



Balance Redefined
move more ~ live well

Maximizing Balance Training For Your Residents



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National Institute for Fitness and Sport



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There is a better-than-average chance that even your independent living residents will experience a fall in the next year.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tells us that each year, one in every three adults age 65 and older will experience a fall. Some studies report that between 25%-30% of community-dwelling elders reported a fall within the past year with Medicare costs per fall ranging from \$14,306 and \$21,270 (in 2013 dollars).

Most communities are addressing balance with a class or two on the group fitness calendar and with access to physical therapy when a resident reports an issue. Our experience tells us that there is much more than can be done, with good success, to help residents reclaim their balance and decrease overall fall risk in your community. When your community brand promises vibrant living coupled with safety and security, putting increased emphasis on balance training is a natural fit.

Balance Redefined is our brand for the comprehensive fall prevention and lifestyle programming we bring to communities where we provide staffing. Over the last several years, we’ve evolved our core assessment and balance training offerings into the robust and inclusive research-based services we provide today. NIFS approaches to balance training are outlined throughout this whitepaper to help you see what’s possible for your community.

Group Fitness, Exercise Prescription, and Fitness Assessments

Certainly, group fitness classes are a staple in any balance program offerings at a community. However, with all the emphasis we see on balance in this industry, there are still plenty of communities without dedicated balance classes on their schedule. In many cases, balance is an element of a traditional strength or stretch class. But elevating your organization’s emphasis on balance to include balance-only formats on your calendar sends a strong message to prospects and residents about your commitment to their physical wellbeing.

Creating opportunities within your fitness program is another area to consider. Our staff offer a menu of services to residents including a fitness evaluation and exercise prescriptions. Both of those 1:1 interactions with residents give our exercise specialists an opportunity to evaluate a participant’s balance and prescribe exercise, on land and/or in the pool, to help them improve their balance. We then re-assess their balance over time and adjust the exercise program according to resident’s needs and goals.

The assessment also provides an avenue for our staff to interact with therapy on campus to make referrals based on assessment scores. When participants score at a certain low level on the scientifically validated protocols we use, our staff help the resident understand the score and then facilitate a connection with a physical therapist to initiate therapy focused on improving balance. Once the therapist and the resident have progressed through the



course of treatment, the therapist hands that resident back to our fitness manager to revisit an appropriate exercise program that can be used to maintain the improved balance earned in therapy.

The Balance Challenge

When we started placing a greater emphasis on balance training in 2011, it began with our original “Balance Challenge”. It was an eight-week program that contained the core components of physical activity, interactive learning, and socialization where the participants were continuously challenged by ever-changing activities within the initiative. Our staff incorporated their traditional balance group fitness classes along with individual balance exercise prescriptions, balance mazes, and, where available, we used the Biodex Balance System to assist with pre- and post-testing.

We had some positive outcomes from that early programming:

- 67% of the residents who registered for the Balance Challenge participated in the various offerings each week and completed the program in its entirety.
- 80% of the residents who completed the program improved their Fall Risk, Postural Stability, and Limits of Stability test scores on the Biodex as compared to their pre-test.

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We also received encouraging anecdotal support from participants:

“I wanted you to know how much your eight-week balance challenge and the Biodex Balance System have improved my daily activities. I no longer support myself when I put on my shoes with the aid of a long-handled shoehorn or when I tip my head back to put drops in my eyes. After the eight weeks, I find it much easier to stand up and sit down in a chair. By attending your balance challenge, I am stronger and much more physically fit. I have gained significant endurance and feel more alert. I no longer find myself taking afternoon naps.”

—Bob Byrnes

“Balance is critical and yet it never occurred to me that I was gradually losing my strength, and consequently my balance was also on the decline. I discovered that only after the Biodex Balance testing results were presented to me. I participated in the eight-week balance challenge and my strength and balance improved a significant and remarkable degree. I believe anyone who has the opportunity participate in the balance challenge should consider themselves lucky.”

—J.B.

“Participants receive a score card they can use to complete the challenge through the month that includes the activities for the challenge on one side and a brief description of each activity on the other.”

We keep traditional favorites on the schedule for this program as well including the standard balance classes, Balance Challenge Circuit, and Balance Stations. Participants receive a score card they can use to complete the challenge through the month that includes the activities for the challenge on one side and a brief description of each activity on the other.

Name: _____

Participants must complete 15 of the 18 stars below. Residents can pick and choose which activities they complete, however the Senior Fitness Evaluation & Balance Survey are required for all participants.

Balance Challenge Activity	Times to Complete	Schedule
Attend the Balance Fair	☆	See the monthly activity calendar
*Senior Fitness Evaluation	★	Schedule an appt with the staff
Weekly Balance Stations	☆☆☆☆	Complete in the fitness center
Attend Any Group Exercise Class	☆☆☆☆☆	See the monthly activity calendar
Fall Prevention Presentation	☆	00/11/2013 at 0:00pm in the (location)
Balance Circuit Day	☆☆	Every Friday at 0:00pm in the (location)
Wii or Biodex Balance System Training	☆☆	Every Friday at 0:00pm in the (location)
Home Safety Checklist	☆	Pick up in the fitness center
*Complete Balance Survey	★	See the fitness staff

Almost all of the individual elements of the NIFS Balance Challenge are existing offerings that the residents can participate in on a regular basis through the fitness center in their community. Our focus on these services in March each year helps our staff emphasize the importance of balance training and it creates a space to initiate conversations with residents about how they can take charge of maintaining or improving their own balance while living at the community.

Part of our focus on continuous improvement is centered on measuring outcomes, and NIFS Balance Challenge is no exception when it comes to gathering and evaluating data. In our most recent offering of this program, 30% of participants reported a decreased fear of falling, and 11% report an improvement in their self-assessment of their balance. Now that's a story that your sales counselors can relate back to a prospect who has expressed concern about being safe and steady at home!

Continued Innovation

With that success, we knew that we were onto something so we began looking at ways to bring additional emphasis on balance training for our clients and Balance Redefined was born. We still continue our annual Balance Challenge as an opportunity to highlight programs and services that are available to residents all year long and additional creative offerings have been developed as well to keep Balance Redefined fresh and engaging.

- We've created a balance fair and it's proven to be quite a hit across our diverse client sites. At this collaborative event, residents can interact with representatives from a home health agency to do tune-up clinics on assistive devices, pharmacists to discuss potential side effects of medications, and a dietitian to discuss balanced eating and proper hydration. It's a great twist on the traditional health fair
- We work with the onsite therapy group to host an educational lecture on fall prevention including the proper way(s) to get up after a fall. Residents are empowered following this lecture to take a home safety checklist back to their household to evaluate areas of risk in their daily environment.
- We also partner with therapy for assistance with Fullerton Advanced Balance testing.
- We encourage our staff to take a creative twist on balance for additional program options. At one community, the NIFS manager engaged dining services for an educational program on balanced nutrition and eating from a balanced plate.
- We started adding levels of balance classes to encourage new participants with a relatively easy place to start, and to further challenge residents who were veterans of our classes. Now our staff have an easy way to introduce balance training to residents who have never done this kind of training before. That low threshold entry point is critical to being able to retain participants in exercise programming. The residents also benefit from the opportunity to progress into a more challenging class if/when they're ready and the staff happily have a place they can nudge regulars who they know would benefit from something more complex.

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- We began exploring opportunities to bridge Balance Redefined offerings into assisted living. With some thoughtful adaptations like those listed below, we found this program was very well received by those who participated.
 - The Activities Coordinator for assisted living was folded into the planning, preparation, and program execution. Through some train-the-trainer initiatives, the activities team was able to host Wii programming and the Balance Circuit.
 - Residents complete their own version of a Balance Challenge annually as well. The scorecards were adapted according to the specific group of residents in assisted living. Discussions with the activities team helped determine what existing elements of the Balance Challenge were a good fit. For example, the Fall Prevention lecture became part of the activities schedule in assisted living and staff supported getting residents to that program.
 - Other elements of Balance Redefined services were modified to fit the ability levels of the residents in assisted living. The fitness evaluations were scaled back, where necessary, to include only the assessments that are performed from a seated position.
 - Gentle Yoga and Balance Classes have also become staple programs on the weekly calendar with dedicated offerings in assisted living.

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Remember the Big Picture

Comprehensive balance programming is a must have in any senior living community, but how you develop and evolve those programs and services can and should be tailored to the needs of your residents. What NIFS provides through the Balance Challenge has been successful for us, but each year we adjust the program to be responsive to feedback from previous offerings.

Include education/awareness opportunities along with assessments, and physical challenges for participants. Keep programming fun by making a play on the word “balance” to pull in a different aspect (like a balanced plate) for them to consider. Fold in diverse staff across the community. Invite feedback, and keep track of and share your participation rates and outcomes.

***For more information on NIFS programs please contact:
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