



# Unique Approach Helps Gait in Parkinson's

By **Nichola Moretti**

Mary Karp is sharing her success with others whose lives are touched by Parkinson's disease.

Diagnosed more than four years ago, she has shifted her perspective from viewing her body as broken to discovering what she can do now and marveling at its resilience. She has reached this through her experience with the *Trager*<sup>®</sup> Approach.

"A dramatic change for me has been in my gait," she said. "We're building towards realigning my body by relaxing and strengthening. I love it."

Karp and others are finding greater control of their symptoms with the assistance and advice of a certified *Trager* practitioner. Sessions which address a lighter approach to exercise, self-help movements to ease pain, a gentle alternative to massage and an over-all awareness of how body and mind work together provide clients with the information they need to change the way their disease affects their lives.

"Balance and walking are much easier for me now because of *Trager*. I have learned that the relaxation element allows me to function," said Constantine Cassolas, who also lives with Parkinson's disease. He concedes that his balance isn't perfect, but improved and more within his control.

"With PD you have to keep moving, or you're in trouble. When I'm on a moving bus or subway, it helps me hold on, because I have learned to shift my weight and focus on that process," he said.

A one-on-one relationship with a *Trager* practitioner allows for tailoring of sessions to each customer's individual needs. This can be rewarding for both people.

"I find working with clients with Parkinson's disease to be very satisfying and gratifying. For these clients, the *Trager* approach of asking, 'What could be easier or lighter or freer?' is particularly relevant," said one practitioner who has extensive experience helping those with Parkinson's disease.

One of the daunting issues for people with Parkinson's is difficulty in moving.

"My clients tell me that in a *Trager* session they are able to experience freedom of movement without having to struggle or work to make it happen; the sense of relaxation feels like a relief from the state of stiffness and tension they experience much of the time," she said.

The *Trager* Approach was developed by Dr. Milton Trager as a method of movement education. Certified practitioners are available nationwide to help those interested in learning more. One part of the approach includes the use of *Mentastics*<sup>®</sup>, a word that Dr. Trager created from combining "mental" and "gymnastics".

*Mentastics* are simple movements designed to bring attention and awareness to the quality of the body's motions. Because *Trager* combines both mind and body when approaching movement, the client is able to carry these lessons with them into their daily lives and learn to evaluate the quality of their movements in real life situations, not just during the appointment.

"*Mentastics* are gentle and subtle, yet very effective," said Karp. "It carries the message that this is fun and that the best results come from a gentle commitment to the body's own wisdom."

To locate a practitioner, go to the *Trager*<sup>®</sup> website [www.trager-us.org](http://www.trager-us.org) or call the United States *Trager*<sup>®</sup> Association at 440-834-0308.