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10 Simple Activities to Achieve Confidence with Balance

By Kim Fox, PT, DPT

Many adults sustain a fall in their later years of life which can result in a hip fracture, wrist fracture or any assortment of injuries. These injuries lead to time out of work or statistically speaking, time in a nursing home. Below are 10 simple activities to help refocus on becoming balanced.

1. **Work on a strong and stable foundation.** Posture is a key player in how well you are balanced. If you slump forward, you are also shifting more weight forward, forcing your body to work harder to balance.
2. **Work to music.** Balance and rhythm go hand in hand. Perform your favorite exercises to music and practice, practice, practice.
3. **Add a mental task while balancing.** The natural ability to balance should not require excessive concentration and in doing so can actually make your balance worse. For example, while challenging your balance, count backwards from 100 by 2's, say nursery rhymes, talk on the phone, etc.
4. **Incorporate visualization techniques.** While sitting or lying down quietly with your eyes closed, visualize yourself with perfect balance. Visualize walking in familiar areas with confidence, without hesitation and with perfectly flowing movement.
5. **Apply confidence building techniques to balance.** Focus on the positive, note your successes and don't be negative. Negativity wastes energy and does not give you any additional control over a situation. Work on being positive.
6. **Relax!** Don't become tense with anticipation of when you are going to fall. Being guarded and rigid only makes balance worse. Take reasonable precautions but don't let fear become the source of your balance problem. Learn what you can from life's blunders and move on or know when to ask for help.
7. **Set reasonable goals.** Know what your confidence level is so that you know what you need to work on. Listed on our website is a form called Activities Specific Balance Confidence Scale (ABC Scale). Take the test at www.ashevillephysicaltherapy.com and determine how confident you really are.
8. **Keep things in perspective.** Accept what you cannot change and work on what you can and again, know when to ask for help.
9. **Learn about falling.** This does not mean throw yourself onto the floor! Watch "safe" ways to fall by watching sports that often involve falling (i.e. gymnastics, bull riding, ice skating, football, skiing) and observe how they fall. If you need additional help or are involved in a physical therapy program, learning how to get up from the floor and how to safely fall should be part of any balance program.
10. **Get in shape!** The better shape you are currently in, the better prepared you are to deal with anything that life dishes out! Just being active and taking care of yourself can be a great confidence booster.

Kim Fox, PT owns Western Carolina Physical Therapy in Black Mountain and is co-owner of Asheville Physical Therapy located in South Asheville. For additional information on Physical Therapy programs to improve your balance, please call the office at 669-8643 or visit our website at www.WesternCarolinaPT.com