

Chatting with The Good Dr. Laura Shook
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Once upon a time in a land far away a much younger me, not yet Dr. Laura, trained in the martial art of Aikido. During the years I spent in the dojo (Training Hall or “Place of the Tao”) I learned, among other things, to feel my center of gravity, to stay balanced and to meet the ground gracefully when I fall. Yes, WHEN I fall, for you see I also learned that gravity is a powerful and unrelenting force. I know that if I drop my guard, trip or something knocks me off my “center”, down I will go.

A fall can skin your knee, jam your joints or break your bones. Even a slip-slide, catching yourself before actually hitting the ground can leave you strained, caddywumpus and worse for wear. For some people, a fall will result in flowery curses, the application of band-aids and a trip to the chiropractor. But for others, especially people over the age of 65 a fall can be a life-threatening hazard that could permanently alter mobility and independence. Fortunately within the human body there are systems in place to help us deal with the forces of gravity. YES, you know what I’m talking about, balance and muscle tone. Furthermore, regardless of your age, if you can stand-up then you can develop, improve and strengthen your sense of balance and muscle tone.

If this all seems familiar that is because it was this time last year that I last chatted with you about your balance. At that time I asked you to try standing on one foot for 30 seconds. For a bit of added stability place your hands on the back of a sturdy chair or on the kitchen counter. How did that go for you? Were you rock solid stable? Great, your next assignment is to stand while putting on your socks and shoes in the morning. IF on the other hand you felt wobbly and kept an iron grip on the back of that chair then perhaps it is time to take whatever steps are necessary to develop your balance and muscle tone.

I am very serious when I encourage you to develop and maintain the skills necessary to prevent falls. Please, never stop working on these life skills. Never hesitate to seek the guidance of a trusted health care provider or to explore the resources available at local gyms, community centers or library. My all time favorite book on the topic of preventing falls is “How to Prevent Falls a Comprehensive Guide to Better Balance” by Betty Perkins-Carpenter. Health Strategies, a local gym, is still offering their class “I Will Not Fall for You” and Grace Wu is still teaching Tai Chi over on North St. Francis.

You can do it. I can do it. My old daddy and momma can do it. Let us all do it and the world knows that Riverside, with all our eclectic diversity, is a well balanced place to live and work.

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