

Managing Concerns About Falls

Objective

To your fear of experiencing a fall.

What to Know

When you believe something terrible can (and probably will) happen to you if you are not careful, you fear taking risks. You might feel helpless, believing you cannot protect yourself from falling. Limitations and worries about depending on others might also enter your thoughts.

Concerns about falling can enter your life slowly and gradually and get stronger as time goes on. Perhaps you have already had a bad and unexpected fall, or you know someone who has. As this fear grows, it begins to direct your thinking and choices and you may begin to restrict your life. You might stop visiting friends, taking walks, or doing things that bring you pleasure. It can even affect basic activities like cleaning your home or taking showers. Fear of falling can lead to increased isolation and anxiety or depression. You might become so inactive that your muscles and bones become weak – increasing your risk of falling.

To manage your concerns about falling, the first step is to recognize them and the effects they have on you. This worksheet will help you assess your attitudes about falls and reduce the likelihood of experiencing a fall.

What to Do

First, complete the following assessment. Read each statement and check whether you agree or disagree.

Statement	Agree	Disagree
1. Falling is inevitable and a natural part of growing old.		
2. Most falls can't be prevented.		
3. If I report a fall to my doctor, it could lead to a restriction of my independence.		
4. If I report a fall to my doctor, they might think I can't take care of myself.		

Statement	Agree	Disagree
5. If I report a fall to a relative, they might think I can't take care of myself.		
6. My doctor is a very busy person and shouldn't be bothered with my concerns about falls.		
7. I'm afraid that a bad fall will lead to my death.		
8. I'm generally nervous when I walk.		
9. Falling is humiliating.		
10. Even when it's not wet or slippery outside, I avoid leaving my home to avoid a possible fall.		
11. I constantly think about the fact that I could fall and hurt myself at any time.		
12. There are things I'd like to do but don't do because I'm afraid that I might fall.		
13. I'd rather stay home than risk a fall.		
14. I will become disabled if I fall.		
15. I've already experienced a bad fall, and I can't let that happen again.		

If you answered "agree" to two or more statements, you might have a fear of falling that is negatively impacting your life. Being concerned about falling can lead to a safer lifestyle. However, if your fear of falling is keeping you from doing the things you like to do, it might be causing stress – and you might want to discuss your fears with your healthcare provider.

For each statement to which you answered “agree,” write a positive sentence that shows you have some control.

Example: *I am generally nervous when I walk.*

Rewrite: I am confident when I walk because I’ve taken steps to prevent a fall, such as exercising and wearing sensible shoes.

Statement # _____

Rewrite: _____

Statement # _____

Rewrite: _____

Statement # _____

Rewrite: _____

If you require more space, use another piece of paper to continue rewriting the statements.

To appropriately manage your concerns, the first step is to recognize them and the effects they have on your thoughts, feelings, and actions. How does your fear of falling affect your daily life?

Are your fears of falling realistic? Why or why not?

Does your fear of falling prevent you from taking constructive action or making changes that will decrease the chance of falling? Explain.

Fears are like warning signals that protect you from danger. Sometimes they flash red, telling you to STOP! But sometimes the signal should be yellow, telling you to proceed with caution.

With some practice you can turn a red light into a yellow one, or even into a green signal (GO!), by talking back to your fears.

Example

Worry about falling: *My balance is so bad I can't do things on my own.*

Feelings: *anxiety, sadness, insecure about being left alone*

Behavior: *restricted activity, demanding of family*

In the following chart, write down some worries you have about falling, and how these worries make you feel and behave.

Worries	Feelings	Behaviors

Your fears can get in the way of staying active and of doing what you can to prevent falls and cope if they do occur. One way of challenging your concerns is to replace them with more constructive, confidence-building thoughts. Read the following example.

Norman was invited to his neighbor's home for dinner. He must climb steps to get into their house. Norman immediately thought, "I can't go. I'll never make it up those steps without losing my balance. I could fall and break my hip!"

Norman asked himself the following questions.

- How likely is it that I will fall?
- How dangerous is this situation?

Norman turned his thinking around: "I'm nervous about those steps, but I've never fallen down steps before and I've climbed a lot of them in my life. It's possible I can do it. I'd like to see my neighbors. I get bored with being cooped-up all the time. I'd feel good about

Did this activity help you reduce your fear of falling? Why or why not?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this activity?
