



Ray Edwards Show, Episode 537

How I Live Well With Parkinson's (10 years later)

Announcer ([00:01](#)):

Ray Edwards Show, episode 537. How I Live Well With Parkinson's (10 years later).

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The Ray Edwards Show. This is the podcast for prosperity, with purpose.

Ray Edwards ([00:19](#)):

Welcome to the Ray Edwards Show. I'm so glad to have you here today. I'm recording this on my anniversary, not the anniversary of my wedding, which is probably what you would assume in most cases when somebody says that, but today is the 10th anniversary of my receiving a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. It was 10 years ago today on September 22nd, 2011, that I got diagnosed. At the time I was having some problem with my handwriting and using my right hand in general. It just wasn't doing the things I told it to do. And it was just odd enough that I went to the doctor and found out I had Parkinson's. I've detailed that journey elsewhere. And if you search back on my blog, you'll find at rayedwards.com, there's a blog entry where I talk about how I'm dealing with having Parkinson's disease. This was back in the early days of those 10 years. And I was quite sold on a number of ideas that I've since readjusted, because my expectations were not matching up to reality and that was causing me a great deal of frustration, anxiety, and even depression. So I had to make a change. I'm going to talk today about, among other things, what do you do when your expectations are- you realize one day are totally unrealistic. There is an answer. I'll share that along with nine other observations about how I'm living well with Parkinson's, 10 years later. Let's get to it.

Announcer ([02:00](#)):

And now, our feature presentation.

Ray Edwards ([02:03](#)):

I'm going to keep this quick and I'm actually going to do something I don't normally do. I'm actually going to give you 10 directives. These are direct calls to action, things that I recommend you do if you're faced with something like Parkinson's disease. Now, please don't tune out if you don't have Parkinson's or you don't know somebody who does. You might think, oh, it's that shaking disease that Michael J. Fox has that Muhammad Ali had, that Pope John Paul had, and many other people, unfortunately, have also dealt with. But this advice that I'm going to give you, I believe applies to any chronic illness, including the fatal condition we're

all born with. We all have a terminal disease. It was sexually transmitted when we were conceived, it's called life. We're all going to come to the end of life. And if we are fortunate enough not to suffer violence or injury or some tragic event along the way, at the very best our life will consist of us getting older. And as we age, things begin to deteriorate physically, mentally physiologically. And we eventually the organism that we live inside of, our body, fails and we die. That is a destiny that awaits all of us. Gee, thanks, Ray, for the pep talk. I feel great now. Hear me walking around in denial of that reality is not going to make you happy. I believe that acknowledging the reality of death is a very psychologically healthy thing to do. And then once we realized really deeply, I mean, I know we all intellectually know we're all going to die, but I believe based on my own experience and observing the experience of people around me, that most of us haven't internalized the reality of that week, we sort of feel like maybe, well, that happens to other people in this movie that I call my life, but I'm still here. It will not always be so, sunshine. So when you get that reality settled into your bones, then you begin to ask some really meaningful questions. Like what the heck do I do now? Well, here are 10 pieces of advice. I don't give a lot of just direct advice where I say do this, or don't do that, in these kinds of matters. But in this case, I've spent the last 10 years studying this and testing different approaches. So I'm going for it. How I live well with Parkinson's, 10 things I've learned 10 years later. Number one, and remember these apply to you regardless of what you're dealing with, whether it's Parkinson's or muscular dystrophy or MS, or the flu or COVID, or just middle age or young age, we're all dealing with something. And I believe that my problem is not necessarily bigger than your problem or vice versa. To us, the biggest problem we're dealing with is the biggest problem we're dealing with. That makes it real. So don't feel bad if you don't have any huge problems right now, celebrate that, but just know this applies for the small inconveniences and also for the larger, more challenging obstacles you may end up facing in your life. So number one, be a rational optimist. This does not mean that you're doing the positive thinking thing where you just for no good apparent reason, just decide you're going to believe everything's always going to work out. Everything's great. I find that's not really helpful. It's not a useful way to approach life because if you have that expectation, almost invariably, you're going to be disappointed. So my recommendation is to adopt the approach of the rational optimist. And when I say that word, that term to people and they me, what's a rational optimist?

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My answer is I don't believe the best will always happen, but I do work to make the best of whatever does. That runs deeper than you think. I don't believe the best will always happen, but I do work to make the best of whatever does. Just meditate on it a bit, try it out and see what your experience is. Number two, consciously choose a philosophy of life and live in a state of non-contradiction. This is a subject that could go very deep, very quickly. And I'm going to try to keep it quick and let you do the research, if you so choose. Most of us have not consciously chosen our philosophy of life. The way we look at the world, what we believe about what life means and what we should do about it. We have assembled our map of reality from a mish-mash of messages, of commands, of advice, which we have received at random times, from random people. From our teachers, from our babysitters, our moms, dads, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, television, cartoons, movies, toys, books, magazines, bullies at school, friends at school. We've got all these different sources of "wisdom and knowledge" that we've accumulated, and we don't even realize that's how we formed our philosophy about what the world means and what we need to do about it. When you have the realization that what I just said is true, you're probably immediately drawn to the conclusion: Good Gosh, I need to take a look at my map of reality and make sure it's realistic. That's what I'm recommending. Consciously choose your philosophy of life. Consciously walk through the important ideas of what things mean, how we know what is real and what is not, how we know the meaning of things, how we can test the meaning of things, what we should do about it, how we can test what we believe we should do about things that happen in our lives.

That's philosophy, it's practical philosophy. This is not some, ethereal intellectual exercise that is disconnected from reality. It's very much connected to reality. And for most people, their philosophy of life is not. And that's the problem. The number three thing that I've learned in learning to live well with Parkinson's and whatever else you may be dealing with in life: 10 lessons, 10 years later, number three is take 100% responsibility for everything in your life. I have a shirt that I got from Tom Bilyeu, it simply says, "Everything is my fault". And what that means is not that I'm taking on a burden of guilt for all the bad things in the world, but it's me acknowledging I take responsibility for my life. And one might argue, well, gosh, Ray, that doesn't sound very fair. For instance, you, Ray, should understand, you have Parkinson's disease. You didn't cause that in yourself, that's, you're not responsible for that. Perhaps not, but I am responsible for how I respond to having Parkinson's disease. I'm responsible for the behaviors, the thoughts, the emotions, that flow from the knowledge that I have, Parkinson's. That I am responsible for. And that is true for everything that happens in your life. We are responsible for our response to life. We can't and never will be able to control everything that happens to us. But we are able to decide what happens through us. How we respond is 100% in our control. And thus in that way, I am responsible 100% for everything in my life. Number four, be well, even when you're not. This is particularly meaningful for anyone who experiences an illness or an injury, and especially a chronic illness. Anyone who deals with chronic pain or fibromyalgia or something like MS or Parkinson's, or even chronic migraines or sinus infections or tooth aches, whatever it is that seems to continually be bothering you, Lyme disease, chronic fatigue syndrome, gastrointestinal issues. I'm not ruling anything out. I'm not making anything bigger or smaller than the other things I'm saying. These are all uncomfortable. It's often difficult to hear people talk about wellness and thriving and being well and saying things like, if you don't have your health, you have nothing. By the way, that's a ridiculous and idiotic statement. You may not have perfect health, but if you're alive, you do not have nothing. You have everything, my friend. The breadth and depth of human experience is still yours to have, as long as you don't tell yourself something stupid, like I don't have my health, so I don't have anything. Now I'm aware that if you're 100% vibrantly, healthy and well with no disease, no discomfort and no complaints, that's something to celebrate. But if you don't fit that picture of perfection, and nobody does all of their life, then don't despair. You still have everything. And your assignment is to be well, even when you're not. Wellness is a buzz word that gets used in a lot of marketing. And the national wellness Institute defines it more broadly than most people do. Most of us think of it as being, not sick and not in pain, but the national wellness Institute defines wellness as six dimensions of being: physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, and occupational. And they define wellness as "an active process through which people become aware of and make a choice toward a more successful existence." This sounds hauntingly familiar to me because it reminds me of Earl Nightingale's definition of success, which is "the progressive realization of worthy goals." Well, that's also a good definition for wellness. My health optimization specialist, a medical doctor, a physician who consults with me about my health, how I deal with Parkinson's began coaching me from the very first day about the fact that I needed to maximize my own potential health span; my own maximal wellness spectrum that's available to me. And he said, "Ray, that's going to be different than it is for somebody who doesn't have Parkinson's, but it doesn't mean you can't reach optimal levels of health and wellness. You can, and together we'll work on doing that for you." That physician's name by the way, is Dr. Gus Vickery. He practices in Asheville, North Carolina. Very wise, man. You should seek out his website and his book. I'll put links to those in the show notes for this podcast. So number four is be well, even when you're not. Look for the maximum optimization of wellness that is available to you, and you have all these different areas, you're seeking wellness in. Not just your physical life, but emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, socially, and occupationally. There's so much available to you, even if you're not 100% well.

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Number five of the 10 things I've learned 10 years later, after being diagnosed with Parkinson's and these apply to everybody. Number five, pursue growth and contribution. Growth as in personal growth: growing in your maturity, in your attitude, in your relationship, in your lovability, in your thrive-ability, as my friend, Becky Warner, says. Personal growth is important. If we don't feel that we're growing as a person, we begin to feel that we're dying. So it's better to be growing. In fact, Tony Robbins proposes in his human needs psychology, that these two categories that I've named, growth and contribution, are actually two needs that human beings have. It's not just some people who have a need to grow and contribute. It's a need that we all share. And he says that there are six human needs. Four of them are psychological human needs, and he calls two of them, the spiritual needs. And those are the needs of growth; the ability to continually grow and improve as a human being. And to contribute; to make a valuable contribution to a larger story than just your own. So, to contribute to other human beings, to contribute to the world, to society. He says these spiritual needs growth and contribution are the needs that people find not satisfied if they've met all the other needs and still that life is empty. So for those who have achieved all the wealth and they have the correct number of family members, and the right kind of boat, and car, and travel itinerary, and bank balance, and net worth, and public accolades, they've got all the trappings of success, but then they end up taking their own lives. How many times have we heard that story? Why does somebody who has all the seeming hallmarks of success feel empty as if there's nothing more to life, in fact, they're so miserable, they take their own life? They kill themselves. It's because they're not meeting the need for growth and contribution. They're missing the spiritual fulfillment that their very being craves: their connection with God.

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Number six- trade your expectations for appreciation. This one I learned from Tony Robbins. And it's just as simple as it sounds. We tend to go through life with certain expectations. This is how we become unhappy. We expect things are going to work a certain way. We have a blueprint for what success in our life looks like. If life is perfect, if I'm to be happy, then I must make this amount of money, I must live in this kind of house, I must have this kind of relationship with my wife, I must have this many children, I must have this kind of hobby, I must have this much free cash to spend however I want to. We have a long list of how things have to go for us to be happy or feel like we're successful. And the challenge comes in when we have a blueprint of the world that's not the way things happen in the world. For example, I mean, one of the things that I had planned on for all my life was not getting a degenerative neurological disease, like Parkinson's disease. My plan was I would stay healthy and live to be 120 or so. And I did not, of course, have in my blueprint, a neurodegenerative disorder starting at age 45, but that's what happened. So reality was different from my blueprint. And so what happens is now most people become upset with the fact they didn't get what they expected. So they become angry, bitter, fearful, they lose sight of their dreams. And that's because they don't know how to resolve the conflict between their blueprint and reality. So you have two choices really, and two choices only: either you got to change reality, which might be possible. You could perhaps enter into some kind of treatment protocol to reverse your disease, or you could dig your way out of debt if you're deeply in debt financially. Or you could fix your relationship, if you had a terrible, tumultuous relationship with your spouse or your boyfriend or girlfriend, but oftentimes people are obsessed with changing realities that can't be changed. Like in the last 18 months, have you experienced anything that frustrated you, made you angry, that kind of messed with your blueprint about how things were supposed to go in life, but you could do nothing to change them. Like, um, I think maybe quarantine, maybe the lockdowns, maybe the restrictions and regulations that are constantly changing and all the arguments about those things. That's a reality.

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I'm not here to be negative and say, we just got to live with how things are. Sometimes we need to acknowledge reality and just say, okay, that's I can't change those things. So what can I change? What I can change is my blueprint. I can take my blueprint and correct it and say, okay, I've got to now deal with all the quarantine and lockdown regulations that are in place because of the virus, because of the pandemic. That's just reality. So I have to deal with that. Whether I like it or not, whether I like the way it's being handled or not at the government level, it's my job to figure out, in my life, how I'm going to deal with these facts of reality. So I've readjusted my blueprint. And if you do that and I don't, I'm not suggesting you give up your dreams.

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I'm suggesting you may have to change the way you get to them. Your objective doesn't change: your strategy might. So, constantly fighting against reality, saying, "this is my blueprint. Reality. You must change to fit my blueprint," is a good way to be frustrated. As Byron Katie says, "if you fight with reality, if you, if you resist reality, reality will win 100% of the time." So instead of constantly being angry and upset and bemoaning and complaining about how your blueprint and reality don't match up, take your expectations of how life was supposed to be, like I'm supposed to have the perfect body, I'm supposed to have the perfect health, I'm supposed to have the perfect mate, I'm supposed to have the perfect financial condition, I'm supposed to live in a perfect world where people don't get sick and die: take your expectations and trade them in for appreciation.

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And this really goes back to the questions we ask ourselves. So this can take the form of when you get a diagnosis like Parkinson's, just asking yourself, what does this make possible? I can appreciate this diagnosis because it forces me to slow down and pay attention to and be a better steward of my overall health. I appreciate the opportunity to do this. Trading your expectation for appreciation, taking frustration and transmuting it into gratitude will change your life. Promise.

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Number seven, build daily rituals to control your focus, your physiology and your neurobiology. Wow! That's big stuff. That's what, what is that all about, Ray? Through lots of study, lots of reading, attending many seminars and workshops and spending so much money on this stuff, I'm almost embarrassed to tell you how much I spent, but it wasn't spending. It was investing, to learn at the deepest point within me that we are largely in control of how we feel about our life. Barring a physical injury to your brain that messes up your perception of your own emotions. Barring that, 99.99999999% of us on this planet, and I include myself in that number, are largely in control of how we feel about our lives. Now, somebody who's struggled with depression off and on for many years now, this was hard for me to accept because I really wanted to say, this is just neurobiologically, how I am, and there's nothing I can do about it. So I cannot be held responsible for it. I cannot be to blame for it. It is not me being self-indulgent. It's just how I am. And while I know that is true for some folks, I feel it's largely not true for me. Even though I have a condition that neurologists many neurologists will say, well, depression and anxiety are just part of Parkinson's, Ray. There's nothing you can do to control them. I have found that to be wrong. I found that to be erroneous when I take control of my focus, what I'm thinking about and what I'm speaking about, talking about, that's, that's how we direct our focus: by our thoughts and by our speech, our communication with others and with ourselves. If I control my focus and my physiology, what I'm doing with my body, am I exercising? Am I breathing deeply? Am I getting my heart rate elevated every day? Am I doing the things that contribute to a healthy cardiovascular system, which in turn contributes to a healthy neurological system in my body, which means a healthy brain. Getting the neurochemicals flowing that make me feel good. That make me happy. That make

me fulfilled. My focus; What I think about, what I speak about, my physiology, what I do with my body, and my neurobiology. That includes what kind of fuel do I feed my body, which in turn feeds my brain.

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When I control the rituals that exert influence on those three things, it changes the very fabric of how I feel about my life. So this is a complex one. I've tried to pack a lot into a very short list, but build daily rituals that control your focus, your physiology and your neurobiology. What this really comes down to is build in daily rituals, that force you to meditate, to be mindful, to eat healthy foods that support good brain health and good body health, to exercise, to move a large amount of the day to be in motion. My physical therapist tells me motion is lotion. So you've got to move. And you've got to tell yourself to experience joy and gratitude and happiness and peace and contentment. You need to talk to yourself much more than you listen to yourself, because if you're listening to yourself, you'll often convince yourself that your life is crap because often your automatic voice is complaining.

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So don't complain. Control your focus, your physiology, your neurobiology by building in daily rituals. And I say, rituals, I make this very important because rituals are, that's like the first thing you do when you get up in the morning, the rituals are the things you do automatically. I'm not talking about religious rituals. I'm not talking about mysterious people in robes around Stonehenge. The rituals that you already have should be good examples for you. Like you probably get up out of the same side of bed every morning. You probably think the same thoughts plus or minus 5%. Every day as you get started about your day, you probably have the same thing for breakfast. You take the same route to work. You do most of the same things during the day. Those are all ritualized behaviors. It just means it's become so persistent in your schedule. You've done it so often, it becomes habit. It's muscle memory. So you want to build it in daily rituals that force you to control your focus, your physiology, and your neurobiology.

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The number eight thing that I've learned in the past 10 years, that helps me live well with Parkinson's and will help you live well with whatever you're dealing with is do your best to stay awake. And I don't mean resist sleep. When I say stay awake. I mean, do your best to stay out of the hypnotic trance that society puts us in. If you just blindly consume the media that's on television, that's on the internet, that's on social media. If you just blindly accept that the topics that are being discussed, there are the important topics. If you put yourself on automatic pilot, most of the day and 90% of your thoughts are the same thoughts you had as yesterday. And you're never moving in environments that stimulate you to think different thoughts, to have different viewpoints, to have different ideas, to have your own ideas, your own thoughts, then you are asleep. And my encouragement to you is do your best to stay awake so that you're aware of what's actually happening around you and happening to you.

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Number nine- live from your future to your present. What does that mean? It means that most of us are living from our past. We think about how life has always been about this is just the way I am. I'm just not that kind of person. I've always been the kind of person who does this sort of thing. I've always been the kind of person who lived in this kind of apartment, who wears this kind of clothes, who has this kind of job, who has this kind of attitude, who likes this kind of entertainment. This is a person who's decided my past is very predictive of my future. In other words, my past equals my future, which in a way I think is strangely

comforting for most people. But if you think about it, it puts a real limit on what you're going to be able to accomplish in the rest of your life. If you want to accomplish things you've never accomplished before you can't live based on your past, because in your past, you never accomplished this thing before you have to live from your future. You have to, in your mind, go into the future and imagine what it will be like to be in the place where you're, you are the kind of person you dream you could be. Whether that's about your money, or your relationships or your appearance, or your physique, or your health, or your possessions, or your home: whatever you're thinking of in your future that you want to see made manifest in reality, you have to be able to vividly picture it and then reverse engineer what kind of person do I need to become in order to experience that reality? And then go to work, becoming that person today and work on it day by day. And for this process to actually work for you, this is not magic. This is not the secret. This is not the law of attraction. This is simply picking an objective in the future, figuring out, reverse engineering, how one gets there, and then doing the actions that get one to that location, that destination, that destiny. So live from your future to your present.

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And finally out of the 10 big lessons I've learned when it comes to how I live well with Parkinson's and you can live well with whatever you're facing. 10 lessons, 10 years later-number 10, this is probably the most powerful one of all: ask better questions. The fact is the questions we ask are what result in the thoughts that we have and the answers that we get. And if we ask terrible questions, we're going to keep getting terrible answers. If we ask which party is better, the Republicans or the Democrats? That's always going to give us a terrible answer, in my opinion. If we want a better answer, we should ask a better question. Perhaps we should ask. What's a better way for us to select the leaders of our society. If we're experiencing troublesome realities, like you've just received a terrible diagnosis or you've received some terrible news, maybe it's news about your business or news about your marriage or news about someone you love or news about your job. Maybe you just lost your job. I don't know. I just know these are common things that all of us deal with at some point in our lives, instead of asking, why does this always happen to me? How could this be happening again? What am I going to do? How am I going to survive? What will people think? What am I going to tell my spouse? Those are maybe not the best questions to be asking maybe the best questions to be asking are questions that are more like this. Like, well, what's actually good about this? And I know your initial response is going to be, to say nothing. Nothing is good about this, but there's always a different answer. When I was working through the questions that I'm sharing with you now, like, what's good about this? What can I learn from this? How can I use this? In reference to Parkinson's disease, at first, I was very angry and I was very self-righteous and said, there's nothing good about it. There's no way to use it. There's no way it benefits me. But once I got past my own emotions and realized those emotions originated with what I was thinking. So I'm going to try to think something different. I'm going to try to think, what if there is a good answer to these more positively focused questions? What's actually good about this? Well, it's caused me to slow down and think more carefully about my overall holistic health, about what I eat about the air that I'm breathing, about what I do with my time and my focus and my energy. How can I use this? I've been able to use this to captivate people's attention when I want to talk to them about spiritual matters, about quality of life, about the importance of relationships. What's, what's actually great about this? What have I learned from this? I've learned how to be empathetic toward people that have a condition that affects them in ways I couldn't possibly have understood before. I've learned that everybody's carrying something that we don't know about and we should treat them carefully. I've learned that we're all going to get old. We're all going- If we're lucky, if we're fortunate, we're going to get older. We're going to begin to experience

the process of aging, which causes us to slow down. Perhaps causes our hands to tremble. Perhaps causes people to disregard us and not realize the amount of wisdom that's stored up inside of us because of our physical appearance. I'm not saying that I'm happy that I got Parkinson's disease, but I'm happy about the things that have happened to me as I've adopted a, "what does this make possible attitude" about it. And you can do the same, whatever you're facing, whatever you're dealing with. And finally, I leave you with this thought from the book of Philippians chapter four in the Bible, the apostle Paul writes and recommends that, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable. If anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things". Good advice. My prayer for you is that you would experience great health and long life and much prosperity. Live long and prosper.

Announcer ([31:42](#)):

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