

Walking Is Falling

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Neurology® 2022;98:591. doi:10.1212/WNL.0000000000200167

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I think of this watching him walk today.
Now he shuffles, stoops, and slips at times.
His foot in an act of faith rises—
Barely clears my office floor,
And returns again,
Each step, a whispered prayer.

He ran a business,
Led a church,
Raced a marathon at 70,
His son proudly tells me.

I am reminded of delivering babies in med school,
How after the pain and struggle,
Gravity did the work,
The trick not pulling the baby out, but holding it back,
So the tissue wouldn't tear when the baby dropped.
Or how, at a year old,
My own boys stumblewalked,
Giggling with each tumble,
Toddler knees bent, their feet and toes
A series of fat circles.

From two on we are misled.
We climb over rocks and scramble up hillsides.
Too soon we take the stairs two at a time,
And go for long walks in the woods
Branches crackling underfoot
Certain with easy hubris
That like storm-tossed trees
Our strength keeps us from toppling,
Not the ground that holds us up.

With time, each step
Is less taken than given,
Each footfall, a fall averted.
For now, that is enough,
For him, for us.

Neurology®

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Neurology 2022;98;591 Published Online before print February 10, 2022

DOI 10.1212/WNL.0000000000200167

This information is current as of February 10, 2022

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