

## The Meditation Journal

# Overcoming Parkinson's Disease

(In the opening ceremony of the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, the legendary Muhammad Ali set the Olympic torch alight with his trembling hand. Many people were shocked. He was suffering from Parkinson's disease. Besides Ali, many well-known celebrities have suffered from Parkinson's, including 4-time Oscar-winner Katherine Hepburn, Taiwan's famous musician Li Taixiang, Chinese literary giant Ba Jin, and the legendary Chinese leader Xiaoping Deng.)

In 2017, there are close to 5 million Parkinson's sufferers worldwide. And this number is increasing every year. Parkinson's will become the number-3 killer of mature people, right after cancer and cerebrovascular illnesses. It's as bad as cancer, but non-fatal. And the person we are interviewing today is someone who suffered from Parkinson's for over 6 years. Let's listen to his story.)

I was watching a video of Master JinBodhi playing ping pong. I wanted to have a match with him. I used to be the top player in my company. I was good at everything I wanted to compete in. I was a karaoke champion, and I came first in bowling too.

(Welcome, how are you today? How was the traffic?) It was fine. There is a balcony here. There is a beautiful view from here. This is my wife's special place. Because she likes to grow flowers and plants. I am not much of a conversationalist, but I help with the dishes. That is the only housework I am good at.

(His smiling face and hearty laughter made the interviewer forget that he has been a Parkinson's patient for over 6 years. After we started chatting, seeing our camera had been set up, Mr. Lu started to talk about his illness in a solemn, reserved tone.)

My name is Victor, Chinese name Yilin Lu. Before I retired, I was a manager at an American company. When I thought I was right, I'd never give in. I thought I was a reasonable person. But I was intolerant. In January 2011, I was diagnosed with Parkinson's. I have lived with it for over 6 years.

Previously, I could only walk very slowly. My movements were always very slow. I lacked energy. I found it hard even to open a bottle. My muscles ached, and I was prone to dizziness and falls. I also suffered uncontrollable tremors. I was in pain. The illness drastically affected my life. I tried taking deer placenta, which was expensive but didn't help. I also took a lot of so-called health supplements, to no avail. I even tried infrared clothes, and clothing with negative ions, but nothing worked. I spent a lot of money.

Money was not a problem, the problem was that nothing worked.

(While he was worrying about his health condition, another problem developed.)

I started to distance myself from my friends because I didn't want them to see me in that state. When I saw them, I felt worse. They are all healthy, and I was half-dead. I preferred to be alone. Patients with Parkinson's often suffer depression. When I was diagnosed with depression, I wanted to kill myself.

The third year living with Parkinson's, I often had suicidal thoughts. My wife became very angry. She said, "If you want to die, die somewhere else. Don't terrify me by dying at home." Every day I was griping about everything. I kept lamenting that I used to be so able, only to become totally useless. Why waste time and money on me? I might as well die with dignity.

(Then in August 2016, they were in the PJ region of Malaysia. They came to Bao Ling Bodhi Meditation Center.)

I felt there was no hope in my life. There were other Parkinson's patients who suffered much more than me. I was worried about them. I was also afraid; I felt so insecure. I thought that in the future, I might become like them. What a miserable life.

I got angry, very angry. I said, "If you die, what will I do?" I said we should continue to search for alternatives.

Finally, with luck, we found Bodhi Meditation. Zhou-shen, a dharma sister from Klang Dragon Spring Center, was recovering very well from severe Parkinson's. She was even preparing to run a marathon. After Mr. Ong and I got this news, I contacted her immediately and we talked. She said that Bodhi Meditation could certainly help me. So we joined. We were skeptical at first. At that time, I knew nothing about Bodhi Meditation. But I was looking for ways to get better. If it worked for other people, we might as well give it a try.

(In December 2016, at the Bao Ling Center, we met Mr. Lu again. There were 2 Parkinson's patients with him. This interview took place 6 months after his first Bodhi Meditation class. Given their consistent practice over the past 6 months, what kind of surprises do he and his friends have in store for us?)

I have had Parkinson's for over 6 years. Parkinson's disease makes a person lose mobility. But I want to challenge that, and prove that after more than 6 years of Parkinson's, I can recover and dance up a storm.

(Years of Parkinson's disease had limited his mobility to the point that he didn't want to meet people anymore. But today, if we did not see him with

our own eyes, it would be hard to believe that this quick, agile person on the dance floor had suffered Parkinson's disease for over 6 years.)

Meditation and health are 2 sides of the same coin. Our mood affects our physical body, and vice versa. Look, I'm still shaking a bit, but it's much better now. You can ask my teacher. "At the beginning, she shook badly when I was near her. Now it is much less."

The progress can be seen in 2 ways. One is voice. A Parkinson's patient's voice will become 90% softer over time. But mine became louder once I joined Bodhi Meditation. My voice can be very loud. In 2016, till the beginning of this year, I wasn't able to walk normally. I either had to use a cane or be supported by my helper. I walked unsteadily. But after 2 or 3 days at the Health & Happiness Retreat, all of a sudden, I could walk very steadily.

I noticed that right away when he returned to the Parkinson's center for an event. He looked so happy. His face glowed with health and delight. And his walking has improved so much. The most important part is his voice. Before when he talked with me, I couldn't hear him clearly; I felt bad asking him to repeat. But after the retreat, his voice was loud and clear. Everyone there noticed that. We were all greatly encouraged. Thus, I came to Bodhi Meditation.

(Perhaps because they have suffered the same illness, these patients

share much in common, and they became each other's supports and witnesses during their recovery at Bodhi Meditation. In this interview, we learned that this group of Parkinson's patients set up another chat group on the internet, trying to help more Parkinson's sufferers. Also, they formed a meditation club for Parkinson's patients. They practice together every week and share their experiences.)

We practice together every Thursday afternoon from 2 to 4:30pm at Klang Dragon Spring Bodhi Meditation Center. We get together to practice and we ask questions, then try to find answers together. Now there are about 15 of us. We welcome all Parkinson's patients to join us at Bodhi Meditation. Our first Health & Happiness Retreat took place on July 23, 2016, almost a year ago.

I have attended the Health & Happiness Retreat 7 times, and the Level 2 Chanting Class once. I just don't want to stop. I practice every day without fail. I've regained my confidence. I am 100% confident now. My temperament has also changed. I am more tolerant and compassionate. After several Health & Happiness Retreats, I feel my character has changed. Before, I wouldn't give in if I was right. Now I am more forgiving and compassionate.

(In April 2017, Malaysia Bodhi Meditation organized Bathing the Buddha Festival Blessing Ceremony, attended by an audience of 5,000. This group of Parkinson's patients walked up on stage, eager to share their stories

of fighting Parkinson's.)

From July 23rd last year to April 23rd this year, in these 9 months, I have put my heart and soul into my meditation practice. My health improved gradually, and my depression is gone. Bodhi Meditation not only helped me to regain my health, it changed my character too. One day when I was in a chanting class, all of a sudden, a thought came to my mind: If Parkinson's can be eliminated from this Earth tomorrow, I am willing to take on all the pain of all Parkinson's sufferers.

Parkinson's, I will conquer you!

(One person, 7 Health & Happiness Retreats. Practicing daily for 365 days, never skipping a day. An internet group of a dozen Parkinson's patients, sharing their experiences with 5,000 people. A wish to help 5 million Parkinson's patients. One light kindles a hundred, and a hundred kindles millions. This transmission of compassion is Bodhi Meditation.)