# Safer Landings with Dynamic Balance for Life™ – Testimonials

May 2025

The Introductory Dynamic Balance for Life™ (DBfL) Program was first delivered to participants in 2021. Since then the program has been delivered to 106 older participants 73% of whom were female, at the AUJC judo club dojo in Adelaide. Participation was either as part of an intensive 8-week clinical study or a 10-week non-clinical program.

The program has also been delivered in Perth, Western Australia by the UWA Judo Club and in Melbourne, Victoria by the Resilience Judo Club, by coaches trained and certified in the DBfL program. It has also been licensed to a Community Judo Club in England and a University Judo Club in Japan.

Of the 106 participants, 30% choose to continue with judo-based sessions to make their ‘ukemi’ more instinctive and as automatic as possible. The Continuing sessions are an extension of the program sessions with an added focus on making the trip and ‘fall’ scenarios less predictable. This is done safely on the judo mat, with the participants usually wearing judogi to give the coach added control over the landing position and speed.

Usually, about 6 months after completing their introductory program, our continuing participants start reporting their fall experiences, usually surprising and very positive. A few have taken a tumble sooner and also have a positive outcome as they put their newly acquired skills into practise!

## Here are a few of their documented stories, in their own words…

**Clive, age 77, Introductory program commenced Set 2024; 21 April 2025**

To my surprise the new learnings that I was practising came in very handy indeed. Last month, I was tree pruning and went out to the front verge to trim the water shoots and a few low branches of a young Golden Ash tree. I was crawling under the tree in an awkward crouching position ready to move out to the nearby foot path. As I moved forward out my left foot was stopped by protruding root and I was in the process of moving forward so basically, I was tripped. However as in the previous weeks I had been doing breakfalls and safe landings so this time I was well and truly primed to save myself from harm. If I had not reacted appropriately my face would have smashed into the hard ground and possibly done a lot of damage to me.

**Rosemary, age 81, Introductory program commenced Feb 2023; 11 Nov 2024**I fell crossing the Port Road whilst taking my two dogs for a walk early this morning. Half way over the road there are paved islands for pedestrians to safety wait until all is clear. However, on reaching the paved island, my feet became tangled in circular wire which I failed to see. I immediately fell forward. Instinctively I protected my upper body and face by placing my arms forward; as taught in the ekema section of our classes. I was able to stand up immediately. I have a grazed L knee and despite a history of rheumatoid arthritis seem to be intact! Thank you l for all the useful life skills you teach us.

**Kathy, age 82, Introductory Program commenced Feb 2023; 19 Sep 2024**There was a slight rise in the footpath which caused me to stumble forward and loose balance.
I recollect my hands coming up in front of my face and then my body automatically went into a barrel roll to the left. The only damage was a graze on my left knee and some skin off my arm near my left elbow. No bruising or aches and pains the following day. I am so grateful to "Dynamic Balance" it certainly prevented any serious injury which is pretty surreal at 82 years of age. Thank you so much M. & M. for introducing such an awesome program. I will be forever grateful.

**Marie, age 75; Introductory Program commenced Sep 2022; 14 Dec 2023**My encounter with a fall was pretty simple. I was in the Botanic gardens in Ballarat and I leaned across a knee-high hedge to smell a rise and toppled over and landed on my bottom. The presence of the hedge slowed my fall but I must have turned myself sideways as I fell. My friend said I fell in a funny way!!

**Julia, age 71; Introductory Program commenced Sep 2022; 10 Aug 2023**Life-changing!
Recently I tripped as I was walking, falling forward on asphalt. And didn’t land on my face!
A moment passed on the ground before I realised to my astonishment that I had unconsciously landed in a position I had learned and practised in Dynamic Balance, with my face and head a good 30 cm off the ground carefully protected by my forearms. I was fine. I got up, and carried on. Amazed.
Previously I had tripped while bushwalking, injuring my face, teeth and confidence pretty unpleasantly. I became fearful of hard surfaces after that, of falling and cracking my face again and only walked on the beach or with support for months. Dynamic Balance has been truly transformative. Thank you so much.

**Anne age 82, Introductory program commenced May 2021; 9 Jul 2023**I had a rather graceful fall yesterday. Again walked into a gutter and went falling forwards. Managed to roll down my right side and finished up looking down into my beautifully crossed fingers. Got up and continued my morning walk in the rain, and then off to breakfast with my good friend C.
Thank you dynamic balance

**Anne, age 82, Introductory program commenced May 2021; 13 Jun 2023***Experiences with Dynamic Balance*At the end of 2020 I participated in a focus group which led to the start of the Dynamic Balance classes offered by Adelaide University Judo Club.

I live in the Adelaide City square mile and walk most places. Many of the back streets in the city have uneven pavements and I had the occasional fall – at least once, maybe twice a year. I joined the classes hoping to gain strategies to prevent falls. I was 79 when I started the classes. I walk almost every day and am aware that one of the greatest health problems for older people is falling and breaking a limb.

I’m now almost 82. In the 2+ years of doing these classes I have had only one fall. This was in Toledo in Spain when I tripped on a gutter as I was taking a photograph – not watching where my feet were going! I went down and realised once I was on the ground that my arms were out in front of me as we had been taught in class. After catching my breath I was able to get up by myself (and take the photo). A sore knee was my only minor problem. I have no memory of how I went down and asked my companions what happened. They commented that I had not tried to put my hands on the ground to break the fall, and I explained this was part of the strategy I had learned to help prevent serious injury. This fall was on hard concrete type surfaces and could have been catastrophic. I believe that the strategies we have been taught in class, and frequently repeat, meant that my muscle memory took over.

The classes have been a fantastic help to me. Practising simple things like crawling in different ways so that if you fall you can get to a place where there is some sort of hand hold to help you get up is one of the things we do. I have a friend who was unable to get up off the floor and thanks to the knowledge gained from these classes I was able to talk her through how to crawl into the kitchen where she could use the bench top to lever herself up. She is now considering joining a beginners’ class. Another important strategy learned is to take time to stop and get back into correct posture if you feel out of balance.

It is also rather nice to mention to one’s grandchildren in a casual way that one is off to a judo class. And I did my first forward roll just after my 80th birthday!!!

I am impressed by how well our teachers/trainers are able to inclusively cater for different ability levels as they modify and adapt each activity so everyone can achieve success and develop strategies for improvement. They also explain how each class activity relates to a real-life situation.

I am widowed and like many older people I live alone. I am sure the skills developed and strategies learned in these classes contribute to my safety and well-being.

**Helen 81, Introductory Program commenced Sept 2021; 3 May 2023**
*Dynamic Balance Saves*On filling out a standard form I was surprised to realise I was falling more than twelve times a year. A disastrous uncontrolled fall while walking to view Christmas lights left me feeling disoriented, bruised, helpless, in shock and eventually, thankful it was no worse.

My peers were experiencing severe injuries to hips, heads, knees and ankles and I began to feel it was only a matter of time before I did too.

Aware that my balance was deteriorating to the point I was unable to do things I wanted, I was keen to attend a focus group organised by COTA (Council of the Ageing) on falls and ageing. It was there I learnt of a proposed study using a locally developed Adelaide University Judo Club programme called Dynamic Balance for Life. I pursued it and signed up for the pilot as soon as it became available.

The 8-week programme, one hour twice a week, was hard to fit into a busy life. But it was such fun and challenging and we gained so much, that for those continuing on as ‘Balancers’ it became a question of fitting life around the judo and we found we wanted it twice a week rather than the planned once.

For me there have been some unexpected and surprising gains which may not all have shown up in pilot study records.

* I have lost my fear of falling/landing badly, feel generally in control and able to cope if I am not.
* I now seem to have ‘time’ midfall to consider my options and choose my landing method(s)/spot. (I may at last understand Einstein’s concept of the relativity of time).
* If I do fall, I mostly feel in control and even more importantly do not go into shock and disorientation on landing.
* I have recovered some previously frequently used means of fall prevention that I had lost e.g., rapid stepping to regain balance.
* I have vastly increased my stability and the number of falls has reduced accordingly.
* I am generally in control of how and where I land and confident, I have a range of ways to do so to mitigate consequences.

My balance is still far from perfect but is now adequate for daily life and I continue to make gains.

 *What has Dynamic balance done for me in terms of falling?*

I have logged my falls over about 18 months. All were reported to and honoured by my fellow Balancers who are most supportive of each other. Approximately 5 falls of significance in that time (on previous figure I would have expected 18).

I have listed only two instances where I did not land but there were a considerable number of other occasions of falls prevented by learned judo skills.

Car park parking strip - I cut across directly to my car in the next space, caught my back foot on the recently installed stopping strip and stretched my length forward on the wet, rough bitumen. I avoided hitting my face and was left with grooves on my hands for 2 days but no broken skin and lost some skin off my knees under my trousers. It was isolated, late, dark, raining and the sensor light blinded me. I was alone having airily sent the others off saying I’d only be a few minutes, and my personal alarm didn’t work that far from home. Was I thankful for my judo training? Indeed, I was!

Playing games - At judo I too enthusiastically overran the large ball I was rolling, ran out of room and automatically executed a neat forward roll as taught. I was unharmed as were the bystanders.

Adelaide Fringe in Rundle Street - I escaped being sent flying on the footpath by an inebriated gentleman intent on reaching the bar. Afterward I realised that without conscious thought had used footwork I had been taught maintaining my balance and all but avoided contact.

Coming down backwards from the back seat of a truck - my foot slipped under the truck, I called out ‘ow’ in surprise and as I fell backwards my boot caught above the top step. I had time to consider the consequence of releasing my boot (I didn’t know how) and had a mental picture of me as pendulum contacting the cement floor below with my head first. My boot let go and I continued to the floor. I am unable to reconstruct exactly how but, as I lay on my right side on the cement floor I was able to identify contact points and their sequence. First contact was the side of my right buttock (not hip), second was the back of my shoulder (not the point) and third was the right side of the back of my head. None of these points were tender to the touch at the time and there was no soreness anywhere the next day when I discovered an oval bruise under my left upper arm (possibly from contact with the lower handrail on that side on the way down) The two front seat occupants of the truck were unaware I had fallen and one commented ‘It’s OK you did the right thing going down the steps backward’.

I stepped over my front fence and classically caught my back foot. I chose a technique to land without damage. Reassuring a shocked bystander who was distressed at being unable to stop my fall, I told him I had been in control of my descent and he remarked ‘Yes. You were so graceful’.

At a Market day band performance - stepping on a piece of paper on the grass caused my foot to catch under a music stand tripod and my only escape route was through two other stands. By three quick steps into stable stances I managed to avoid a tangled tumble. My afterthought was that I had got out of the situation with a ‘Judo dance’.

Dragon boating - It is no longer essential to hold both sides of the boat to step over every seat on the way to and from my paddling position in the rear nor hold on to climb over the side. In the past I had had two spectacular nosedives over the side and several tumbles within the boat in contact with the hard seats.

Thank you