



FAMILIES  
OF VETERANS GUILD

# HOW TO SUPPORT LOVED ONES TO HAVE COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT AGEING

*Supporting a loved one as they age is a meaningful part of family life. It is important to approach mindfully, meeting your loved one where they are at in their journey. War widows in our community have spent decades caring for others, showing resilience through loss, change, and responsibility. As they grow older, one of the most supportive things families can do is to gently open conversations about ageing needs, concerns, and hopes for the future. Many people share that they worry they are “becoming a burden,” to their families. This is why supporting vulnerable conversations about ageing is so important.*

Families can support their loved one through compassionate communication which ensures that their physical, emotional, social, and cultural wellbeing is supported in the ways they need whilst normalising feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability. Brené Brown's insights in *Atlas of the Heart* remind us that vulnerability is an act of courage and that emotions are not something to “fix” they are something to observed with empathy and worked through with curiosity, and self-compassion.

By starting the conversation over a cup of tea, families can establish and grow a safe and respectful space for conversation and healing.

## Starting the conversation

Families can begin by acknowledging and validating their loved one's life story (strength, losses, and contributions) so they feel heard and understood. Brene notes that our ability to connect is strengthened when we share meaning, not just logistics, and the most powerful way to share meaning is through story. Remain curious about their experiences asking what they need you to understand and what helps them to feel supported and secure.

This includes practical considerations such as living arrangements, independence, health support, social connections, and safety. Invite their reflections, holding space for their grief about what used to be, and allowing time to process where they are at now.

Families do not need to navigate this alone. Our social work team is here to help. We can support you and your loved one 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 our 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 loved one to navigate the ageing journey in a gentle and considered way.