

# Avoid the Sideways Shuffle with Universal Design

Above: Universal Design Bathroom Photo by Great Grabz  
Right: Vita Anne Burdi, Certified Kitchen & Bath Designer, VP of DJ's Home Improvements, Universal Design Speaker



by Vita Anne Burdi, CKD, CBD

A few months ago I spoke at a Senior's Day seminar about the importance of Universal Design. At first, the attendees were not very open to the concept but after the first few moments and a personal story I shared with the group many of the attendees had something to take away from the presentation.

I would like to reiterate that Universal Design is not only important in your golden years and useful as aging-in-place design, it is **important all the time for every stage of life**. It's about ease-of-use and safety around your home.

I was not in my golden years when I had an operation. Upon returning home from the hospital I was forced to do the sideways shuffle in to 19" high tub. This task, post-op, proved to be difficult to say the least. Also, had we installed a

handheld shower in the tub, it would have made things so much easier for me.

And I definitely could have used some universal design elements installed in my home when I first had my sons, Anthony and Matthew.

A lever door handle and wider doorways would have been so helpful when multi-tasking and carrying the laundry basket, baby bottles and the toys off the floor...

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"I Look In The Mirror And Say, 'Who The Hell Is She!'"

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VITA ANNE BURDI, CKD, CBD - Universal Design speaker  
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Find Vita's Universal Design presentation on Youtube at: <http://youtu.be/KOMtHNTClcc>

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## TRIVIA QUESTION

Question:

Falls are a leading cause of injuries from accidents in the homes among Americans 65 and older.

- a) True
- b) False

By the year 2030, the number of people aged over 65 will soar to about 72.1 million (1 in 5 Americans).

- a) True
- b) False

If you know the answer call for a chance to win!

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## Avoid the Sideways Shuffle with Universal Design

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all at once.

Incorporating universal design into your home can be done with just a few **small upgrades** or it can be a full **remodel**. If you are ready to make everyone's lives easier by incorporating universal design into your home here are a few design elements to think about and use for your home improvement project.

- Change bath and kitchen floor tiles to a **less slippery** tile
- Install **handheld** shower heads, with hose attached, preferably at the hand level.



- Install an adjustable tub or shower chair. (You are not limited to institutional-looking pieces. There are **designer options** to choose from.)
- Replace standard doorknobs with **levers**, which are easier to manipulate than twist doorknobs or latches. Replace knobs on cabinets with large loops or finger pull tabs, which also require less gripping.
- Install **low curb** entries in the shower area, and
- Install nonslip and color-contrasting **grab bars** near the toilet and in the bath and shower areas.

If you have any further questions, would like some additional ideas and need help with Universal Design in your home, please call **DJ's Home Improvements at (516) 775-8696**.



### Accessible Kitchen Design

It's hard enough trying to figure out what to whip up for dinner every night. It's much harder, even **unfathomable** to someone like me, to try to cook a dinner while wheelchair-bound in a kitchen that is unsafe and **inconvenient**, where many items are out of reach.

This was the case for 19 year-old Emily and her mother, Ellen, who both suffer from Larsen's syndrome, a rare disorder that affects the bones and joints.

We were approached by the people at Home Free Home to help build a universal design kitchen, a design that would be **accessible** to Emily and Ellen, as well as Marc, Emily's dad who is not wheelchair bound.

Before the kitchen was remodeled there were many issues to contend with, such as, many high and low areas that couldn't be accessed, not being able to reach the sink or countertop and difficulty carrying pots and pans to and from the stove. Oftentimes, Emily would wait for dad,

Marc, to return home to complete a kitchen task for her – even the preparation of the simplest meals.

In collaboration with architect Mark Wittenberg, the kitchen redesign is especially **adapted** to meet the abilities of mother and daughter. It would include two prep areas: one with the counter slightly lower than regular height with open spaces under the induction cook top so Emily's wheelchair can roll right under. On the other side of the kitchen there is another countertop space that is shallow ( 20") and low ( 30") . It has a small sink with an easy to use single lever faucet.



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## Accessible Kitchen Design (continued from page 2)

A side by side refrigerator would allow Emily to reach the freezer. Other details include: pull out drawers for pots, easy to reach outlets and light switches and raised toe-kicks.



For the first time, when she came home for spring break from Adelphi University, Emily enjoyed being able to cook on her own. Ellen is also looking forward to more **independence** in her kitchen and teaching her daughter the skills she will need to live a more independent life.

"It was so relaxing to know we were in such professional and compassionate hands and we



couldn't be happier with the choice of finishes, fixtures, cabinet handles and all the other design features which make our kitchen **functional** and **beautiful.**", says Ellen.

\* If you have any questions about this project or would like some additional ideas and need help with Universal Design in your home, please call **DJ's Home Improvements at (516) 775-8696.**

\*\* A special thanks to the following for their generous help with this project: Home Free Home, Mark Wittenberg AIA, Appliance World, All Island Countertop Fabrication, Consumers Kitchens and Baths, and JP Painting.



Emily with her first cooked meal in her new kitchen.

## Recipe

From DrWeil.com News

### Healthy Turmeric Tea

Tumeric with its broad anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer effects, found in curry and in the yellow mustard we use for hot dogs has been found to help prevent or alleviate some diseases such as Alzheimer's disease, arthritis and cancer.



But few Americans eat enough curry to achieve these protective effects. Although Dr. Weil does not recommend daily mustard-laden hot dogs as the ideal turmeric delivery device, he found a potential solution during one of his many trips to Okinawa, the island nation with the world's longest average life span, 81.2 years.

Okinawans drink copious quantities of turmeric tea. Some brew it fresh, but others simply buy cans or powdered instant versions of unsweetened tea from their local stores.

If you would like to try it, here's a recipe. Feel free to experiment with the ingredients and flavorings until you find a combination that suits your taste:

- Bring four cups of water to a boil.
- Add one teaspoon of ground turmeric and reduce to a simmer for 10 minutes.
- Strain the tea through a fine sieve into a cup, add honey and/or lemon to taste.

Some people like to add a teaspoon of ginger along with the turmeric. While ground versions are more convenient, it's worthwhile to experiment with freshly grated turmeric for a more vibrant flavor. These distinctive, deep-orange roots are increasingly available in American grocery and natural food stores. Enjoy!



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