



Lily Hou

STRENGTHENING LEG MUSCLES FOR BETTER MOBILITY

My recent tour group made up of 60 to 80 year olds just got back from Egypt. It's considered a low activity level and we walked an average of 2 miles per day. While most travelers were fit, some really struggled with stairs and walking. A few people tripped and fell.

There may be various reasons, but I believe one of the reasons is weak leg muscles. When we have weak leg muscles, especially the thighs, glutes, and calves, it can greatly impact balance by reducing stability and making going up the stairs much more difficult. Some need to pull the handrail which creates falling risks. Leg weakness, besides certain medical issues, is often caused by inactivity, which we can improve.

Here are a few simple, easy and yet practical exercises to strengthen leg muscles, improve balance and maintain an active lifestyle reducing the risks of falling or other injuries.

Daily Walking: Daily walking around your block or in your house. Walking is the simplest way to improve motor function, build muscle mass and strength. Daily walking also will improve body coordination and balance, preventing falls related to weak leg muscles.

Sit-to-Stand Exercises: Sit on a sturdy chair with feet flat on the floor. Stand up completely and then sit back down, repeating this as quickly and safely as possible for 30 seconds. A successful stand requires a full upright position.

Table (Armrests)-Assisted Standing: Sit on the front edge of a chair with feet below the knees and hands on your dining table or armrests, lean forward, and push the feet and the hands to stand up and lean forward again to sit down. This can be done slower.

Standing Calf and Heel Lifts: Start in a standing position or standing by holding onto something with feet hip-width apart, raise the heels to engage

the calves and lower back down. Start with 15 repetitions and work your way up to a few sets. An alternative choice can be seated calf and heel lifts.

Seated Calves, Toe, Heel Lifts and Ankle Circles: Sit in a chair with back upright, lift toes and heels repeatedly for 30 seconds and for 2 - sets. Heel and toe lifts strengthen the lower leg muscles, improve balance, ankle stability, and calf strength.

Rotate the foot in a circular motion, clockwise and then counterclockwise for 15 repetitions per direction and up to 2 - 3 sets. Ankle circles are a range-of-motion exercise that improves ankle flexibility and mobility.

Sitting Single-Leg Lifts: Sit upright in a chair with feet flat on the floor. Lift one knee up and down a few inches or hold the lift for a few seconds and then lower down. Repeat 15 times for 2 to 3 sets. This will definitely strengthen your hip flexors and quadriceps.

Standing Sides and Back Leg Lifts: Hold onto a chair or kitchen counter, stand upright and kick one leg straight back and kick sideways engaging your glute. Each with 10 repetitions or more and do both sides. This can effectively strengthen the glutes and improve balance. It is important to do these movements deliberately while holding onto something for support if needed.

With the right exercises, we can stay active and independent by consistently engaging in regular physical activities for a long, healthy life.*

Lily Hou has owned Green Yoga House (greenyogahouse.com) since 2003. She began her practice in the mid-1990s and quickly discovered the transforming benefits of yoga for her rheumatoid arthritis. She has received training by some renowned yoga masters on various styles. As a certified yoga instructor, Lily is known to teach with an eclectic blend of many styles and uses her extensive knowledge of body alignments and exercise safety in designing her classes to meet individual needs. She approaches her mostly private classes with enthusiasm, compassion and respect for each client. Lily has a Bachelor's Degree in English and a Master's Degree in American Literature. She frequently speaks on yoga and wellness. She is also passionate about her fun jewelry business, "Lily Hand Made." greenyogahouse.com • 515-991-6266



Confidence is Earned

I always dreamt of having confidence like the kids in the classroom seemed to have. I didn't see uncertainty in their eyes, like I felt it in my body. They all had history together, they probably had a perfect life, and a mom and dad that loved them. I was always the new girl, hoping I didn't get too many stares or hear whispers as I walked in between the unfamiliar faces hoping I'd find my desk. As a child, I had changed schools every year, (many times twice in one year), from 4th grade until High School. I was not from a military family, I had a mom that struggled with her mental health and also had a drug addiction. I couldn't explain that to anyone, couldn't have friends over, nor could I feel safe at home. Although the faces were new, it was the same scene, over and over again. I found safety in the consistency of a classroom. I would rather walk into the unknown of a new school, as I held my trapper keeper tight against my body, hoping someone would talk to me at lunch or recess...then to go home. Perhaps, just perhaps, each new school provided me with hope that it would get better. I never quite fit in, never knew where I belonged, never knew it would be okay. I will always be that little girl inside. Looking in the mirror now I see remnants of who I used to be, who I am now, and who I have yet to become. Confidence is listening to your heart, moving towards something that feels better than before, and having hope that you will experience the fullness of what life has to offer. It takes courage, strength, and the belief that you deserve to feel peace in a world that isn't always safe. You have to put in the effort of undoing and unlearning, letting go, rebuilding your perceptions of what can be-AND doing the hard work to get there. THIS is confidence. *

Amy Davis, MSW, LISW

Amy is a mom, wife, Clinical Social Worker, advocate for mental health, public speaker, and soon to be published author. Since losing her mom to suicide in late 2011, Amy began her journey of healing with the understanding that it was up to her to heal and change generational wounds. This meant seven years of advanced education as a single mom, showing herself, and her daughters, that they could do anything they set their hearts and minds to. Amy now is married and has a beautiful blended family with four amazing children, who are all on their own path of self-discovery.

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2025

Holiday Mart

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1

9 A.M. – 3 P.M.

9225 Cascade Ave. in West Des Moines

Carved Santa figures and pens Wooden and crocheted toys Fiber arts, pottery, and ceramics Linoleum block prints and fused and blown glass Paintings and photographs	Embroidered dish towels and knitted socks Goat's milk soaps and lotions Paper quilling and jewelry Decorated felt and quilted bags Breads, baked goods, nuts, candy, and honey
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