

# Fall and Recovery

## And other related stuff

### Introduction

Blow whistle. I will get started while you quietly sit down. This first part is boring.

### Disclaimer

What you are about to hear is strictly based on my experiences and may or **may not** follow various codes. Use your own judgment for each situation, as every situation is different, and I cannot and will not be held responsible for any of your actions

Ladies, gentlemen, boys and girls. This hour could be a life changer and perhaps the most important information you have received or will receive in a long time. That is because of the content not because of the presenter.

We have a lot of info to cover. Please no questions or interruptions till Q &A time. I will read a lot of this talk to keep me on track.

Failure to comply, interrupt me, and you will be required to do the chicken dance in front of all of us.

I hope to have my notes circulated or available to all present, for future reference. Email me and I will send you a copy of my notes.

There will be a test at the end. The test is to see that no one here falls EVER.

The new expanded name is because recovery may be more important than the fall.

Everyone loves statistics so let's spend time on them. One out of three seniors will suffer a severe fall this year!

Let's make sure it is no one in this group that is going to be the one that falls. That is it for statistics.

As a Retired Dr. of Chiropractic I have treated innumerable patients of all ages following their fall. I have researched and taught other fall prevention classes and taught heavy hands (walking with hand weights), and the use of using walking poles. I am more than happy to discuss any of these issues with interested parties at a later time.

I have seen or heard about all of the following issues. The following just scratches the surface and most potential problems are obvious if you watch for them.

I know many of you have stories of falls but we will not have time to hear them so hold back until the Q & E at the end.

The only exception is my stories and they have a moral to learn from.

Personally, as a gymnast I have had some epic falls myself as well as being blown off my pedal bike when hit by a car.

My last fall was incredible. I volunteered to undergo as much pain as I could tolerate while they monitored my facial expression. This was a university study to help monitor nonverbal patients pain.

At the end of the session I went to sit at a table for a resume. I was at this time in pain because of my spinal issues. I pulled the chair up behind me, with hands on the table to stabilize my low back. In sitting down I touched the chair with my thighs. I felt secure, but the chair unannounced to me rolled backward.

I missed the chair and landed flat on my back on the floor. The poor girl that was doing the test panicked and rushed to help me up. **Bad**

**Idea.** The helping up part that is. Always assess the damage prior to helping someone up or in getting up yourself if you are the one to fall.

I did a quick check for concussion and all moving parts. In assessing the situation I thought, do I fake concussion and sue the U of R. If I did that I would miss lunch due to a trip to emergency. Lunch was more of a pressing issue, so I struggled to my feet and we had a laugh about it.

Morals of the story. First be careful of even the most unlikely situations, without being paranoid.

Now I am more careful with chairs on wheels.

Second, assess the damage first in any rescue mission.

People with a concussion may give what are in their mind humorous answers, so push for correct answers. Name, address, phone, present location etc.

Extremely important in fall prevention is physical fitness. Get fitter and you will have a safer, longer, happier life.

As an example of my commitment to fitness, the day before my low back surgery I performed my usual, but, due to my back issues abbreviated exercise routine. However, I did among other things over 100 crunches.

My home gym includes a cross country machine, a stair climber that I started back on 3 weeks post-surgery, an elliptical machine, a stationary bike and a rowing machine, and enough weights to bring an elephant to its knees. For weights I only use relatively light dumbbells and higher reps.

Not everyone will have access to all the equipment but brisk walking especially with hand weights or walking poles will kick up your walk. Walking poles are also a safety item. When you walk always carry your

cell phone but never take it out of your pocket unless it is a real emergency and never talk on it and walk at the same time.

The new suggestion for an optimum walking program is 8000 steps 3 times a week

The question of personal trainers comes up at times. They can be good or bad. An elite athlete is not necessarily good or bad. You can get to be certified as a personal trainer with as little as a high school grade 12 or the equivalent, and a 1 month on line course.

Personally, I would want someone with degree such as a Dr. of Chiropractic, degree in Kinesiology, Physio Therapy, or similar education.

Some good research indicates that lower exertion intensity over a longer period of time is likely the best form of exercise. Hiking, cross country skiing. Snowshoeing, or just plain walking may be the best exercise for most of us.

Next to fitness and diet, but also super important is observation, assessment and action.

Please be proactive and do these appropriate things now before you think you need them, and before you or someone close to you falls.

I have done a lot in our house but now I wish I had done more and at this time I am unable to do them myself.

Look at yourself in 5/10/even 15 or 20 years from now and prepare for those days now.

When you, or a loved one is lying on the ground do you want to have to say "I should have fixed that situation years ago."

**Let's take a short walk through our house.**

In the winter keep walks clean we use a lot of crusher dust for traction. It stays put is easy to clean up (just sweep onto lawn) and is environmentally friendly.

At night the sensor lights come on to guide you. Some are hard wired and some solar powered some are on timers.

We have a handrail for the 1 step up and along the side of the front patio.

The Our front door lock is pushbutton coded and door bells now allow you to see and talk to the person at the door without rushing and risking a fall to get to the door. You just use your phone, even while you are away you can answer the door. Ours is a RING make

I am sure some door locks can be activated with your cell phone but we have not yet got that. If interested you can check it out yourself.

Once inside we have a non-slide mat good lighting and a good seat for boot removal.

Turn right and you are into the kitchen

### **Kitchen**

Keep floor clean and dry. Clean up all spills drips etc. immediately.

Close all cupboard doors, dish washer doors, drawers etc. immediately after use even if you are going back in within a few seconds. Use the 5 second rule. Left open more than 5 seconds is bad.

If you use a step stool be sure it is top quality and has a front handle for stability.

People will use a chair to climb on. **Not a good idea**, but I know some of you do. So have the back of the chair facing toward what you are

attempting to reach. Attempt to mount the chair from the back, facing the cupboard.

No roller, swivel or reclining chairs! The seat on a straight chair may carry your weight when spread out as in under your butt, however your foot might damage the chair bottom or be **unstable** with all your weight concentrated on one spot. Have a spotter to pick up the pieces when you fall.

Chairs tend to tip due to the high step. Get a quality step stool if you do not have one.

Use a reacher to get things that are out of reach, when you can.

We have 1 kitchen light on a timer for safety and convenience.

There are far too many dangers in a kitchen to look at all of them now. Watch for danger and correct any problems you see in your kitchen.

Down the hall to the bathroom. You can install a railing in the hall if it is a long hall and would seem to be good for the future. Remember 10 years from now you might need it.

You might even want a wall rail in your bedroom if you have a longer wall there.

While we are talking about it lets look at hand rails. One of the best overall rail for inside, outside level or stairs is also inexpensive. The 2 inch round rail on metal brackets is great for most applications. Cut the ends square not diagonal or straight vertical. Code, I think requires returns on rails. Ours are not code but work for us

## **Bathroom**

Have at least two hand grab bars in the shower or tub, more might be better depending on use and the area.

Don't lock the bathroom door, if you go down you might have a trashed door before you are rescued.

Non slip mats in and out of the water area are obviously a must. Keep mats and the floor clean and dry to avoid slipping and to avoid mold from forming in the moisture. Rinse all soap from all surfaces you might step on.

Elderly may eventually need a bar to help lift themselves off the toilet. There is a floor to ceiling tub bar that will also swing around and be an assist over the toilet. It wedges in floor to ceiling, so is easily removed with no holes left. Many other options are available in stores.

Keep your cell phone with you while you are in the tub or shower.

## Phones

Your phone can be a lifesaver. Keep it on your body any time you are out of sight of all other people. No pockets-- simple solutions—a phone holster on a belt, or a pocket in an apron or tool belt. **Best bet is a fanny pack worn in front.** I have several sizes of packs that I use for various situations. If your phone is in a pocket and you fall on that side you might not be able to get it. Keep it in front, accessible to either hand.

A phone, even on a low table is of no value if you are on the floor with a broken hip. A phone on the toilet seat is of no value if you slip and fall and your head is at the other end of the tub.

In the tub put the phone in a waterproof bag and leave it on the floor in the middle outside of the tub with a string tied to a rubber duck inside the tub so you can retrieve your phone if necessary.

We rarely shower or tub when we are alone in the house.

## **Bedroom**

Do not leave piles of clothes or bedspreads where you might trip on them.

Keep night lights on overnight where you might walk.

Take your time moving around in the semi dark when you will not be as alert or mobile as you might be normally in the day time.

Be vigilant many falls occur at night. When getting up at night it is often a good idea to sit on the bed for a moment to get your bearings and get your body prepared to move.

A relative of a friend of ours was visiting another relative. When she got up at night to go the bathroom she went down the hall opened the basement door by mistake stepped in and fell to her death. Better lighting might have prevented that.

## **Ladders**

This could be an hour long talk by itself.

Always use the proper ladder for the job.

No overreaching.

We have 7 different ladders and scaffolds at our beach home alone. All are for different uses.

Our beach home is on 150 feet of lakefront on Echo Lake with about 25 steps vertically up to the road from the water. With the walkout home and other buildings we need and use every ladder.

For the base of the ladders I have hinged 2 pieces of ply together. The top piece has a rail around it to keep the ladder from slipping. I wedge



the entire base unit slightly toward the house and wedge between the 2 sheets of ply to level the ladder base. At times I use rebar stakes to prevent slippage of the base. It works well for me even though it is not likely code.

At the tops of the ladders I have an arrangement of interchangeable clamp on 2X4s to hold the ladder in use when centered on a pipe or pole. It feels safe and works well for me. Just keep your weight in the middle of the step.

New recommendation for ladder angle is to stand at bottom of ladder reach out and you should be able to grasp a rung. I always step on the first rung and give a little bounce to check stability.

If something about a ladder or other task does not fit in your comfort zone. Back off just do not take any risks. Go to plan B.

Ladder falls are really bad.

Use safety ropes and harnesses on ladders and roofs and other high places.

## **Miscellaneous**

Always use adequate lighting!!!!

Always wear slip proof foot wear!!

Kitchen lighting is critical for falls, burns, cuts, etc.

Use night lights between bed and bathroom and anywhere else you might go in the dark.

In hotels we leave the bathroom light on and leave the door just slightly open. That would work well at home as well.

Good lighting on stairs is critical.

Sensor lights are great in certain circumstances. Solar powered outdoor sensors are super.

Extension cords are a nightmare in and around the house. Be safe, run them where you will not step on them or trip on them.

Always keep a hand on a banister going up or down stairs. Slide your hand in front of you. Don't lift it off the railing.

If you have a large or heavy load to go downstairs you may be able to throw it down (laundry) or hump it down by going backward moving the load, and you alternately a step down at a time.

You can also use the same technique going up. This technique keeps you leaning forward over the steps with almost no chance of falling backward down stairs.

A stair climbing lift is also a great way to move you and, or a load up and down.

Avoid leaving tripping items on stairs. We have a small table at the bottom of the stairs for things coming up and a spot on the hinge side of the door for things going down. This reduces the likelihood of tripping on the stairs.

If in doubt of stairs safety, such as wet or slippery public stairs it may be much safer to go down backward holding the stair rail, in front of you with both hands on the rail at all times.

Snow clearing and keeping sidewalks and stairs clear, and clean and in good repair is a no brainer.

Spikes on canes, shoes, and walking poles are good in both ice and deep snow for traction and balance.

I use hiking boots with sheet metal screws around the soles and heel edges for walking on ice conditions.

Install digital door locks. If you fall and need help, give the rescuer the code (a one use code is best) so they do not have to break down the door to get in.

A fall detection device, either a pendant or a watch could be a great safety option.

A location button and or a location finder on a phone could be a valuable option.

Just think and practice and preach safety at all times. It will pay off.

## Show and tell

I will leave my show and tell items here until supper so you can come and see them if you wish and we will be here for supper and the evening to meet people. They are not free sample items! Leave them on the table.

**Phone:** The most important item on the list. In a plastic bag, in your pocket, on a string. Wherever, and however. Keep it charged and handy. A clip on holder often works well. **Fanny pack is super good.**

Have all-important numbers in your phone, things like fire, ambulance, M, D. police, etc.

Phone apps: should include a flashlight. A find me locator, compass, contacts including who you are your important people, weather, maps, Level, etc.

**Bump hat:** Hit your head and fall backward.

**Hard hat:** Same as above but better

**Canes:** Variety of types. May be an individual fashion item as well as functional. Make some yourself. If you or more important if **someone else** thinks you should use a cane do so.

**Spike boots, slip on boot spikes and cane spikes:** For slippery conditions

**Hit me jacket:** be visible at all times.

**Flashing light:** And flash light for walking at night

**Multi tool:** Just because. Handy in many situations.

**Dumb bells:** walking with weights. Handles for invisible skipping rope.

**Back pack:** Obviously for carrying things but just as important for keeping your hands free.

**Fanny pack:** same as back pack and for phone, wallet, keys etc. in front of you

**Whistle:** to attract attention.

**Reaching stick:** Many uses. We have 1 for picking up pine cones.

**Safety harness:** for work on ladders and roofs and high places.

**Tourniquet:** There may be multiple injuries in a fall.

**Blankets:** in winter a fall victim will need warming.

## **What else should be on the list?**

As a final note we have had 2 senior lady friends fall within the last 6 months.

One fell on ice beside her house. She has no phone but was able to holler to some people passing by and they came to her rescue. Had she fallen behind her house she would have frozen to death.

The other lady fell in the bath and fractured ribs and other injuries. Her husband was with her so he rescued her.

That is why I call this chat fall and rescue. Rescue may be more important than the fall. In a fall a person could have a compound complicated fracture of the lower leg. Rescue in the summer would be different then in the winter. In the winter keeping a victim warm and stopping the bleeding are of primary importance. As is bleeding in the summer. In the summer the results of the fall are most important, but in the winter rescue is likely more important.

Thank you for your attention.

When I go to a seminar if I get 1 good tip I feel it was worth it. If I get 2 or more it was a bonus I hope this chat was a bonus for you.