



Healthy ageing in action



Read Joy's real-life story about ageing well through everyday tools and family support



Joy Ingram is a go-getter. As she ages, she's getting used to slowing down and accepting support, largely from her daughter Christine.

"For mum, it's been a big change in her life, because she's always been independent. She's always been able to just go, go, go – nonstop," Christine said. "When she left work it was a massive change in terms of her whole, 'Who am I?' You know, her whole wellbeing changed."

On our ageing journey, our sense of self can come into question. Who are we, when we can't do all the things we used to? Christine, who is a Team Leader and Outreach Worker at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, sees this come to the fore for many of her clients.

"I think the challenge for them is that they're getting older. They've got to think about, 'Oh jeez, there are things that I can't do on my own.' And it's actually asking for that support" Christine said.

Joy still lives on her own. Outside of her support network, she maintains independence in many ways through the use of everyday tools. "In terms of what I know my mother used to do, she doesn't have that same capacity. But she soldiers on as much as she can," Christine said.

Joy uses a walking frame when she's out and about, and a walking stick to get around the house. Other simple home modifications, like a handrail and chair in the shower, help to make life easier. Joy also has a personal alarm, so if anything happens while she's home alone, she can press a button for help. Plus, Christine and other family members are never far away.

Staying active and seeing loved ones remain big parts of Joy's life. "Our family network is, you know, everything," Christine said.

Christine and Joy are proud Gimuy Walubara Yidinji women. "We've also got family in Far North Queensland, so we take mum home to Country and catch up," Christine said. "Because we know if you're isolated and your mobility is getting less and less, it's not good for the rest of the body. So it's just trying every day to do something to keep that energy and body moving."

Joy agrees. "You've just got to keep moving," Joy said. "Get up and rock and roll. Always. There's nothing stopping me. You know what I mean? You go forward, not backwards."

The Everyday Tools to Help Mob Guide was co-designed with First Nations Elders and Elder care experts to explore options for ageing well. "The booklet and the resources – and just us being able to come together and have that yarn, particularly our Elders that sat around the table – have shown that there are other aids and equipment they can benefit from to live independently," Christine said.

"The longer we look after ourselves, and have the proper resources to actually support us to continue to live a happy, healthy life, we'll be happier in ourselves," Christine said. "Your life changes depending on your health and everything else, but if you look after yourself now, the transition won't be so daunting."

Featured artwork:

Walking Hand in Hand by Matty Atkinson
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