



# PT Matters

A Quarterly Publication of McDonald Physical Therapy & Sports Rehabilitation Center

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## McDonald Physical Therapy & Sports Rehab Center

### Hours

Monday - Thursday

7 a.m. – 1 p.m.

2 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Friday

7 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**CLOSED FOR LUNCH**

Times may vary, please call.

## In this issue:

- ✓ Why the Elderly Fall
- ✓ Preventing Falls at Home
- ✓ Meet Tommy K.
- ✓ Holiday Gift Ideas
- ✓ Use of a Cane During Your Rehabilitation

*A reminder that with the new year for most insurance programs you will have to meet your deductibles again.*

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[www.McDonaldPT.com](http://www.McDonaldPT.com)

## ***“Did you work as hard as you should have? Did you really try your best?”***

These questions were an integral part of my childhood. Whenever I complained about not getting a good enough grade in school, my mom or dad would ask if I thought I had worked hard enough. If I complained about not getting enough playing time in football, basketball, or baseball, my mom or dad would ask me if I thought I had worked hard enough to deserve it. If I didn't get a special part in a musical or a solo in the choir, my parents would always turn it back on me and force me to reflect on what I might have done differently to achieve my goal. They never said anything about “politics” or that maybe I was better than the person chosen. They always threw it back to me with the question I always hated – “*Do you think you worked as hard as the person you lost to?*”, or “*Did you really try your best?*” I wondered if my parents loved me. Didn't they have confidence in me? What was **their** problem?



When I first heard these questions, I became angry and upset. I envisioned coming home and complaining how unfair life and/or the teacher and/or the coach was, and my parents would reassure me how wonderful I was and how I really deserved “it” over some other person.

Well, that little scenario never happened. Instead I was forced to look at myself as the one responsible for whatever happened. Often this was difficult. In time, I learned to reflect on my real talents, passions, and work ethic. I became more objective about myself. Originally, I thought I was gifted at everything. (Some of my friends think I haven't changed.) As years passed, and I heard those same questions again from my mom and dad, I became more honest with myself and less of a complainer or whiner. By challenging me to accept responsibility, my parents taught me to discover and develop my real talents and passions.

Since I was not allowed to blame others, I had to take a hard look at myself. When I succeeded, I noted how much harder I worked, and usually it was because I truly loved what I was doing and found I had talent in that area. When I was less than successful, I realized I wasn't as gifted in those areas, and I hadn't worked as hard.

In a strange way, by being tough on me and forcing me to take responsibility for myself, my parents gave me a great gift – the gift of a more positive view of myself. I would not get too down on myself when I failed; I chalked it up to lack of talent and/or effort. These choices enabled me to deal with the fear of failure. I also realized that taking responsibility may be difficult and even painful, but the lessons learned are much more rewarding and valuable than developing excuses through complaining and blaming others.

Studies have shown that a positive attitude may add up to 10 years to one's life. If I am lucky enough to earn the full 10 years, I am hoping to see my children grow, find and succeed in their passions, get married and have children, and help others realize their potential; it will be worth the hard work and self-reflection.

Once again, as seems to be the case in most of my newsletters, my parents deserve more credit than I ever thought they deserved during my younger years – for being strong enough to let me fail without excuses and being strong enough to be OK with my failures. They obviously believed in my ability to reason things out, and that belief probably helped (and continues to help) me more than I realized.

During the upcoming Holiday Season, I wish you all the ability to feel the love of the people you have touched in a positive way. I do believe that we get back at least twice as much as we give.

**Happy Holidays 2005**

*Francis McDonald PT*



## Why the Elderly Fall

*Pam Walkowski, PTA*



1 out of every 3 people over the age of 65 falls each year, and 2/3 of those who fall will fall a second time within 6 months.

25% of falls occur when a person goes from a sitting to a standing position. 75% of falls take place when an individual is in the “walking stage.”

People fall because one or more of the three systems that control balance is not working properly.

The three balance control systems are:

**Somatogensory / Proprioceptive System** – Knowing where your body is in space. For example, a diabetic may lose sensation in the lower extremities creating an inability of feet or legs to establish a good point of balance.

**Vestibular System** – The functions of the inner ear. The physical elements begin to show signs of aging at age 55. For example, incidents of dizziness.

**Visual System** – What we see and how well we see. For example, macular degeneration.

Other factors that may lead to balance problems:

- Neurological Problems – MS, Parkinson’s, stroke, head / spinal injury
- Medications - a combination of different medications and the side effects
- Muscle weakness – poor physical condition
- Limited range of motion– inability to move fully
- Cardiac disorder – low blood pressure, orthostatic hypotension
- Functional deficits – functional reach, timed up and go.



The following steps are recommended in dealing with or preventing problems with falling.

- Work with your physician to identify the source of the problem.
- Work with your physical therapist to identify specific exercises to work on balance and/or dizziness.
- Work to make your home environment as “fall safe” as possible.

### ***SAFETY CHECKLIST - Preventing Falls at Home***

#### **All living spaces**

- Remove throw rugs.
- Secure carpet edges.
- Remove low furniture and objects on the floor.
- Reduce clutter.
- Remove cords and wires on the floor.
- Check lighting for adequate illumination at night (especially in the pathway to the bathroom).
- Secure carpet or treads on stairs.
- Install handrails on staircases.
- Eliminate chairs that are too low to sit in and get out of easily.
- Avoid floor wax (or use nonskid wax).
- Ensure that the telephone can be reached from the floor.

#### **Bathrooms**

- Install grab bars in the bathtub or shower and by the toilet.
- Use rubber mats in the bathtub or shower.
- Take up floor mats when the bathtub or shower is not in use.
- Install a raised toilet seat.

#### **Outdoors**

- Repair cracked sidewalks.
- Install handrails on stairs and steps.
- Trim shrubbery along the pathway to the home.
- Install adequate lighting by doorways and along walkways leading to doors.





Tommy K at 12

## Meet Tommy K.

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*The following is a diversion from the articles we usually offer in PT Matters. We have chosen to introduce you to Tommy K because his story is worth telling, and more importantly, worth hearing.*

*We asked Tommy to tell his own story, and he has done so quite well. His dedication to recovery is a valuable lesson for all.*

In the fall of my sixth grade year, when I was 12, I experienced pain and stiffness in my neck. Eventually the doctors ordered an MRI, and they found a tumor on my spine. An emergency 12 hour surgery was performed at Riley Hospital in Indianapolis. This was the first of a series of surgeries I would need. After the surgery I felt pain like I had never experienced before – even though I was on high doses of morphine. A nerve that controls my left arm was affected by the procedure, and as a consequence my left arm did not work after surgery.

After weeks of minimal recovery, I went for therapy at a hospital close to home. My workouts were grueling and painful, and I reaped few benefits, if any. My left arm would not work. I was so frustrated telling my arm I wanted it to move and have it just lay like dead weight. To make matters worse at some point during this darkness, part of my neck collapsed. It had not been properly secured during the surgery. My parents searched for a place for my future surgeries. This may have been the worst time for me. There was a possibility I would not wake up from my next surgery. I was scared to death.

About this time we heard of McDonald Physical Therapy. I began working with Fran to prepare myself for the next surgery. Fran focused on working on my legs. He wanted me to get stronger throughout the rest of my body, since we could do nothing about the nerves of the damaged arm. The strength I gained through the workouts helped my confidence going into the next round of surgery. I continued to improve physically, but every day waiting for the second round of surgery was an emotional roller coaster. I remember waking up on the morning of surgery thinking that this was about the worst thing in the world to wake up to. I wished I could just be a normal kid going to school that morning.

My second surgery removed what remained of the tumor. The days after surgery lasted forever, and it always seemed too long between doses of pain and sleep medicine. Finally the time came for my “final” surgery – this time to rebuild my neck where it had collapsed, to insert metal plates in the area where the tumor had eaten away the bone, and finally to remove scar tissue around the nerve so I might regain use of my arm. All levels of the surgery were successful. I was still in pain physically, but the emotional pain was gone. I was on the road to recovery. I was like a child who lost his favorite toy with no hope of ever finding it again, and then one day it suddenly reappears.

I was outfitted with a “halo” brace, the huge metal brace that allows no neck movement whatsoever. I went through a series of radiation treatments, and worked my way to a regular neck brace. A year had passed, and I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I still could not run or really move my neck. I continued therapy, and later in the year got rid of my neck brace.

I am in my fourth year of therapy and working out at McDonald’s. I have improved to levels that I would never have thought possible a few years ago. I was a good tennis player in grade school, and I had doubts about my future. With my weakened left arm, I wondered if I would ever play again. With the help of the people at McDonald’s I have made the varsity team at St. Joseph High School my freshman and sophomore year. I believe I have been a patient at McDonald’s longer than most of the employees have been there.



Tommy K today

## Holiday Gift Ideas



If you haven’t finished your shopping for the holidays, or if you want to find just the right gift, consider giving a “gift of health”. The following are a few suggestions with no price range in mind. All can contribute to the health, physical or mental, of anyone who receives them.

A jump rope • stretching bands • tubing • a Swiss ball • a work out video • a pedometer • a heart monitor • a certificate to a health club • a water bottle • a pass to a state or national park • exercise equipment • a set of weights • a spa or massage certificate • certificate for babysitting or childcare • membership to a local museum or historical society • a coupon book with “free rides” to the doctor, hospital, grocery store, etc. • a form or booklet to compile personal / family health history • Invitation to be a “workout buddy” • some homemade prepared healthy meals

## ***USE OF A CANE DURING YOUR REHABILITATION***

If part of your rehabilitation program requires the use of a cane; if you have balance or vestibular difficulties that require a cane, or if you experience a long term condition, such as arthritis, that necessitates support when you walk, we have a few simple ideas for choosing and using your cane.

- Consider the functionality of the cane, not only its appearance.
- Select from the various styles of canes by considering the stability each offers.
- Choose a cane that is light.
- To select the proper length for a cane, stand up straight with your shoes on and arms at your sides. The top of the cane should reach the crease on the under side of your wrist.
- If the cane is a proper fit, your elbow will be flexed 15-20 degrees when you hold the cane while standing.
- Choose an adjustable cane if you plan to wear different styles of shoes.
- Make sure you have a good grip of the cane and that the fingers and thumb do not overlap.
- Shift as much weight to the cane as necessary.
- Make sure that the tip of the cane is in good condition and that it is replaceable.
- Hold the cane with the opposite hand of the side that needs extra support.
- When ascending stairs, step first with the cane and good foot following with the bad side.
- When descending stairs, step first with the bad foot/leg and follow with the cane and good foot/leg.



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