

Last month, we discussed two emotions: stress and depression caused by the Holiday Season. This month is a good follow-up regarding another emotion that contributes to fall risk: fear.

## Addressing Fear



Fear from falling can be a significant contributor to how a resident participates in a Fall Reduction Program. Anxiety and stress can cloud sound decision making which can inhibit the resident from participating in activities, a strengthening or restorative program, or even assisting with self care on a daily basis. When this anxiety and stress have become significant, it is important to manage the effects of these two emotions before jumping right into a fall reduction program. Further, you can add management of these emotions to the immediate careplan as an effective intervention toward the ultimate goal, a reduction in falls and injury.

When these emotions show themselves, take time to stop talking about how to reduce the fall and talk about the root of the anxiety or fear. For example, if Mrs. Smith refuses to stand up because she fell from a chair the last time she broke her hip, begin to address her refusal as the first step in fall reduction. Spend sometime to explain that you understand why she feels anxious or nervous. Encourage her to verbalize how it felt to go through that experience. Ask her to visualize step by step what it is you want her to do. Start with the example where she uses proper techniques to get up from the chair, use her walker, take a step forward on her right foot and make it to the bathroom without issue. You might even mirror what you want her to do to her, show her what the proper way to achieve this would look like. Also, inform her of what you will be doing, how and why. Explain that you will stand right next to her on her left side, you will use a gait belt to help guide her as she walks and you will encourage her to continue.

Take the time to do a second visualization as well, explain what will happen if she tries and it doesn't go well. Start at the beginning, just as you did the first time. When you discuss taking a step, interject that she might lose her balance, and it will be necessary to lower to the floor. Explain how together you will lower to the floor as gently as possible and show her how she can call for help. Ask her to tell you what she thinks would be the worst that could happen during this event. Get her to discuss with you her fears so that you can address them directly. You might also ask her to tell you a time when she took a chance and how it felt to do that. Once you have done this, review one more time how you will approach her transfer to avoid the likelihood of a fall and ask her to try. Too often we want to follow the process or protocol, and when it doesn't work, we wonder why. It is important to remember that there are many factors that impede our progress to reducing falls, of those, the human factor has a huge impact on our success.