

WHEENK! HEALTH

PLAY MORE

THEY SAY THAT THE WORK OF KIDS IS PLAY AND I BELIEVE THAT THE WORLD NEEDS TO TAKE A LOOK AT KIDS AND WHAT THEY DO. WHEN KIDS ARE YOUNG, THEY'RE FREE TO PLAY AND EXPLORE AND IMAGINE AND TAKE IN ALL KINDS OF SENSORY EXPERIENCES. WHEN LEARNING BECOMES MORE FORMALIZED, SOMETIMES THE FUN AND DISCOVERY ASPECTS CAN GET SQUEEZED OUT. LEARNING IS MORE EFFECTIVE IF ITS FUN. THIS IS TRUE NOT ONLY FOR MENTAL LEARNING AND PROCESSING, BUT ALSO FOR MOTOR LEARNING.

AS CHILDREN WE CLIMB ON PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT, JUMP OVER THE LINES ON SIDEWALKS, WALK ON CURBS AND WALLS, JUMP ROPE, HULA-HOOP, SKIP, HOP, AND GET UP AND OFF THE FLOOR ALL DAY LONG. SOMETIME BETWEEN THE AGES OF 10 AND 90 WE SLOWLY FALL INTO THE PATTERN OF SKIPPING LESS AND WALKING POISED MORE, CLIMBING LESS AND TALKING MORE, SITTING ON THE FLOOR LESS AND FINDING A CHAIR MORE. IF WE WOULD CONTINUE TO DO THE THINGS THAT YOUNG CHILDREN DO THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES WE WOULD MAINTAIN A HEALTHIER STRONGER BODY THROUGHOUT OUR ADULT LIVES.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST EFFECTS OF AGING THAT I SEE AS A PHYSICAL THERAPIST IS IMPAIRED BALANCE, WHICH PREDISPOSES US TO FALLS. BALANCE IS SOMETHING THAT AS CHILDREN WE NEVER CONSCIOUSLY THOUGHT ABOUT. WE START OUT LIFE A LITTLE UNSTEADY ON OUR FEET, BUT BACK THEN WE WERE NOT TOO FAR OFF THE GROUND SO OUR FALLS DIDN'T RESULT IN INJURY. ONCE WE GET MORE THAN 4 FEET ABOVE THE GROUND FALLS CAN BECOME MUCH MORE SERIOUS. 1 IN 4 PEOPLE OVER THE AGE OF 65 (WHO LIVE AT HOME) WILL FALL DURING THE NEXT YEAR. ONE OF THE BIGGEST THINGS WE CAN DO TO PREVENT THIS IS MAINTAIN GOOD BALANCE THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES.

BALANCE IS SOMETHING THAT WE MAINTAIN AND GAIN AS LONG AS WE CHALLENGE IT. WALKING ALONG LINES AND CURBS, STANDING ON ONE LEG, TIPTOEING, WALKING ON UNEVEN SURFACES ARE ALL WAYS THAT WE CAN CHALLENGE OUR BALANCE. MUCH OF THE DETERIORATION IN BALANCE ASSOCIATED WITH AGE IS SIMPLY DUE TO NOT USING THIS SKILL. THIS USUALLY HAPPENS BECAUSE OF OUR SLOW CHANGE IN LIFESTYLE. MOST OF US GROW MORE SEDENTARY AS WE GROW OLDER. THEREFORE, I CHALLENGE YOU TO GET ON THE FLOOR DAILY, STAND ON ONE LEG TO PUT YOUR SHOES ON, WALK THE LINES ON THE SIDEWALKS, GET TO THE PARK AND CLIMB UP THE LADDER TO THE SLIDE, WALK ON THE BEACH, JUST KEEP DOING THINGS THAT CHALLENGE YOU AND MOST IMPORTANTLY HAVE FUN DOING IT!



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