

## ***Happiness of Pursuit* Discussion Guide for Young-Onset Parkinson's Disease**

*The Happiness of Pursuit, A Father's Courage, A Son's Love, and Life's Steepest Climb*, written by Davis Phinney with Austin Murphy, details Davis's life story, weaving his extraordinary cycling career and beyond with his remarkable journey following his diagnosis with young-onset Parkinson's disease at age 40.

### **Questions and Topics for Discussion**

1. *The Happiness of Pursuit* brings us into the lives of Davis Phinney and his many friends and family who have supported him through his Parkinson's disease. Who are your greatest sources of support? What have you learned from them? What might they have learned from you?
2. In part due to his age and physical fitness, Davis's diagnosis followed "an exasperating, months-long mission to find out what the hell the problem was" (page 13). How does this mirror your own experience? What resources have you found most useful post-diagnosis?
3. What does Davis's journey toward disease acceptance reflect in you as the reader? How can you relate to his pursuit?
4. Davis discusses in-depth the value of the professionals who comprise his treatment team. Which qualities do you look for in doctors, physical therapists and others who provide your care? What experiences have shaped your views?
5. Davis describes the physical effects of Parkinson's ["like you've been encased in armor" (page 184)] as well as the withdrawal and depression that are extremely common in people with young-onset Parkinson's disease, since facing the disease at a much younger age and for far longer means a high likelihood of worrying about jobs, intimacy, families and social lives. What types of emotional and psychological support have you explored and not yet explored and why?
6. In the chapter titled "The Big C," we are introduced to the positive social changes Davis witnesses in his own father after his father's diagnosis with prostate cancer, and their subsequent impact on Davis's approach to living with Parkinson's disease. How has your experience with others who have experienced chronic illness affected the way you approach your journey in living with Parkinson's disease?

7. How does Davis embrace the concept of living well today with Parkinson's disease? What does living well with Parkinson's mean to you? How does the concept of living well today extend into your relationships with family and friends?
8. Davis reflects on "learning to be aware of, to recognize and celebrate, the small victories and blessings available to us every day..." (page 22) and even refers to victories as "curative moments" (page 121). What victories have you celebrated and how are these moments helping you in living with young-onset Parkinson's disease?
9. What events have impacted your decisions to change your treatment approach since your diagnosis? What events influence Davis's decision to have Medtronic Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) therapy?
10. Davis recounts that following his DBS therapy, he has experienced "dramatic relief," including a stronger voice, clearer diction, improvements in walking, balance, and sleeping (page 186). He also continues cycling and is a passionate advocate for exercise with a valued treatment team who "keep me running smoothly." What has created relief for you?
11. Davis shares his discovery over time that "I needed to adjust my tactics... waiting around for good news did not serve me or my fellow Parkinson's peeps. It was too passive... I tell the members of my tribe, 'Get out! Move your body! Meet some friends. Think positively. Focus. Be present for those brief, shining moments.'" (page 133). Are you living well with Parkinson's disease today? What changes might you be willing to make that might help you to live well? If so, what would they be?
12. What did you learn from *The Happiness of Pursuit*? Has your definition of victory changed? How?

You are not alone. The Davis Phinney Foundation's mission is to help people with Parkinson's disease live well today. The Foundation provides information and inspiration that enable the Parkinson's community to make sure [Every Victory Counts™](#) while attacking the despair, surrender and loss of hope that too often attend this disease. Learn more about [living well](#) today with Parkinson's disease.