



# The Upbeat

Finding Balance

March 2022, Volume 6



To all our members:

Greetings! Finding balance, the theme for this issue of The UpBeat, is a topic near and dear to my heart. My father fell two years ago and broke his upper leg just below his hip. Recovery was going quite well until he decided to walk across the kitchen without his cane and fell again, breaking his other hip (he is doing ok now!). At 84, he went from golfing three times per week to full time use of a cane and limiting himself to watching the golf course live from the back patio. It was life changing to say the least.

After his falls, my father not only had to work on physical balance, but he and my mom had to create a new life balance. They made decisions to leave old passions and create new ones, to limit things that caused stress and anxiety in the spirit of making their journey together as enjoyable and fulfilling as it had always been. They accepted help from my siblings and me, but they struck a balance there too, defining for us the help that mattered most and setting boundaries we had to respect.

Life never stands still and balance is always a moving target, at any age. We hope that this issue will help you reflect on what balance means to you, and to pursue it with a passion. Aging in Place is a journey, and you can have control of yours. Our hope is to provide support along the way so you can have the best journey possible.

**Mark Friedman**

VP Services & Operations, Assured Allies

P.S. Forgive me for getting up on my soapbox for a moment. Falls are NOT a normal part of aging and many if not most falls are preventable. The more we prepare the better off we are. Exercise, specific fall prevention and balance conditioning, use of recommended assistive supports (e.g. canes or a walker) are all effective, as are removing tripping hazards and “fall-proofing” bathrooms. If you have fallen recently or believe you’re at an increased risk of falling, don’t hesitate to call us at (866) 727-7833 to talk to an Age Assured Ally about preventative measures.

# Maintaining Balance, Head to Toe:



By Kasaundra Bennett, Lisa Tinker, and Allie Petznick, Age Assured Allies who help our members age in place. Note: All health recommendations are dependent on your personal health, so always talk to your doctor for guidance.

## Eyes and Ears

Visiting your eye doctor and an audiologist on an annual basis to optimize your vision and hearing can maintain or even improve your balance. Ear health is also important for your vestibular system, or the balance mechanism within your inner ear. Technology has come a long way and there are many options to improve vision and hearing. Ask your doctor about resources available to you.

## Whole Body Movement

Adults who did balance exercises for 6 weeks enhanced their balance control and gained confidence. The exercises also helped improve coordination, leg strength, and ankle mobility. Many enjoy the practice of Tai Chi, an ancient Chinese form of exercise known to improve balance and reduce stress that involves gentle, slow movements coordinated with breath. Consult with your doctor or care provider before beginning any new exercise program.

## Feet

Footwear can greatly affect balance. Here are some tips to keep in mind when shopping for new shoes:

- **Stay Sturdy:** Select shoes with a sturdy sole and good tread. Soles that are too flexible and soft can lead to ankle-twisting and possible falls. Avoid rubber soles that extend up around the toes (the rubber can grip or catch on carpets).
- **Go Light:** In seeking a sturdy sole, don't err on the side of chunky or heavy. Heavy soles compound problems for adults who have trouble lifting their feet up when they walk. Chunky-soled athletic shoes that promise that "walking on air" feeling can impair gait and balance. Soles should be sturdy but thin enough that you can sense the surface you're walking on.
- **Right Size:** Ensure that your shoes fit properly. Too big and your foot might slip and slide within the shoe, leading to a fall or loss of balance. Too small might result in pain, which can distract you from where you're going and/or cause you to alter your natural gait.
- **Best Heels:** Open-heel shoes like clogs or flip-flops allow the foot to slide around and create instability, whereas a closed-heel shoe will always move with your foot and reduce tripping. Low heels are best for balance, posture, and stability.

### Rock the Boat

**A balance exercise to do anytime, anywhere.**

*Note: if you feel unsteady on one foot, this may not be an appropriate exercise for you. Consult with your doctor if you are unsure.*

1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart. Keep your knees slightly bent.
2. Shift your weight onto your left foot and lift your right foot off the ground. Extend arms out as needed for balance.
3. Hold for up to 30 seconds.
4. Slowly lower your right foot, feel your weight firmly on both feet, then repeat on the other side.
5. Repeat 3 or more times as often as you wish.

# Aging in Balance: Communication that Works for You



By Dr. Michal Herz, Age Assured Wellness Director. Before joining Assured Allies, Michal worked passionately for twenty years in the field of dementia and aging.

*'Mom, I told you that already!....'*

*"No you didn't! When? I don't see a text. Was it an email?"*

*"It was on the phone. Yesterday!"*

*"Yesterday? You mean when you were driving on the highway and your voice kept cutting in and out?"*

We are living in an era like none before. We are bombarded with information that arrives in a multitude of communication channels, in an unplanned and unmeasured way.

Each one of us encounters information from a multitude of sources at different times. Between mail, email, text, TV, radio, newspapers, websites, social media, apps, calls to the mobile, calls to a landline: we are all overwhelmed.

The quality of the message is often poor. We talk (and listen) while doing something else. One person on the call is driving; the second is washing dishes.

Do you remember when a telephone had a cord? And a chair next to it? And a paper and pen? If you do, you probably remember that making a call wasn't cheap. So if you made the call, it was for a reason. Both people on the line would stop their activity, sit down, and focus. They would give each other 100% of their attention, and convey their point. If it was really important, well, that's what the paper and pen were for.

According to the WHO (World Health Organization) healthy aging is not just about your "intrinsic capacity," i.e. what functional abilities you have as an individual. It's also about your environment. And on that note, I'd like to empower you to make the world more supportive of your needs.

How does this apply to modern-day communication? Many adults have a harder time hearing, especially with background noise, and multitasking or switching between tasks. We all have the right to a supportive environment. There is nothing wrong in saying, "The line is noisy, happy to chat, but if there is something important you want to say, I might not get it all, can you email or call later?"

Find a place that is comfortable and not distracting for important calls.

Keep a pen and paper at hand. Make it known to your family and friends what your preferred communication modes are. Some like texts, others prefer phone calls or email.

As part of our Age Assured program, we want to help you find your balance in a world of information overload and fast-changing communication trends. Your environment can enhance your strengths and abilities, rather than frustrate and detract from them.



Communication in a slower era: in this painting by Vermeer, a pregnant woman reads a letter from her distant husband.

# Power Snacks for Balanced Energy



By Kitty Finklea, R.D. Kitty is a lifestyle coach, registered dietitian nutritionist, and personal trainer at McLeod Health and Fitness Center in South Carolina.

Are you a snacker? If so, you're not alone. Snacking habits changed during the pandemic and research indicates 64% of consumers prefer to eat smaller meals (snacks) as opposed to three larger meals. People increasingly look to snacks not just for indulgence but for health and energy, with 62% replacing one meal a day with a snack.<sup>1</sup>

The evolving trend towards more nutritional snacks is a positive one for older adults. Due to medical conditions, medication side effects, or mouth and swallowing issues that make it harder to eat, many older adults don't always feel hunger. Planning healthy snacks as mini meals or between meals can help keep energy levels up and provide needed nutrients. Snacks high in fiber, whole grains, and protein not only increase nutrient intake but also satisfaction and satiety. Include protein and fiber to turn your snack into a power snack!

With a variety of options, planning power snacks into your daily routine will up your nutrition game and keep your energy levels higher.

## Tips for Power Snacking

- Include a snack if meals are longer than 3-4 hours apart.
- Aim for at least two food groups per snack. Start with protein and add a serving of fruit, veggie, or whole grain.
- Have at least 3-4 "go-to" healthy snacks on hand. Changing up snacks weekly helps prevent burnout and variety increases nutrient intake.
- Plan both savory and sweet snacks and choose what suits your taste.
- For people with diabetes or working on weight management, portion control your snacks.
- To gain weight, eat larger portions as tolerated.
- Protein options – lean meats, poultry, seafood, eggs, cheese, nuts, seeds, legumes, Greek yogurt.
- Fiber options – Fruit, veggies, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds.



Want more?

Go to [www.assured.care/power-snacks](http://www.assured.care/power-snacks) to find sweet and savory snack ideas.

<sup>1</sup>The Third Annual State of Snacking, 2021 Mondelez International Global Consumer Trends Study.

# Chocolate Chia Pudding

*A healthy snack for a sweet tooth*



Serves: 1

## Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon cocoa powder
- ¼ cup chia seeds
- 1-2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup
- ⅔ cup nut milk, dairy milk, soy milk, or oat milk
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 pinch of salt

## Instructions:

Place all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Refrigerate in a glass container overnight, or at least 4 hours. When ready to serve, top with ¼-½ cup berries.



## MemberSpeak

*What does spring mean to you?*

“Oh, well I am a gardener and that's been my hobby along with my artwork. Spring means growth, new beginnings, life, and healing. I always say it is a time to heal.”

**Sylvia G., age 88.**

*Sylvia also did the painting on this page!*

For our next issue, we're looking for members to answer the question, "What advice would you give young people today who are worried about their future?" Please reach out to your Ally to send in your answer or email us at [newsletter@assuredallies.com](mailto:newsletter@assuredallies.com).

We'd love to hearv from you!



## Caregiver Corner | Finding Balance as a Caregiver



*By Angelina Portuense. Angelina is an Age Assured Ally who works closely with our members and their caregivers to ensure that they receive the support they need to age successfully in place.*

As a caregiver, I often ask myself, “Am I doing enough?” A few months ago, for example, I was at my mom’s house doing the dishes after cooking her dinner when she asked, “Angelina, could we spend time together out of the house sometime too?” I nodded, but inside I felt apprehensive, overwhelmed by my other responsibilities, raising a child and working full-time. I didn’t want to give her the little “me time” I had leftover, but I felt guilty that she had unmet needs, loneliness and maybe a lack of stimulation.

After some reflection, I was honest with her. I shared how stretched I felt and together we came up with a “good enough” plan. We earmarked Saturdays as our day to go out shopping, eat out, and socialize. My 7-year-old son would come along too. Out of the house, I would be freed from thinking about chores and able to focus on spending quality time with both of them. They would enjoy family time with each other, and I could get some errands done. Lunch out would be a special treat for all of us.

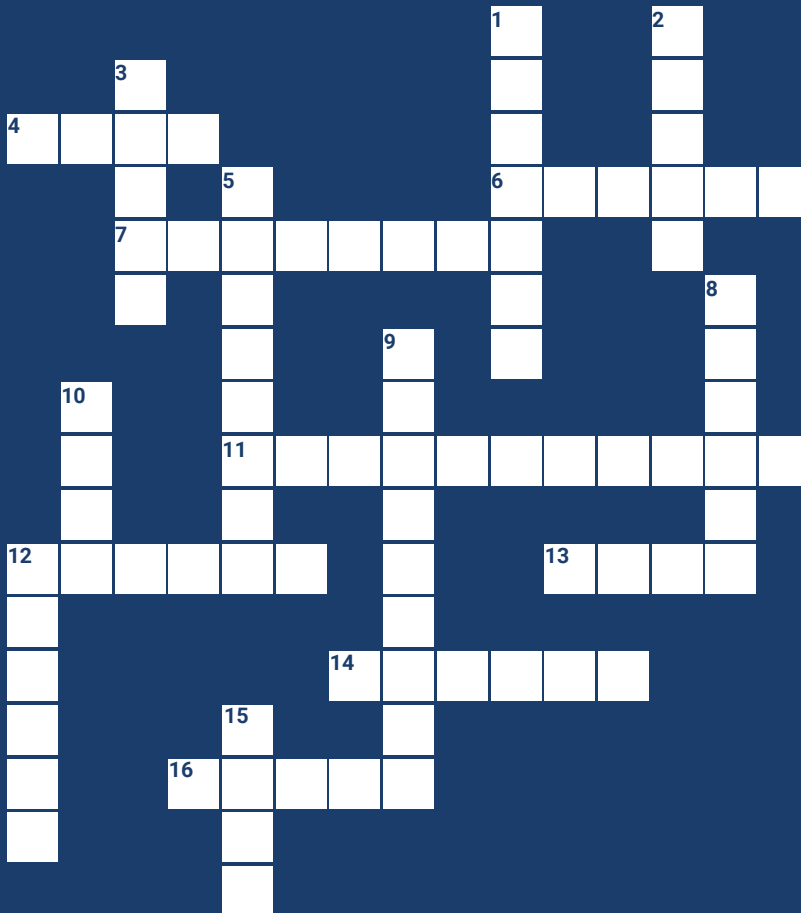
Happily, this multitasking solution met both my mom’s needs and mine, but it’s not always so easy. Each caregiving situation is unique, and creating balance is not a simple recipe. In this spirit, I find the following general guidelines helpful when I feel out of balance as a caregiver, and I hope that they help you too.

- Juggling is inevitable, but caregiver burnout – a chronic state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion as a result of caring for another – is not. Be aware of how you are doing, in addition to those you care for. Seek help if you see signs of burnout.
- Communication is key to any relationship, including caregiving. When tensions or conflicts arise, brainstorm solutions together that respect everyone’s needs, including yours!
- Loneliness is a major issue for adults over 60, 43% of whom report feeling lonely.<sup>1</sup> Caregivers often feel that they’re the only social lifeline. Aging parents may prefer to rely on you because it’s comfortable and investing in new relationships takes effort, but helping them to expand their social circle can benefit both of you in the long run.
- It can be very difficult for people to express their needs and feelings directly, and proxy battles (i.e. a heated argument about buying the wrong kind of creamer that is not really about the creamer) are common. When emotions run high (yours or theirs or both), wait for a calm moment to try and analyze what the real needs are. Write them down on paper, if that helps. Clarity can help reveal solutions hiding in plain sight.
- If you need help as a caregiver, it’s never a negative reflection on you! On the contrary, recognizing that you need help is a strength.

<sup>1</sup>National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

## Finding Balance

Note: All of the clues refer to content in this issue of Upbeat!



### Across

- 4 - Rock the...
- 6 - Ancient Chinese exercise that can help with balance
- 7 - A phone that's not mobile
- 11 - Healthy aging is partly about your...
- 12 - Not sweet
- 13 - Age Assured professional who can help you age in place
- 14 - 43% of older adults feel...
- 16 - Shoe style to avoid

### Down

- 1 - Power snacks have fiber and...
- 2 - Small meal
- 3 - Not a normal part of aging
- 5 - Location of vestibular system
- 8 - Shoe style to avoid #2
- 9 - Shoe style to avoid #3
- 10 - Type of edible seed
- 12 - "A time to heal"
- 15 - Phone, email or ?

### Answers

Across: 4. Boat 6. TaiChi 7. Landline 11. Environment 12. Savory 13. Ally 14. Lonely 16. Heels  
 Down: 1. Protein 2. Snack 3. Falls 5. Inner ear 8. Chunky 9. FlipFlops 10. Chia 12. Spring 15. Text

### EDITOR'S NOTE

We hope you enjoyed this edition of "The Upbeat." Feel free to share this newsletter with your friends, family and neighbors as well. We welcome any feedback, comments, or questions you may have. Please reach out to us at [newsletter@assuredallies.com](mailto:newsletter@assuredallies.com). If you prefer to receive this newsletter in electronic format, contact us as well.