

Fear of Falling



I fell on my stairs last week. Truth be told, I was going down the stairs in the dark when I fell, wearing slippery slippers and texting as I went. Basically, I was asking for it this time. But it wasn't the first fall, and I doubt it will be the last. For many of us who have MS, falling seems to be part of the package.

I was diagnosed last winter, but I've been falling for years. I've skinned knees and elbows. I've ripped some really good jeans. I've twisted both ankles. I'm lucky - I haven't needed stitches or broken bones. But in retrospect, I can't believe I didn't wonder earlier what was going on. Most people don't have so much trouble staying on their feet.

Since my diagnosis, I haven't fallen more often, but I've **worried** about falling a lot more. I worry that if I fall again, I'll hurt myself in a more serious way. Or that if I fall again, I'll be one hundred percent more embarrassed than I would have been before. Or that now my friends and family wouldn't laugh and call me a klutz. Instead, they would worry. The laughing is fine with me. The worry would not be.

So now I watch where I'm going. I hold on tight to the railings when I'm on the stairs. If there aren't railings available, I hold on tight to a friend. I gave my high heels to my sister. For exercise, I walk on a track instead of on the sidewalk, because it has a nice smooth, relatively soft surface. Despite my recent misadventure, I actually do try not to do dumb things like text on the stairs in the dark. It's tiresome having to think about this all the time, but I think it goes with the territory these days.

Last week, I also fell playing frisbee with my son. We both raced to pick up the frisbee, he dived onto the ground in front of me. I fell over him and then he rolled over me in a tumble of

fleece, grass, fall leaves and seven-year-old giggles. For all the times that I resent having to be careful, it is nice to be reminded that not everything is about MS. Sometimes a fall is just part of the fun, and not worth a second thought.