

**A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns About Falls
Volunteer Lay Leader Model
Most Frequently Asked Questions**

A Matter of Balance Volunteer Lay Leader Model

What is A Matter of Balance?

A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns About Falls is a program designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase the activity levels of older adults who have this concern. It is based upon research conducted by the Roybal Center for Enhancement of Late-Life Function at Boston University.

What is the volunteer lay leader model?

In October 2003, the Administration on Aging awarded three-year evidence-based disease prevention grants. Southern Maine Agency on Aging, MaineHealth's Partnership for Healthy Aging, Maine Medical Center Division of Geriatrics, and the University of Southern Maine School of Social Work received funding to translate A Matter of Balance into a program that uses volunteer lay leaders as facilitators instead of health care professionals and to serve as an innovative national model for addressing fall prevention.

The Volunteer Lay Leader Model utilizes trained volunteers, called coaches, to conduct the class which consists of eight two-hour sessions for groups of 10 to 12 participants. Because A Matter of Balance/Volunteer Lay Leader Model reduces the cost of the intervention, the program can be offered more frequently and in a wider variety of settings, thereby reaching a significantly higher number of older adults.

A Matter of Balance Volunteer Lay Leader Model is a copyrighted program. Organizations can be licensed as Master Trainer Sites to train coaches and implement the program.

Where can I purchase the materials?

You must become certified as a Master Trainer in order to receive the materials. The materials are provided upon completion of the Master Trainer session.

A Matter of Balance Class

What are the components of A Matter of Balance?

A Matter of Balance is a structured group intervention, which utilizes a variety of activities to address physical, social, and cognitive factors affecting fear of falling and to learn fall prevention strategies. The activities include group discussion, problem-solving, skill building, assertiveness training, videotapes, sharing practical solutions and exercise training.

During the class, participants learn to:

- view falls and fear of falling as controllable (involves changing behavior with a focus on building falls self-efficacy, i.e. the belief that one can engage in an activity without falling)

- set realistic goals for increasing activity (by instilling adaptive beliefs such as greater perceived control, greater confidence in one's abilities, and more realistic assessment of failures)
- change their environment to reduce fall risk factors (uses a home safety evaluation and action planner to reduce fall risk hazards in the home and community.)
- promote exercise to increase strength and balance

Each of the eight sessions is two hours in length including a break for light refreshments. Early sessions focus on changing attitudes and self-efficacy before attempting changes in actual behavior. The exercise component, which begins in the third session, takes about 30 minutes of the session to complete.

Who should attend A Matter of Balance?

The program was designed to benefit community-dwelling older adults who:

- are concerned about falls
- have sustained a fall in the past
- restrict activities because of concerns about falling
- are interested in improving flexibility, balance and strength
- are age 60 or older, ambulatory and able to problem-solve

What is the recommended class size?

A Matter of Balance is a structured group intervention, which utilizes a variety of activities such as group discussion, problem-solving, skill building, assertiveness training, and sharing practical solutions. The ideal class size to facilitate discussion is 10- 12 participants (minimum of 8, maximum of 14).

What space and equipment is needed to host A Matter of Balance?

The classroom should be ADA accessible and have enough space for each participant to exercise and move around comfortably. The room should have chairs and tables, preferably set up in a U-shape and a space to set up snacks. The materials needed include name tags, attendance sheet, pencils, markers, tape, flip chart and stand, TV with DVD/VCR, participant workbooks and healthy snacks for each session.

A Matter of Balance Master Trainers

What is a Master Trainer?

A Master Trainer is responsible for teaching the A Matter of Balance curriculum to coaches and providing them with guidance and support as they lead the Matter of Balance classes. To implement A Matter of Balance, organizations identify key staff to attend a Master Trainer Session. It is recommended that two staff members be trained to assume responsibility for the program.

What are the requirements to become a Master Trainer?

Leadership requirements:

- Experience and interest in working with older adults
- Knowledge about the special needs of older adults
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Experience with group process and facilitation
- Comfortable teaching, leading group discussion and role play
- Willingness to learn about and support the principles and protocols of evidence-based programs
- Enthusiastic about being a member of a team
- Dependable
- Able to use audiovisual equipment (TV/VCR)
- Able to perform range of motion and low-level endurance exercises and to demonstrate A Matter of Balance exercises
- Able to carry up to 20 lbs
- Life experience valued with an education or health care background a plus

How do you become a Master Trainer?

- Attend a two day Master Trainer session offered by MaineHealth's Partnership for Healthy Aging (PfHA) and earn A Matter of Balance Master Trainer Certification. All materials necessary to implement A Matter of Balance are provided at the training. They include a Master Trainer Manual with numerous tools for program implementation, Coach Handbook, Participant Workbook and Guest Therapist Handbook. All materials are available on a CD-ROM. The program videos, *Fear of Falling and Exercise is Never Too Late*, are provided on DVD.
- PfHA staff are available to conduct the Master Trainer Session at other locations, as requested.

What are the Master Trainer's responsibilities?

- Teach A Matter of Balance curriculum to the coaches according to the directions, training and materials provided
- Assess each coach's understanding, ability and comfort with leading A Matter of Balance classes
- Be available to answer questions and provide support for coaches
- Observe and evaluate the volunteer coaches using the Coach Observation tool and process
- Encourage and collect feedback from coaches using the Coach Feedback form
- Pair experienced coaches with new coaches whenever possible
- Recruit and train coaches, schedule classes and recruit participants (depending upon organizational structure)
- Participate in quarterly conference calls with other Master Trainer Sites
- Measures outcomes and report quarterly

What is the recommended class size for a coach training?

The training is most effective with from 6 to 12 coaches.

A Matter of Balance Coaches

Who leads A Matter of Balance classes?

A Matter of Balance is led by volunteer coaches who complete an eight -hour training. Coaches teach the class in pairs.

What are the requirements to become A Matter of Balance Coach?

Leadership requirements:

- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Enthusiasm
- Dependability
- Willingness to lead a small group
- Interest in working with older adults
- Life experiences valued - with education or health care experience a plus
- Ability to perform range of motion and low-level endurance exercises
- Ability to carry up to 20 lbs

How do you become a coach?

- Attend eight hours of coach training taught by the Master Trainer(s) and earn A Matter of Balance Coach Certification
- Attend 2.5 hours of coach training update annually
- Agree to coach two Matter of Balance classes within one year of certification.

The Guest Therapist

What is the role of the Guest Therapist?

A healthcare professional (such as a physical therapist, occupational therapist, or registered nurse) is invited to attend a session to provide information and answer questions about reducing fall risks.. They review such things as how to get up and down from the floor safely; how to get out of bed or up from a chair more easily; and, how to go up and down stairs. They also discuss the use of assistive devices and home and community safety.

Measuring Outcomes

What are the class outcomes for A Matter of Balance Volunteer Lay Leader Model?

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 MOB

* Participant Class Evaluation- % agree to strongly agree

Preliminary findings of the participant outcome evaluation indicate that there were significant improvements for participants regarding their level of falls management, that is the degree of confidence participants perceive concerning their ability to manage the risk of falls and of actual falls; falls control, that is the degree to which participants perceive their ability to prevent falls; level of exercise; and social limitations with regard to concern about falling. These measures indicate that the program has been successful to date in reducing the fear of falling by increasing participants' 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. (Healy, McMahon, Haynes, ASA/NCOA presentation, *Sustainability through Collaboration: An AoA Evidence-Based Prevention Program for the Elderly*, March, 2006.)

What tools are used to measure outcomes?

- Initial survey (given during the first class) with questions regarding falls management, social activity, exercise levels, and background information.
- Last class survey; repeat of questions regarding falls management, social activity and exercise levels.
- Last class evaluation with questions concerning comfort in talking about fear of falling, changes made to environment, comfort in increasing activity levels, plans to increase activity levels, and background information.

What have been the benefits for volunteer coaches?

Coaches have reported feeling better to a lot better in the following areas as a result of their involvement with A Matter of Balance:

- Sense of accomplishment
- Purpose in life
- Can make a positive difference in another person's life
- Feelings about your health
- Confidence in managing falls themselves

(Healy, Haynes, ASA/NCOA presentation, *A Matter of Balance: Volunteer Lay Leader Model: Key Elements in the Translation of a Professionally Lead Program*, March, 2006.)

How is fidelity to the program maintained?

To maintain fidelity to the original program the following strategies are used:

- Master Trainer Certification is required for an organization to implement the program
- Two day coach training based on original A Matter of Balance curriculum (fidelity stressed)
- Master trainers observe volunteer coaches during the two day training and at A Matter of Balance class
- Coaching skills observation and coach feedback process and forms have been developed
- Collaboration with healthcare professionals to visit the A Matter of Balance class using the Guest Therapist Handbook as a resource.

Costs

What are the costs to implement A Matter of Balance?

- Master Trainer Session – 2-day training with breakfast and lunch provided and all materials (Master Trainer Manual with CD-ROM, *Fear of Falling and Exercise: It's Never too Late* DVD).
Cost: \$1500 (\$750 for additional staff); recommend 2 staff attend if possible.
Fee for on location training will be based on the number of staff trained and travel expenses.
- Coach training- 8 hours (usually 2 four- hour sessions) conducted by the Master Trainer(s);
Costs: coach handbook (\$20), staff time & light refreshments, room & AV.
- A Matter of Balance Class- Participant workbooks(\$13), refreshment for classes (\$5/person for eight sessions), room & AV, Guest Therapist Handbook (\$5)
- Reproduction costs of manuals (approximate) and additional videos
 - Coach Handbook- \$20
 - Participant Workbook- \$13
 - Guest Therapist Handbook- \$5
 - DVD set (*Fear of Falling & Exercise: It's Never too Late*) - \$75
 - VHS – *Fear of Falling* \$169 & *Exercise: It's Never too Late* - \$119

Program Recognition

Since 2002, PfHA and its partners have earned the following national recognition for their work with A Matter of Balance:

- 1) Healthy Aging: A Good Investment, Exemplary Programs for Senior Centers and Other Facilities, National Council on the Aging, Fall, 2002;
- 2) The Aging States Project: Promoting Opportunities for Collaboration Between the Public Health and Aging Services Networks, January 2003;
- 3) National Governors' Association, May 2003;
- 4) Journal of Physical Activity and Aging, October, 2004, guest editorial by the Assistant Secretary U.S. Administration on Aging;
- 5) Partnering for Healthy Aging, November, 2004, National Council on the Aging;
- 6) Healthcare and Aging Network Award for Quality and Innovation, American Society on Aging, 2006.
- 7) Aging Innovations and Achievements Award, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, 2006.

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