

Good Gadgets for Parkinson People

Louis "Skip" Sander – LSander153@aol.com – 412-367-1376

I am afflicted with Parkinsonism, but my symptoms are fairly mild at this point – my fingers don't work so well, and my gait is a bit unsteady. I've found some inexpensive gadgets and techniques that make my life a little better, and I'd like to share them with you. Here they are:

Back scratcher/shoe horn



This is very useful for putting on your shoes and for reaching things on the floor. You can buy them for a few dollars at many stores. Look in craft stores. They are hand-made from natural bamboo, so there is a lot of variability, especially in the shoehorn end. If you find one that is thin there, it will be better for putting on shoes. Search online for 'bamboo back scratcher shoe horn'.

10" Slip Joint Pliers



These will let you open bottles that are hard to open by anyone. Juice bottles and milk jugs are prime examples of this, and they yield easily to these pliers. You can buy them for \$10 or so at Home Depot, Lowe's, Harbor Freight and similar stores. The 10" size is common and is the one you want. Smaller ones aren't as useful, and larger ones are overkill. You do not need the professional pliers that can cost \$30 or more.

Hand-Held Shopping Baskets



I can handle stairs pretty well by holding onto the railing, and I can usually carry one small item in my free hand. But it gets unwieldy and dangerous to carry more than one thing at a time, like a sandwich and a drink. I have to take two trips.

When looking for a way to carry more. I noticed a metal-handled shopping basket at my local grocery store. I asked the manager if I could borrow one to try it out, and he agreed. It was easy to carry in my free hand, and

its low center of gravity kept it stable as I hobbled up and down the stairs. It easily held a plate, some silverware, and a drink in a mug or squatty glass, and nothing threatened to spill. A metal loaf pan or other liner can catch the spills if they happen. Bingo!

I wanted one, but I learned they are hard to find. The store couldn't sell me one, and it was beneath me (and you) to steal one, so I searched online for 'small shopping baskets'. You can buy them at many places there, but usually you have to order a whole rack of them, which is overkill and can cost \$80 or more.

But you can buy them singly in several colors from webrestaurantstore.com/

Try searching their huge site for 'regency shopping baskets'. Depending on the style, they will cost from \$5-\$8 each. I like the red ones with metal handles. Shipping for one or two baskets is about \$20. If you have trouble, their Customer Service department is very helpful.

Good goes to heaven, bad goes to hell

If one of your legs works better or hurts less than the other, remember the above line when going up or down stairs. When climbing, put the good leg up first, then bring the bad one up to its level. Repeat this, one step at a time, for the remainder of the trip.

When descending, put the bad leg down first, then bring the good one down to join it. Repeat this, one step at a time, until you're at the bottom. It helps a lot.

Thorlos Socks



These stretchy socks are extremely easy to put on, and they provide great cushioning for your feet. They come in a bewildering assortment of styles, including a new one for pickleball. I like the WX Unisex Walking Socks and the thicker TX Unisex Tennis Socks. They cost \$15.99 a pair, but they last forever and their convenience and comfort are well worth the expense. They are available online and at a few dealers, including Dick's Sporting Goods.

Snap Shirts



Shirts with snaps down the front are much easier to deal with than those with buttons. Fingers that can't handle buttons can often manage lining up the two halves of the snaps and clicking them together. Removing the shirt is just a matter of pulling the fronts apart. If you are finger-impaired, both things can give you a feeling of power over your environment.

Snap front shirts are a specialty item that can definitely be hard to find. They are available in long- and short-sleeved models. Most have a cowboy-style plaid design, but plain colors are available, too. Look for them where ranchers and cowboys might look. The key online search term seems to be 'snap shirts'. Be careful, because the snap and button models are often intermixed on websites, and it isn't always obvious which is which. You can usually identify those with snaps by zooming in on the shirt fronts. Most of the snaps have a pearl finish that isn't found on buttons.

Wrangler is the main brand of snap shirts, and you can find many of theirs online. Prices range from under \$20 to over \$100, with fancy styles at the upper end. The discount supplier Haband sometimes has them at very reasonable prices. WalMart sometimes stocks them, too, as do Penneys and Kohl's.

Suspenders

Using suspenders instead of a belt can make your pants much easier to put on and take off. Some suspenders attach to buttons inside your waistband, but for practicality, you want the ones that attach with clips. These suspenders are available in several widths, typically from 1.25" to 2". Men who have trouble dressing might prefer the wider ones.

Avoid suspenders with flimsy clips designed to avoid harm to delicate fabrics. Get the heavy-duty ones shown below:



Buy your pants with a larger waist than you needed when you used a belt, and adjust the suspenders so they support them at a comfortable level. Be bold about the adjustments. If your pants have elastic sections in the waist,

position the suspender clips so they don't interfere with them. If you do everything right, you can leave your pants buttoned at the waist and they'll slide right on and off.

Lee Extreme Comfort Pants

These provide the ultimate in loose-fitting comfort and convenience, but have a somewhat rumpled appearance compared to other pants. Most people seem to love them. They are cut large and made of stretchable material. Look for them at Penneys, Kohl's, and on the internet.

Hang Your Pants on the Wall



If you use suspenders and hang your pants on pegs at night, you'll have little trouble putting them on in the morning.

Firemen do something like this so they can dress instantly when the alarm goes off.

You can do it too, especially with Lee Extreme Comfort pants.

- The End -