



**A MATTER OF  
BALANCE**  
MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS



## **Program Synopsis**

A Matter of Balance acknowledges the risk of falling but emphasizes practical coping strategies to reduce this fear. These include:

- Promoting a view of falls and fear of falling as controllable
- Setting realistic goals for increasing activity
- Changing the environment to reduce fall risk factors
- Promoting exercise to increase strength and balance

The workshop is conducted over eight sessions, meeting weekly or twice weekly for two hours per session. Meetings are led by volunteer lay leaders. A Master Trainer is responsible for teaching the Matter of Balance curriculum to the coaches and providing them with guidance and support as they lead the Matter of Balance classes.

**Program goal:** The program's goal is to reduce fear of falling, stop the fear of falling cycle, and increase activity levels among community-dwelling older adults.

## **Reasoning behind the program design and elements:**

- Studies indicate that up to half of community dwelling older adults experience fear of falling (Howland & Peterson, submitted for publication), and that many respond to this concern by curtailing activity (Tinetti & Speechley, 1989).
- A majority of falls occur during routine activities.
- Falls usually are not caused by just one issue.
- A large portion of falls are preventable.
- Being inactive results 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.
- MOB acknowledges the risk of falling but emphasizes practical coping strategies to reduce this concern. Participants learn to view falls and fear of falling as controllable and set realistic goals for increasing activity.
- Participants also find ways to change the environment to reduce fall risk factors and learn simple exercises to increase strength and balance.
- The group format provides an opportunity for people with a common problem to learn from each other and to help each other deal with the shared problem of fear of falling.

### **Target population**

- 60 or older, ambulatory, able to problem-solve
- Concerned about falls
- Interested in improving flexibility, balance, and strength

### **Essential program components and activities**

- Group discussion
- Problem-solving
- Skill building
- Assertiveness training
- Exercise training
- Sharing practical solutions
- Cognitive restructuring—learning to shift from negative to positive thinking patterns or thinking about something in a different way

### **Length/Timeframe of program**

- Eight two-hour classes

### **Recommended class size**

- 10–12 participants (minimum of 8, maximum of 14)

Participants have found significant improvement regarding their level of falls management, falls control, level of exercise, and social limitations with regard to concern about falling.