

Making a Difference

A Matter of Balance- Managing Concerns About Falls **Program Summary for Cottle/King Counties**

Relevance:

Research indicates up to half of community-dwelling older adults experience fear of falling and that many respond to this concern by curtailing activity. A majority of falls occur during routine activities and are usually caused by a variety of issues. In fact, a large portion of falls are preventable. Being inactive may result in loss of muscle strength and balance. It can also compromise social interaction and increase the risk for isolation, depression, and anxiety. Fear of falling can actually contribute to falling. *A Matter of Balance* acknowledges the risk of falling but emphasizes practical coping strategies to reduce this concern.

A Matter of Balance is an evidence-based fall risk reduction program that emphasizes practical strategies to reduce fear of falling and increase activity levels. Participants learn to view falls and fear of falling as controllable, set realistic goals to increase activity, change their environment to reduce fall risk factors and exercise to increase strength and balance.

Because *A Matter of Balance* is certified by the Administration on Aging and the National Council on the Aging, there is an abundance of data from national studies to indicate the program's effectiveness.

Nationally, after completing *A Matter of Balance*:

- 97% of participants are more comfortable talking about fear of falling
- 97% feel comfortable increasing activity
- 99% plan to continue exercising
- 98% would recommend A Matter of Balance

Response:

After meeting with the Family and Consumer Science Committees in both Cottle and King Counties, it was decided to hold *A Matter of Balance* classes in both Cottle and King Counties. The classes were held in August in Cottle County and November in King County.

Results: Participants were evaluated using a pre-test and post-test. 5 participants completed both pre and post tests.

As a result of participating in *A Matter of Balance* in **Cottle County**, participants increased confidence that they can manage falls risk better and actual falls if they occur and that they can take action to help reduce the risk of falling. In addition, participants indicated that their concerns about falling are interfering less with their social activity and they report that they have increased their exercise levels.

Statement	Response (N = 5)		Percent Change
	Pre-Series	Post-Series	
	Scale: Very Sure (4), Sure (3), Somewhat Sure (2), Not at All Sure (1)		
I can find a way to get up if I fall.	3.00	3.50	17%
I can find a way to reduce falls.	3.33	3.67	11%

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I can protect myself if I fall.	3.00	2.67	(11%)
I can increase my physical strength.	3.33	4.00	21%
I can become more steady on my feet.	3.67	4.00	9%
	Scale: Extremely (5), Quite a Bit (4), Moderately (3), Slightly (2), Not at All (1)		
During the last four weeks, to what extent has your concern about falling interfered with your normal social activities with family, friends, neighbors or groups?	1.75	1.50	(15%)
	Scale: Moderate, 3 or more times per week (6), Moderate, less than 3 times per week (5), Infrequent for over a month (4), Trying to start (3), Do not but thinking of starting (2), Do not and do not intend to start (1)		
How much are you walking or exercising now?	4.60	5.60	22%

Regarding the overall series

Statement	Response			
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The leaders were well prepared.	80%	20%	0%	0%
The classes were well organized.	80%	20%	0%	0%
The participant workbook helped me better understand the classes.	80%	20%	0%	0%
As a result of this class, I feel more comfortable talking with others about my fear of falling.	80%	20%	0%	0%
As a result of this class, I have made changes to my environment.	25%	75%	0%	0%
As a result of this class, I feel more comfortable increasing my activity.	60%	40%	0%	0%
As a result of this class, I plan to continue exercising.	100%	0%	0%	0%
I would recommend this class to a friend or relative.	100%	0%	10%	0%

What other changes have you made as a result of this class?

- My attitude toward exercise has improved as far as its importance.
- Exercise more faithfully.
- Exercised more.
- Keeping areas better lit and watching for pets when I walk.
- Checked throw rugs. Made them secure or removed them. Try to care only one arm load of groceries at a time so I can hold on to handrail.

Other comments or suggestions?

- Keep exercising.
- Every older person would benefit using this program.

Acknowledgements: Texas AgriLife Extension would like to acknowledge the Paducah Housing Authority and King County for use of facilities for Extension events.

Future Programming: Programming in this area will continue as needed.