

Episode 215 Transcript :

00;00;11;08 - 00;00;36;09

Karen Brown

Hello, everybody. Welcome to another edition of Real Life Renos - The Podcast. Doesn't that music sound spring like and happy and upbeat? Well, today we're going to talk about spring because it is coming. Even though the temperatures as we record this are a little cooler, it's coming. And I can't help but remembering my grandpa saying spring is sprung, the grass is ris, I wonder where the flowers is?

00;00;36;17 - 00;01;07;23

Karen Brown

Well, they're coming. For those of you who are joining us for the first time, let me introduce myself. My name is Karen Brown. I'm an accessibility and aging in place strategist. I hold three certifications that allow me to assess residential, commercial and public spaces for accessibility and the certification that allows me to assess residential environments also lets me make recommendations to clients around how to renovate their homes so that they work better for those who want to stay in their homes for as long as possible.

00;01;08;02 - 00;01;40;13

Karen Brown

And with spring coming, I want to give you a bit of a to do list so that you will be safe and able to remain independent with as much dignity as you possibly can gather. So get out your pen and paper. Here we go with our checklist. First of all, we're going to check ourselves footwear. Now, those who have paid attention to my videos in years gone by will know that footwear is something that I talk about from time to time.

00;01;41;00 - 00;02;16;17

Karen Brown

We've got to talk about it constantly because we get our favorite footwear on and we tend not to realize that that tread diminishes over time. And it is the tread that keeps us from slipping. In fact, if the tread is completely worn down, it's that favorite shoe or slipper is likely to become a fall hazard. You can slip and trip and fall and you need to have proper tread on the bottom of whatever you're wearing, whether you're wearing it indoors or outdoors.

00;02;17;27 - 00;02;42;12

Karen Brown

Of course, the warmer weather means that we're wearing sandals, so make sure that the straps that are on the sandals hold your foot in place all around and make sure you choose the right footwear for the right excursion. So sneakers or trainers for exercise and for walking and a heel height, that heel height that you can manage for all occasions.

00;02;42;12 - 00;03;12;02

Karen Brown

I tell you, I am so happy to see kitten heels making a comeback. I've got a lot of boxes in my closet that have four and six inch heels in them, but I just don't wear them anymore. They're not safe for me. I want to make sure that I don't turn an ankle when I'm walking. So, you know, take a look at the shoes, not only on the tops, make sure that they're pretty and you want to wear them and you are comfortable wearing them.

00;03;12;02 - 00;03;40;09

Karen Brown

But turn them over and look at that tread. Let's talk about exercise. Walking remains a great form of exercise, and we hear about walking 10,000 steps a day. That seems to remain the standard. There have been studies that say that less can do exactly the same kind of thing for you, but because people mostly talk about 10,000 steps a day, let's keep that as our gold standard.

00;03;40;19 - 00;04;07;02

Karen Brown

But you have to start somewhere. For people who have not walked or exercised through the winter, you will find your muscles starting to atrophy if they haven't already. And, you know, if you just sat in your chair and watched TV or sat at your desk, you're going to find that you are actually at greater risk of falling because your muscles aren't used to the movement.

00;04;07;11 - 00;04;33;07

Karen Brown

So definitely start somewhere. Walk around your house, then walk around the block and then walk two times around the block and so on. We published on TheOldish.com a while ago about a new study that was done by the American Heart Association that found that people over 70 years of age who walked an additional 500 steps were linked with a reduction in heart disease risk of about 14%.

00;04;33;07 - 00;05;01;05

Karen Brown

Now, that's pretty significant. In the same study, older adults who took less than 2000 steps each day were compared with those who took 4500 steps and those who walked more had a 77% lower risk of experiencing a cardiovascular event that is even more significant. Regular physical activity is meaningful for those who want to stay independent and help prevent disability.

00;05;01;06 - 00;05;28;24

Karen Brown

So the takeaway is this just start, start somewhere and build up. Build up as you are able as we get older. Walking is great cardio, but we need to build and maintain that muscle and stay flexible as well. Did anybody see the ad on TV? I believe it was over Christmas time. It featured an older man who would go out to his shed every day and lift weights every day.

00;05;28;25 - 00;05;50;16

Karen Brown

He got stronger and stronger. But all the while, this neighbor next door kept peeking over the fence and then peeking in the window of the garage, wondering what the heck he was up to. They even called his daughter to check on him. He started jogging a little, too, when the weather got nicer. Turned out he wanted to be strong enough to lift his granddaughter up to put the star on top of the Christmas tree.

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Karen Brown

If you have not watched it, you can find it on YouTube. It's a great testimony to the power of will, purpose and determination. So you don't have to have proper weights to start a routine of building strength. Soup cans, a bag, a dog food, a jug of bleach, whatever you've got around the house will work. Just learn how to lift properly so that you don't injure your back or knees.

00;06;16;09 - 00;06;44;29

Karen Brown

And then again, as it is with walking. Just start. For flexibility. Try yoga. There are some great YouTube videos on stretching and yoga, including chair yoga. Again, just start in a place where you are able. If that means holding on to a chair or holding on to a counter, do that. Eventually you won't have to hang on. I have a friend who's in her thirties now.

00;06;45;01 - 00;07;14;12

Karen Brown

She's a musician, has gotten into ice baths as a way of maintaining health. Now that's a whole other subject that we're not going to talk about today. But using cold ice and cold showers to maintain health is something that definitely has merit. Anyway, she posted videos of her daily movement and it was so interesting to watch. She played some music that she liked and then she simply moved in whatever way inspired her.

00;07;14;23 - 00;07;41;10

Karen Brown

In the process, she stretched her arms out. She turned she moved her body and really felt the music. Often she had her eyes closed. If I remember correctly, from watching those videos, it was really inspiration to watch her movement flow. And I realized pretty

quickly that most people can do this again, sitting in a chair, standing in one spot or taking those movements.

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Karen Brown

And sometimes they were very small movements, sometimes they were larger movements. Have you seen people walking with walking poles? They're actually called Nordic walking poles. They're terrific for people who want to maintain balance, especially great for anybody who may have fallen and may therefore be a bit nervous about falling again. And I don't blame you for being nervous.

00;08;05;11 - 00;08;33;23

Karen Brown

But you can't just sit in a chair. You've got to get out there and walk. So Nordic walking poles may be your answer. If you are somebody who has fallen and is now nervous to go outside, as I said, the thing you do not want to do is be sedentary out of fear. As we mentioned earlier, your muscles will start to atrophy and you will put yourself in a greater risk of falling position because now you're weaker and more likely to fall.

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Karen Brown

Nordic walking poles may be your answer together with hip protectors and some good footwear. Let me talk a little bit about hip protectors. First, let me tell you that my company sells hip saver hip protectors, so recognize the conflict of interest. However, I will tell you that they are the best hip protectors I found, and that's why I sell them.

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Karen Brown

It's plain and simple why I sell them. Whatever you do, you need to protect your hips, both inside and outside. The number of falls that happen within a home are just as great as the number of falls that happen outside. Falls can be progressive, meaning that the first time a fall happens, you may break your wrist. You know, you put your hands out to stop yourself from falling or to protect yourself.

00;09;22;09 - 00;09;49;01

Karen Brown

And your wrist may fracture the next time you fall. Your wrist won't be able to support you and the fracture will be to your elbow or shoulder. Eventually you will fall and there is nothing that can protect you and perhaps your hips take the full blow. A badly fractured hip can put you in a position where you can no longer live independently or in your own home because you can't execute the basic tasks of daily living.

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Karen Brown

Now, I have a grandmother who had this happen to her. Those who have been listening to me for quite some time will know that I have told the story before. But she lived in the home that she walked into as a bride and she lived there with her husband for well over 50 years until my grandfather passed away and she continued to live there.

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Karen Brown

She was having a nap on the couch one day and somebody came to the door and rang the doorbell. It startled her awake and she jumped up from her sleep and tried to move quickly to the door. But her leg was asleep and she fell and the process broke a lot of bones. So of course she had to go to the hospital.

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Karen Brown

From hospital she went to rehab and they told her there that she would not be able to go back to her home because it was a two story house She wouldn't be able to manage. There wasn't an appropriate washroom on the main floor. Her bedroom was upstairs. And this was, you know, 15 years ago, maybe 20 years ago.

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Karen Brown

And we didn't have the technology that we have now. So she would be unable to get up the stairs. There was no way to put a bed on the main floor. She just wouldn't be able to function properly. So she went from rehab into long term care. She never saw her home again. So these days, what I see in my work as an accessibility and aging in place strategist is that there are two things that will mean you can leave your home and never be able to come back to it or your familiar neighborhood again.

00;11;31;07 - 00;11;54;08

Karen Brown

Number one is the ability to enter and exit your home. So stairs, stairs are a bad thing. You'll see ramps at homes here and there, but that has to be built rather quickly. But the second thing is not being able to toilet or bathe yourself. Those are the two things in and out of your home and not being able to toilet and bathe yourself.

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Karen Brown

This could mean you need renovations done to your home before you're allowed to come back. Or it can mean moving to rehab like my grandmother did, and then into long term care in order to have your needs met. If you have the ability to afford in-home care or have people come who can look after you and your needs, you may be able to stay in your home with some renovations.

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Karen Brown

However, for most people, this is not the case. You need to be able to do something that is proactive and protect yourself. Renovations are something we have talked about in other shows and we will talk about again on this show. But it's not really the subject of our conversation today. So we're going to just talk about being proactive about yourself.

00;12;37;25 - 00;12;59;04

Karen Brown

You need to exercise and stay strong. You need to make sure your footwear and clothing can support you properly and you will probably need to wear hip protectors. Checking on your medications is another thing you can do to proactively take care of your health. And it's a good thing to do when you're spring cleaning and you get to that medicine cabinet.

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Karen Brown

Here's what you do. Make a list of all your medications, the ones the doctor prescribed, the ones that you buy off the shelf and you don't really think of as medications. But they are you think of teas and CBD gummies or natural products or herbal products or vitamins. These are all medications. Remember everything that goes into your mouth interacts with everything else that goes into your mouth.

00;13;26;20 - 00;13;53;09

Karen Brown

So you need to understand those interactions and the potential side effects. I realize that you may not think of antacids or herbal products the way that you think of a prescribed medication. You think of them as something to help you digest your meal better or stop you from burping. They have side effects. Just because they don't come with a prescription doesn't mean they don't interact with your prescription medication.

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Karen Brown

And falls are one of the potential side effects that comes with some medications or combination of medications. Now, if you want to have a checklist, go to TheOldish.com. You'll need a membership, but it's free. You just need to sign up for it. Now, the reason you need to have a membership is because when you're making your list of medications, it's nobody else's business.

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Karen Brown

So you need a password to protect that information. We have that information available or the list, I should say available. You go to the tool kit after you get your membership

and you go to medication checklist. Once you filled it all out, you can download it, you can save it, you can email it, you could email it to your doctor, you could email it to an adult child.

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Karen Brown

Whatever you need to do, you can keep that medication checklist up to date as well by adding or subtracting items. Once you have the list done, however you choose to do it. Whether it's the one that we provide at the oldest dot com or you do it yourself just on a piece of paper, take it to your next health care appointment and take it to your pharmacist.

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Karen Brown

You go over the list with your health care provider and with your pharmacist, and you're looking for medications that conflict that are old and don't need to be taken any longer. And maybe things that have adverse effects, things that are contra indicated every time you see your health care provider, take that list with you. And every time a new prescription is prescribed, whip out that list and ask if something needs to come off or if there are issues with any of the combinations.

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Karen Brown

Do that with your pharmacist as well. Definitely review that list annually with your health care team. Now, let's take a minute and just look at the broader picture. The town that I live in has sidewalks and while there is a plan in place to replace them on a schedule, they are still subject to heaving over the winter. I live in a place where there are four seasons, and so while you're out walking, pay attention because surfaces may not be level anymore.

00;16;11;14 - 00;16;32;28

Karen Brown

The sidewalks can heave over the winter and you know, you need to keep your eyes on that ground. But while you can see the big heaves, you can't see the little ones that I'm thinking of, the ones that are less than a quarter of an inch, and those are the ones that you're likely to catch a toe on and fall because you didn't see them to begin with.

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Karen Brown

In fact, if your municipality doesn't have a program to mark these heaves in the sidewalks with spray paint so that they're more visible, you might consider asking them to do so. This is an issue as well for people who have mobility devices of any kind, whether it's a walker or a wheelchair. Okay, Let's get back home for our last segment, Spring cleaning and repairs around the house.

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Karen Brown

I definitely advise a to do list or maybe you call it a honey do list, whatever you like to call it. You need to have a list of repairs for your home porches, walkways and patios need to be swept and inspected for those winter heaves. At home, you may have a little sidewalk that takes you to your garage or out to the the main sidewalk of the town that may have heaved.

00;17;22;06 - 00;17;48;08

Karen Brown

Or you may have a patio with stones that have heaved over the winters. I say winters because you may not have done it before. Take a look at those and make sure that you put those on your list to be leveled. Railings, both inside and outside, need to be assessed and tightened. You need them to barrier weight. If you slip or if they are loose, they may not serve you.

00;17;49;05 - 00;18;15;28

Karen Brown

In fact, they can come right out of the wall or out of their moorings if they are required to bear your weight and they haven't been checked on. Light bulbs need to be noted if they are burnt out and need changing. On the subject of light. Make sure you have a look around in the early evening and make sure that any areas you may use on those beautiful summer evenings when we all love to sit outside are properly lit for you and your guests.

00;18;16;27 - 00;18;38;16

Karen Brown

If you make use of security cams, make sure they are functioning and still accessible through your apps. If you use sliding glass doors to access your balcony or patio, make sure they're still sliding nicely for you that they don't need lubrication because you can hurt yourself if you try to hustle on those doors and they're not moving the way that you need them to move.

00;18;39;04 - 00;18;57;09

Karen Brown

Check your landscaping and note trees or shrubs that need to be trimmed back as well. You want to make sure that you always have a good line of sight around your property and that anyone who has less than honorable intentions isn't given a place to hide. That's a good list of stuff for you to go into spring with, isn't it?

00;18;57;18 - 00;19;24;04

Karen Brown

It's all about making sure that you can stay as independent as you want to be while maintaining an environment that is safe and maintaining your dignity. Thank you for listening and we'll touch base again soon. Real Life Renos - The Podcast is a production of Reno Studios executive produced by Karen Brown. This is Real Life theme music and lyrics by Jane Carmichael, recorded at Swamp Songs recording studio in Lucan, Ontario.

00;19;24;14 - 00;19;41;08

Karen Brown

Engineered by Matt Weston. Thank you for tuning in.