

# The upside to falling down

One month and two days ago I stumbled down the flight of stairs that separate the living quarters from the sleeping quarters in my home. The boys and I had just woken up.

“How about waffles for breakfast?” I asked.

“Sure,” said Collin. “Can we make a fort?”

“Sure,” I said.

As I was lifting Leo from his crib, I heard a scuffle on the stairs. I turned the corner to find Collin and Frank halfway down the steps, towing a king sized fluffy blanket.

“Whoa!” I shouted, putting Leo down. I took two steps and reached for the blanket.

“Guys, this isn’t safe. Someone’s gonna get – ”

But, before I could say the word “hurt,” I became the victim of my own prophecy. My stocking feet failed to create enough friction to keep me grounded on the slick wooden steps and in seconds I found myself lying in a heap of limbs and blankets on the landing. Thankfully, the boys managed to escape the avalanche, but when I got up, I felt like I was emerging from a rugby scrum.



It was my back that hurt, in an unspecified spot that seemed to float somewhere in the middle of my body. As the day progressed, I discovered that I could walk fine, but I couldn’t sit down comfortably. And I certainly couldn’t bend down to pick anything up. (An essential movement for parenting young children.)

I waited several days before visiting our local emergent care center, where X-rays indicated that my suspicion, a broken coccyx (tailbone), was not the case. After a further examination, the doctor concluded that my coccyx was bruised. I felt relieved, but not for long.

“Sometimes bruises can be worse than breaks. It usually takes 4-8 weeks to recover from an injury like this. You’re lucky it wasn’t worse.”

A little over 4 weeks better, I've seen some improvement in my mobility, but continue to feel pain whenever I'm forced to sit for extended periods of time or if I try to bend over too much. The doctor is right, it could've been worse, but, as always, I've been trying to look on the bright side of my current situation. Here are the positive effects of my injury:

1. Since I can't sit down, I haven't been watching TV, getting lost in the internet, or lounging around. I've been up on my feet, pushing the boys on the swings, organizing cabinets and closets, and actually going places. Unfortunately, I still can't pick up toys or books that without fail manage to find their way onto the floor, but I'm trying to teach the boys to help me out by being more responsible. My productivity has offered a boost to my mood (not to mention my metabolism) and makes me feel as though I'm living my summer to the fullest. The down side is that I can't take the boys to the pool, but I'm seeking other meaningful experiences for them, like the programs offered at Harford County Public Library. We had a great time learning about the environment at the Abingdon branch just before we went on vacation.

2. I've been reading more. As I mentioned, I'm trying to keep up with my boys in their Summer Reading Program, but I've also found that reading is a great way to pass the time when the only thing that feels good is pacing. One of the more interesting books I've read is "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up" by Marie Kondo. She encourages readers to only surround themselves with objects that make them feel a sense of joy. Her book was a call to action for me and the results of my decluttering experience have motivated me to live a lighter existence. I've also been working on Harper Lee's "Go Set a Watchman." I'm open to other book recommendations if you're reading something exciting, informative or otherwise "life-changing".

3. I'm paying more attention in church. I can't sit in a pew or kneel quite yet, so I've been worshipping from the gathering space as I walk about, trying to find enough comfort to focus on the rituals and messages happening at the altar. My mind doesn't drift during the homily and I feel more connected to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. I'm hoping that when I return to the pew in a few weeks (fingers crossed) I will continue to be more mindful during Mass.

Not being able to sit is an awkward experience when other people enter the picture. When I start to get curious looks, I feel obligated to explain my situation to everyone from waitresses to Frank's teachers, to college professors (yes, I went back to school...stay tuned for more information). It's uncomfortable being the only person standing while everyone eats or hulking over a coffee table while your child and his teacher play a matching game or leaning against a wall in the back of a classroom (again, more on my awesome grad class later) while everyone else is sitting. I don't want the company I'm with to think that I'm trying to dominate our conversations, so I'm quieter than usual. I'm a better listener and observer these days.

My mind is being strengthened as my body heals. By falling down, I've been lifted up. And that is the ultimate gift my trip down the stairs has given me.