

A Matter of Balance

WHAT IS IT?

A Matter of Balance is a group-based, participatory class led by two trained lay leaders over 8 weekly or semi-weekly sessions. The initial sessions are educational and focus on developing coping strategies to overcome the fear of falling. Components include group discussion, problem-solving, skill-building, assertive training, exercise training for strength and balance, sharing practical solutions, and cognitive restructuring. **A Matter of Balance** aims to reframe falls and the fear of falling as controllable. Participants use a workbook and home safety evaluation action planner to change their environment and reduce risk factors. Thirty minutes of supervised exercise is introduced in the third session, and participants set realistic goals for increasing activity. The program includes a visit from a guest PT/OT/RN professional to discuss how to respond to a fall, demonstrate how to get up from a fall, and provide a Q&A session.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Designed for community-dwelling older adults (age 60+) who can problem-solve and have concerns about falls or have experienced prior falls. The program's effectiveness increases with age and fall risk. **A Matter of Balance** targets overcoming the fear of falling, breaking the "fear of falling cycle," and keeping people more active and engaged. It is an excellent introductory program for those not ready for longitudinal exercise programs.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

The original trial showed improvement in participants' confidence in their ability to manage and prevent falls, as well as improvements in exercise levels, mobility, and a reduction in social limitations due to concerns about falling. A large follow-up trial in 2009 confirmed these benefits among community-dwelling adults aged 70 and older.

HOW TO DISCUSS WITH PATIENTS

Older adults highly value their independence and may worry about the implications of being labeled as a fall risk. They may not openly discuss their fears or concerns about falling. It may be necessary for you to initiate the discussion. Highlight to your patient that the goal of this program is to keep them independent, active, and at home for as long as possible. Emphasize that the program is safe and enjoyable. Encouraging patients to bring a friend, family member or caregiver to attend to attend with them, so others can be involved addressing their needs, concerns, and motivations. Emphasize the practical benefits of training, increased confidence, reduction in falls, trips to the emergency department and reduced healthcare costs. Promote the program as a way to connect with others with similar concerns, share experiences, and build a support network. Highlight the opportunity for peer support and learning from others facing similar challenges. Explain how the skills and knowledge gained can directly benefit their daily routine and overall well-being.



What participants say:

- 97% feel comfortable increasing activity
- 99% plan to continue exercising
- 97% are more comfortable talking about fear of falling
- 98% would recommend **A MATTER OF BALANCE**



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