

How A Fall Begins

by Cynthia Allen, GCFP

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Warning: I am about to surprise you.

You are thinking, “I know how it began, I was walking down a step and missed it.” Or, “I turned too quickly and I was down.” But I say, if you are over 50, that fall you just had likely began 20-30 years ago.

It may have even begun with the fact that you didn’t fall enough as a child. Play, falling, almost falling, falling again. This is the breeding ground for better balance throughout life. And actually the occasional trip or even minor fall is healthy, particularly for the young.

Every step you take

Recently there was a nice article in the New York Times called [The Far-Reaching Effects of a Fall](#).

This article emphasized the importance of being slow and careful in walking (as well as staying active.) The author is looking back on a fall and the results of it in her life. She expresses concern about a friend who frequently trips and hopes this friend will start paying more attention to every step. Her concern is well-placed. But the solution is not.

Paying attention to every single step is the last resort in balance. It is exhausting and only becomes a necessity when balance has not been attended to properly throughout life or due to illness or an accident with poor outcomes. Outside of freaky accidents, in my opinion, most falls in someone over sixty began in their 30's.

Balance isn't for old people

Getting ready for a research project a few years ago, I was scouring available balance tests and their sensitivity. In that soup, I found that a simple-to-administer step test was the most sensitive to balance changes, detecting the start of balance decline in women between ages 30 and 40.

How does this happen? That is a good question, and likely the answer for most of us lies in the fact that we simply become less physically active. If you want to prevent a fall in your later years, start now and keep at it. If balance is already a problem for you, then you may need some additional help.

Preventing a fall

Somatic approaches like the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education, Bones for Life®, and Walk for Life are full of balance brain food. Just today in a Bones for Life class, I helped someone go from repeatedly losing his balance when slightly pushed, to a solid stance that would allow him to move in various directions in less than 10 minutes. It was a remarkable experience for the entire class and a great example of neuroplasticity in action.

Here is a simple 2-step philosophy for improving balance:

- Get up and down from the floor frequently. Gradually learn different ways of getting up. While you are down there, roll around on the floor. I double dog dare you to do this for 3 months and tell me your balance hasn't improved.
- Find safe ways to risk losing balance and you will reap the benefit. I have one idea you can use in the video, ["7 Quick Tips for Improving balance."](#) No gadgets or gizmos required, just your own desire to improve.

Enjoy!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Cynthia Allen is a Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner^{CM}, a Senior Trainer in Movement Intelligence, and a co-creator of Integral Human Gait theory. By day, she helps children and adults find easier ways to navigate life challenges and thrive. By night, she is dreaming up new options for how we can all become more fully human through awareness, curiosity, elegance and action. Learn more about Cynthia at FutureLifeNow.com.

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