



FAMILIES
OF VETERANS GUILD

EMPOWERING WIDOWS TO HAVE COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT AGEING

Ageing is a deeply personal journey, and for many war widows it is shaped by decades of strength, sacrifice, and caring for others. As life circumstances change, one of the most important acts of self-care is the willingness to have open, courageous conversations with loved ones about future needs, concerns, and wishes. Though these conversations can feel daunting, they are important to have as they support dignity, choice, and agency in your ageing journey.

Many people share that they worry they are “becoming a burden,” to their families. Sharing your ageing journey helps to ensure all aspects of your wellbeing (emotional, physical, social, and cultural) are supported in the way you need them to be. You have lived through significant change and adversity, and sharing your life journey/story helps family members understand how your experiences shape your wishes for the future.

Honesty and intention

Starting these conversations does not require perfect words; just honesty and intention. Drawing on insights from Brené Brown’s *Atlas of the Heart*, the process of opening up is an act of vulnerability, which Brown describes as the truest form of courage. The initial discomfort you may feel is not a sign of doing something wrong, but a sign that you are engaging in something meaningful and brave. Before starting, create a space where you feel comfortable and safe and is free of distractions. This might look like inviting your family over for a pot of tea in the garden.

Speaking from the heart using “I” statements can support you in sharing your story. For example, “I’ve been thinking about what would help me feel secure going forward” can open the door to deeper conversation. Share what matters most: your preferences for housing, health support, social connections, finances, or how you wish to maintain independence. Discussing what helps you feel safe is especially powerful because it shifts the focus from fear to empowerment.

Collaborating with loved ones

These conversations should also be collaborative. Asking your loved ones for their thoughts reinforces that ageing is something families navigate together and normalises uncertainty. Emotions may arise, but as Brown notes, emotions are not problems to fix. They are meaningful signals that help us understand one another with compassion and clarity. War widows and your families do not have to navigate these discussions or their ageing journey alone.



FAMILIES OF VETERANS GUILD

At Families of Veterans Guild, the social work team can support you and your family to explore their unique needs and access aged care supports such as My Aged Care services, Department of Veteran Affairs Veteran Home Care programs, and Families of Veterans Guild wellbeing and social connection programs for war widows and families of veterans. These services provide practical assistance and emotional reassurance to empower you and your family to navigate the ageing journey in a trauma informed and considered way.

If you would like to find out more about ways to support your wellbeing, visit

Wellbeing: familiesofveterans.org.au/wellbeing-support-defence-veteran-families/

Social Work: familiesofveterans.org.au/social-work-support/

If you or your loved one wish to explore creative ways to work with grief or adjustment such as the ageing journey, we invite you to join our monthly writing through grief workshops.

Visit familiesofveterans.org.au/project/defence-families-wellbeing-events/ or scan the QR code.

