



Chiropractic Newsletter

Well-Being

The Wisdom of Walking

Amidst a battle with mental illness, one of my beloved children lived in rural New Hampshire under a bridge. She told me how she had weaned herself off a plethora of ineffective pharmaceuticals by doing three things: walking all day, every day; sleeping outside; and sharing everything she owned with one good friend.

Although her lifestyle proved unsustainable, I pondered the effectiveness of a simple, outdoor-oriented life in bringing peace to a troubled soul. It's been said that desperate times call for desperate measures. How does a person find health and calm within a daily onslaught of physical, mental, and financial stress?

What would it take for someone like me, a single mother living with children with multiple disabilities, to turn the tide of her life and thrive?

After a car-totaling accident followed by the onset of school and therapeutic program closures, I decided not to replace my car and to work from home as a paid caregiver for my oldest adult child, while partially homeschooling my first grader who also has special needs. At the same time, I sought to make our health and well-being my central goal.

Walking has now become a major part of our daily activities. Each week, we walk several miles— to stores, restaurants, the local library, and the chiropractor. We also walk to a massage therapist and the dentist.



Photo by [Barbara Olsen](#) from [Pexels](#)

Since my daughter, Chrissy, has a developmental disability, we incorporate pedestrian safety, sight words, and speech communication into our walking routines. As we spend time crossing streets and exploring our town, we have become more aware of our surroundings. Chrissy is finally learning how to cross streets and parking lots safely. I often find myself carrying a bag to collect windblown recyclables. The more that I am outside, the more I am drawn to nature and the desire to protect and explore it.

Chrissy has always had difficulty memorizing our phone number, so I developed a new learning strategy. She copies the number several times on a dry-erase sheet. Then we recite the number while walking to the chiropractor. Upon our

arrival, she must type the number into a tablet in order to log in our visit. This activity correlates to a study that found that moderate exercise can increase the size of the hippocampus area of the brain associated with memory skills.

I was actually surprised that my daughter responded eagerly to this new routine, since she has low muscle tone and has lived with cancer for a long time; both factors negatively impact her endurance. After a few weeks she even noted, “I have energy!” Chrissy especially enjoys the social interactions of walking in the community and having specific places to go, rather than simply taking a walk.

I am fortunate to live in a walkable suburb where safety concerns and weather rarely preclude our walking. To keep our feet healthy, we do Epsom

salt foot soaks with essential oils. We do 15-minute yoga routines and neck extension exercises to improve our posture, and we avoid using backpacks.

When I am tempted to return to a car-centered lifestyle, I consider the cost of insuring and maintaining a vehicle. Living without this expense has allowed me to make home repairs and improvements I could not have otherwise afforded while remaining at home with my children. More important, I am not sure I would maintain the level of exercise and outdoor activity that I currently do if I owned an automobile.

—Darlene Preston

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