



There's a poem I really like that describes putting up a fence along a cliff (seen as prevention) to prevent people from falling off the edge when they get too close. Or, not putting up a fence but instead an ambulance at the bottom in the valley to take people to the hospital when they fall (rehabilitation). Written in ~1895!

Do our lifestyle behavior choices include fences or ambulances?
Are we exercising regularly before by choice or after we fall as prescribed?
What event, or condition might we develop because we walked along the edge of the cliff without a second thought.
Until it happens. We fall off. Now, we're in cardiac rehab, or prescribed medication to lower blood pressure, lose weight, or decrease our cholesterol.
Go get yourself some 2x4's and start building that fence!

The Fence or The Ambulance by Joseph Malins 1895

'Twas a dangerous cliff, as they freely confessed, Though to walk near its crest was so pleasant: But over its terrible edge there had slipped A duke and many a peasant; So the people said something would have to be done. But their projects did not at all tally: Some said, "Put a fence around the edge of the cliff" Some, "An ambulance down in the valley."

But the cry for the ambulance carried the day, For it spread to the neighboring city: A fence may be useful or not, it is true, But each heart became brimful of pity. For those who had slipped o'er that dangerous cliff, And the dwellers in highway and alley Gave pounds or gave pence, not to put up a fence, But an ambulance down in the valley.

"For the cliff is alright if you're careful," they said, "and if folks even slip or are dropping, it isn't the slipping that hurts them so much as the shock down below-when they're stopping," So day after day when these mishaps occurred, Quick forth would the rescuers sally, To pick up the victims who fell off the cliff, With their ambulance down in the valley.

Then an old man remarked, "it's a marvel to me that people give far more attention, To repairing results than to stopping the cause, when they'd much better aim at prevention. Let us stop at its source all this mischief, cried he. "Come neighbors and friends let us rally: If the cliff we will fence, we might almost dispense with the ambulance down in the valley."

"He is wrong in the head." the majority said, "he would end all our earnest endeavor" He'd dispense with all charities, too, if he could: no, no! We'll support them forever. Aren't we picking up all just as fast as they fall, And giving them care liberally? A superfluous fence is no consequence, if the ambulance works in the valley?"

The story looks queer as we've written it here, But things oft occur that are stranger, More humane, we assert, than to succor the hurt, Is the plan of removing the danger. The best possible course is to safeguard the source, By attending to things rationally, Yes, build up the fence and let us dispense with the ambulance down in the valley.

Excerpts from *The Best Loved Poems of the American People* Compiled by Hazel Felleman Published by Doubleday, 1936