

Making a Difference

Parker County

Older Adult Wellness In-depth Summary

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.

Response

Under the direction and guidance of the Family and Consumer Sciences Committee a fall prevention program was planned and implemented. *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. There were three sessions conducted and taught by County Extension Agents Kathy Smith and Kayla Neill. Two volunteers assisted with the series.

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

Results

As a result of participating in *A Matter of Balance* in **Parker 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=28) | | 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. | 2.37 | 2.63 | 11% |
| I can find a way to reduce falls. | 2.71 | 2.94 | 9% |
| I can protect myself if I fall. | 2.00 | 2.50 | 25% |
| I can increase my physical strength. | 2.76 | 3.24 | 18% |
| I can become more steady on my feet. | 2.59 | 2.88 | 12% |
| | 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? | 2.19 | 2.00 | (9%) |
| | 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 your walking or exercising now? | 4.12 | 4.82 | 17% |

Regarding the overall series

- 93% feel more comfortable talking with others about their fear of falling.
- 82% felt more comfortable about increasing their activity.
- 86% would recommend the class to a friend.
- 64 % will continue to exercise

Futures Programming

Fear of falling by older adults will continue and there will continue to be a need for a fall prevention program in Parker County. *A Matter of Balance* will again be offered in 2016

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