

**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER...**

# **FIRST STEPS AFTER A DIAGNOSIS**

No one ever wants to hear those three letters, ALS, directed towards them. If you know what they mean, shock and panic may be your first emotions followed by deep sadness. Denial and anger are also not unexpected responses. But, take a deep breath and try to focus. Take that deep breath – you have time.

- Give yourself time to take this in. Don't try to get all your questions answered at once. It can be overwhelming.
- Ask to be referred to the ALS Multidisciplinary Clinic nearest you. The clinic is not for everyone, but it might be just what you need.
- Register with your local ALS Society – they will be your advocates, your cheerleaders, your unfailing supporters. They have resources that can help you understand your diagnosis and help you decide what you may wish to do next. Ask questions; learn all you can but at your own speed.
- It's OK to be angry and/or depressed but try not to let it ruin the time you have left. Seek assistance to try to maintain positivity and hope. There is joy to be found in life – it is right in front of you! And you don't have to do this alone. Reach out to family and friends. Join a Support Group!
- Explore treatment options. There is currently no cure for ALS but there are treatment options to help you stay active and moving. Be proactive and knowledgeable. Don't delay care unnecessarily. **ASK QUESTIONS!**
- Plan ahead. You have lots of decisions to make regarding your finances and future care but once they are done you can put that care and concern aside and be free of that burden.
- Don't neglect your caregiver. Seek help in your home so that you and your loved ones are free to enjoy your time together! Remember that they too have feelings of sadness, helplessness and panic. They love you.
- Don't put off the fun things. Focus on the things that make you happy. Do the things you always wanted to do – take the trip, go to the beach, eat the ice cream.
- Never forget – You are not alone on this journey; we are with you.