers, rather than a group of patients,” she says.

Dance for PD®, which offered one of the most popular demonstrations at the American Brain Foundation's Brain Health Fair for the past two years, has expanded beyond its 2001 inception in Brooklyn to over 100 communities across the United States and to nine countries. It also launched an at-home DVD, which is available for purchase. Ivan Bodis-Wollner M.D., D.Sc., director of the Parkinson's Disease and Related Disorders Clinic, Center of Excellence, State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center, says, “Any physical activity is good for most people with neurologic conditions, but what makes dance special is not only the exercise, but that the elation provided by music is also therapeutic.” While traditional physical therapy involves repetitive activities, dance allows people to express themselves, and the enjoyment and sense of accomplishment can last for days, according to Dr. Bodis-Wollner. “It also has a very good effect on the caregiver,” he adds, having observed how often it also helps relationships with partners.