

# 8 Secrets for Better Balance and Independence

By  
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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JJ Flentke has been sought after for more than 25 years by people who want and need effective physical therapy as they face the challenges of aging, and for many years she worked with seniors in their home with the added focus to help them stay in their home. JJ has devoted the last 15 years to understanding neurological and balance/vestibular challenges in the aging population. She and her team will help you maintain your independence whether that means traveling the world or staying in your own home and avoiding the assisted living facility.



When JJ opened Boomerang Therapy Works it's every detail was designed with people in mind. From the open design, the equipment, the atmosphere and color, to the staff, everyone and everything speaks to the goal of keeping her patients at their best. She wanted a lot of windows for better lighting, plants to optimize the air quality, and a gym like atmosphere that exudes health. At Boomerang you are dealing with a chronic condition, A-G-E, in a healthy environment. You are NOT BROKEN. As a result, JJ has quickly become the authority, sought after by patients who come because their doctors, their families and their peers are all saying, go to Boomerang. Boomerang can help you thrive!

# **Better Balance = Better Life + Independence**

## **1.Exercise and Start Now**

Better balance, and leg strength have been shown to decrease falls; and falls are one of the reasons people move into an assisted living facility. Get strong and work on your balance. Exercise has been proven to improve so many elements of your health. The challenge is starting an exercise program when you already hurt. But that is the most important time to start. An exercise program created for you by a physical therapist is the best choice. The therapist understands how your current health, functional challenges and goals must be coordinated to achieve the maximum result.

## **2.Shoes**

The right shoes can make your balance so much better! Do your shoes tie up? Do they fit? Are they less than a year old? Good fitting shoes are necessary for maintaining your balance: ditch the heels, cowboy boots and flip flops as they create challenges for balance.

## **3.Grab Bars**

This is a totally under-utilized assist. First and foremost, change out all your towel racks for grab bars, secured to the studs in your wall. These bars will not rip out of the wall when you are desperately grabbing for them if you lose your balance. I also think we should place grab bars by closets or cabinets that require us to reach overhead. This way we have counter support.

## **4. Decrease Clutter**

Falls at home may be preventable with a little planning. Are you able to decrease the clutter? Are newspapers piling up that you were hoping to read? Is there a broken step outside your door? Are there poorly secured throw rugs in and around your home? These are common fall hazards and fixing them is critical to fall prevention! I know you are not planning on falling... but I have seen 1000's of people who have fallen and not one of them planned ahead all the details of their fall.

## **5. Social Support**

Social isolation is a real challenge as we get older and we need to cultivate and nurture our social connections. Do you know your neighbors? Are you involved in a social system like Church? Book Club? Walking Group? Early studies show that people who have a good support system have less stress, better blood pressure, less depression, and all around more happiness. At Boomerang you can join in our group classes and meet folks who are also working to keep their balance.

## **6. Embrace Technology**

I realize that our kids and grandkids have a better handle on all of the new technology out there. But, this technology could be the difference between staying in your own home and embracing the daily caregiver at the assisted living facility as they bring your daily medications. There are some fabulous systems that help with medication reminders and fall detection. There are apps like the Safeway app where you can order your groceries and you just pick them up.

## 7. Lyft/Uber

One of the scariest things to give up is driving. It feels like it could really hamper your ability to maintain your independence, but that does not need to be the case. Giving up driving could also save you a lot of money! I learned a lot from one of my patients, who happened to be in his mid-70s and who has Parkinson's Disease. He told me that his grandkids put the Lyft and Uber app on his phone, and he comes to and from the clinic most of the time with an Lyft/Uber. He uses Lyft/Uber to grocery shop and he does not have to pay for the car, car insurance, up keep or gasoline.

## 8. Plan Ahead

**Emergency Plan:** Do you have your emergency contacts labeled as ICE in your phone? Have you thought about what you would do in case of a fire, earthquake, or snow storm? Who would you call? Do you use a wearable emergency device? These are critical steps which could mean the difference of getting help or not. If you do fall, chances are you wont be able to get yourself up off the floor– be ready and always wear your alert system! Better yet, be preventive and come see us at Boomerang and we can help you keep your balance.

**Be Smart:** My 88-year old mother lives with us, she uses a walker 99% of the time, but periodically she walks away from the walker to open the door for the dogs... so in my eyes she is thinking she suddenly has better balance when she is opening the back door for my rambunctious australi-an shepherd's, Harper Lee and Scout. If you use one, keep your walker or cane with you all the time!

# How Can Boomerang Help?

## 1. Physical Therapy

Here at Boomerang, we are balance and exercise experts. Our physical therapists will consider your medications, your medical history and your current level of function to help you address your balance challenges. We want to help you be more functional, and able to exercise at any level! If you prefer to have 1:1 support after your session with the physical therapist, we also have personal trainers for continued support.

## 2. Occupational Therapy

Our occupational therapist, Alex, is an expert in teaching you how to safely perform daily tasks. She provides input on equipment choice or technology to continue to support your staying in your own home, as well as working to improve your fine motor skills.

## 3. Massage

We have a great massage specialist who can help ease the aches and pains that come from tight muscle as we get older! Gail is an amazing spirit with talented hands and wise advice.

## 4. A Caring Closet—[www.acaringcloset.org](http://www.acaringcloset.org)

A Caring Closet is located next door. This non-profit recycles gently used medical equipment for free to those who need it. You do not have to fill out lengthy forms, just a liability waiver. It's easy, simple and free.

# **Boomerang Therapy Works**

## **Location**

210 W 4th St

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We are located in downtown Vancouver just 2 blocks south of Esther Short Park.

## **Contact Us**

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If you have further questions, concerns or just want to speak to someone, call or email us. We are here for you.

**EXERCISE IS MEDICINE**