

# Leader TOOLS

Keeping participants focused  
on positive lifestyle choices

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2017



## Finding Balance

The word “balance” brings to mind a variety of things: balancing your checkbook or a child on your knee; finding balance between work and family, or exercise and rest; eating a balanced diet; or keeping your balance on a slippery or uneven surface.

There are many ways that we need to find, and maintain balance, within our lives. For those who find it difficult to find a healthy balance between work and the rest of your life, WebMD shares five key tips:

1. **Include downtime into your schedule.**
2. **Eliminate activities that sap your time or energy.**
3. **Rethink your chores and errands.**
4. **Get moving. (An easy one to achieve with an AFAP & AFEP class!)**
5. **A little relaxation goes a long way.**

We also need balance – as in the ability to evenly distribute your body weight to remain upright and steady – to perform most everything we do in life from getting dressed to walking down the stairs, picking a flower in the garden to turning to greet someone on the street. Balance is also crucial for preventing falls, and fall-related injuries.

**READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE!**

**Five Tips for Better Work-Life Balance**



### KEY INSTRUCTIONAL ELEMENTS

Each aspect of the AFAP/AFEP class structure has a purpose, and all aspects are interrelated in the goal of helping participants enjoy a more active lifestyle. Key instructional elements of class allow you to provide your class participants with education, awareness, and application of knowledge. Since balance is affected by many factors including our vision, vestibular (relating to the inner ear) function, body alignment, body awareness, and breathing, the following three key instructional elements can make a big impact on class outcomes.

- **Posture & Body Mechanics** focus on finding, and utilizing, the optimal position of the body segments to move and function efficiently. Posture is the position of the body in space and the body's parts in relation to each other. Body mechanics is the way the body moves and maintains balance with the least amount of stress.
- **Body Awareness** is recognizing and acknowledging the way the body moves, and being perceptive to inappropriate movements or tension that may cause pain.
- **Breath Awareness** includes exercises for breathing and chest expansion to improve lung function and increase flexibility of the rib cage. In addition, breathing exercises can enhance relaxation, reduce stress and decrease pain.



Resource provided by the  
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# BALANCE & COORDINATION

One of the AFAP/AFEP **essential class components** is Balance & Coordination, and therefore is something that should be addressed in every class. A key purpose of this class component is to decrease the risk of falls, and fall-related injuries.

Coordination and balance are essential for energy-efficient movement. However, aspects of various rheumatic diseases – pain, limited joint mobility, joint instability, and decreased muscular strength – can increase fatigue and prevent smooth, energy-efficient movement. Therefore, your classes should be designed to assist participants in improving balance and coordination skills through planned exercises in a safe, comfortable environment:

- Balance exercises should improve the ability to maintain proper position during both static and dynamic activities.
- Coordination exercises should improve the ability to perform more than one movement at a time or to achieve complex movement patterns.

Balance & Coordination are listed as Category II Exercises (along with Cardiorespiratory Endurance), but can be integrated into most any segment of your classes from the warm-up all the way through the cool-down. Your manual provides examples of moving (dynamic) and standing (static) exercise progressions that work well in the pool and the exercise room.

You can also share ideas for your participants to try at home – remember, our overall goal is a healthy lifestyle that extends beyond the class setting. Here are a few suggestions to help you, and your participants, enhance balance throughout the day:

- Brush your teeth while standing on one foot.
- Close your eyes while standing still, then progress to closing your eyes while performing a simple standing task, such as folding laundry. Be sure to have something nearby to reach for, such as a countertop, if needed.
- Stand up from your chair during TV commercials and perform WEIGHT SHIFTS (see AFAP Hip & Knee Exercises).



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# HEALTH EDUCATION



Looking for ideas to build your Health Education topics in the months of September and October? Here are two health observances that can provide multiple topics for discussion, handouts, and homework assignments.

## FALLS PREVENTION AWARENESS DAY SEPTEMBER 22, 2017

Falls Prevention Awareness day will be observed on September 22...yes, that is officially the first day of fall! To honor the 10th anniversary of the observance, the 2017 theme is 10 Years Standing Together to Prevent Falls. The National Council on Aging (NCOA) hopes to raise awareness on how to prevent fall-related injuries among older adults. Find excellent resources and handouts at the NCOA website, [ncoa.org](http://ncoa.org), such as the infographic on 6 Steps to Prevent a Fall that you can download and share with class participants. Number 1 on the list?? Find a good balance and exercise program. The NCOA Falls Prevention: Fact Sheet explains that falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries for older Americans. Falls affect one's safety and independence, but are not an inevitable outcome of aging.

## WORLD ARTHRITIS DAY / OCTOBER 12, 2017

The 2017 campaign for World Arthritis Day is Don't Delay Connect Today with the intention of bringing awareness to the importance of early detection of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases. Many people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases receive delayed diagnosis, but early identification and access to treatment is crucial to prevent further damage. For more information on how to get involved, click the link below.

world  
arthritis  
day.org

## CONTINUING EDUCATION FEATURED COURSE

As an AEA AF Program Leader, you need a minimum of 15 continuing education credits (CECs) to renew your training every two-year period. A great online course available at the AEA website, *Balancing Act-Understanding Balance Issues for Seniors*, was developed by Kimberly Huff, AEA AF Program Leader Trainer and Associate Editor of the AEA Arthritis Foundation Program Leader manual.

*Here is an excerpt from the course:* Balance is a major concern for older adults. The physiological changes associated with the aging process often result in a decrease in the ability to maintain balance and stability. Research suggests that one in three people over the age of 65 will experience a fall. Falls are a major concern for older adults as they are the leading cause of injury deaths for adults 65 years of age and older. Exercises to improve balance and stability are valuable components of fitness programs that are designed for older adults. Participation in programs that include balance training, resistance training, walking and weight transfers have been proved to reduce the risk of falls. Programs that are designed to reduce the risk of falls will help older adults maintain an active, independent lifestyle and improve the quality of life.

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