



Visibility Podcast



Being a parent, a child, a family

Fiona

Hi everyone and thanks for listening to Visibility, the monthly podcast produced by CID, the Council for Intellectual Disability.

Here, we will be telling our stories and discussing issues that impact people with intellectual disabilities. To find out more about our work, visit www.cid.org.au. Now settle in and enjoy.

Music

[CID's podcast tune]

Adele

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Council for Intellectual Disability acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Adele

You're listening to Visibility, the Council for Intellectual Disability podcast. Today, we'll be talking with Judith about her experience as a person with an intellectual disability who is also a parent and grandparent and some of the joys and challenges of a family relationship. Welcome Judith. How are you today?

Judith

I'm good thank you.

Adele



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Oh, that's really good. Thank you so much for taking the time to chat with us on the podcast.

Judith

Glad to.

Adele

Excellent. Now Judith, I know you have some incredible life experience and I want chat with you about what it was like way back when you were a first time Mum and talk about what that experience was like for you. Now Judith you have four children, right?

Judith

I have four children now, yes I do.

Adele

How old are they now?

Judith

First one's going to be 39 in December, the youngest is 27.

Adele

That must have been really hectic having so many kids in the house. Could you tell us what it was like day to day? Running around in a busy house trying to do work and be a busy mum?



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Judith

It gets a bit crowded. When we have a family get together, it's a big family.

Adele

How many people do you reckon would be at a big family gathering, Judith, you're your family? [Laughs]

Judith

Over thirty. My four kids and their partners and my great grandson and his Mum, that's quite a lot.

Adele

So Judith, you have a lot of experience with family with being a mother and a grandmother and a great-grandmother and a great-great-grandmother. What do you think makes a happy healthy family?

Judith

Healthy relationships. Yeah, healthy. Having a healthy relationship connects families together. As a family, love and respect. Lots of love.

Adele

What makes a good relationship? How can you tell, Judith, if you're having a good relationship with someone?

Judith: Just be there. Be respectful. Respect for the person for who they are. I just want them to be happy. Happy with their own lives, yeah.



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Adele: Can you tell us what it was like being a new mother with your daughter? What kind of things did you really think about when you realised you were pregnant?

Judith: I was looking forward to being a Mum. Because I was pretty confident I'd be a good Mum. There were some things I wasn't sure about. Was she being looked after? Am I doing the right things to her? Was I going to be a good Mum? I had a lot of questions in my mind that time. My first one. I was less stressful than now to have my babies. Because if I was stressed, the baby could feel the stress too.

Adele: What's one of your favorite memories as a new Mum?

Judith

Burped my first child. That was almost 39 years ago. Was different, was new. My life's changed. Had to undergo some changes during my life when I was pregnant with my first child. Had to settle down and become a responsible parent. I did have some challenges there then went past that later on

Adele

And so, do you think because you grew up with an intellectual disability, were you looking out for that with your babies?

Judith

I did yeah I did. Before they were born I was looking out. I had plans to look out. Just make sure they didn't go through what I went through. I wouldn't let that happen to them to them. I had to make sure they got all the help and support they needed.



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Adele

For your childhood experience, did you get the support that you needed when you were a baby and a kid and a grown-up?

Judith

No. I had to get tested when I was six years old. It was ordered by New South Wales welfare. It was called welfare at that time, known as Department of Community Services.

Adele Do you have siblings with intellectual disability?

Judith

Not my siblings, just one of my cousins.

Adele

And so, did you feel that you were treated differently than your siblings because of your intellectual disability?

Judith

They were a lot more tougher with me than with my brothers. My mum didn't put me first, just put my brothers first before me. They said I gave them a hard time. They didn't know what to do.

Adele

And I know we were chatting about how you wanted to ensure your children got some of the support that you didn't get. Do you think that gave you a bit more of an insight?



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Maybe you would have been looking out with your new babies a bit more than say a Mum without, or a parent without intellectual disability?

Judith

Yeah I did look out more. I didn't want my children to turn out the same as me. Same struggle as I had. I had plans that if they did I would get them help already, get started. I started school almost nine years old.

Adele Wow, that's late isn't it?

Judith

Yes, yes, yes. It was late, and that's why my children were going to start early. When I was fifteen years old I made the choice, I'm not going to end up same as my mum. I didn't want to be anything like her. I had a difficult relationship with her. I didn't want the same thing to happen to my girls. I'd be more open and honest with them, yes. I learned my experience with from my Mum, and her Mum too yeah. It took my Grandma a long time to accept it. For the last two years of her life she accepted me. I'm a bit more understandable, not so narrow-minded. My girls can tell me things.

Adele

So you wanted to make sure that as a parent yourself, your kids could always come and talk to you?

Judith

Come talk to me, tell me things, yes, yes. I didn't want to be someone who was judgmental, because my Mum was very judgmental, I didn't like that.

Adele So you wanted to be an open-minded parent.



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Judith

Be Open minded, yeah yeah.

Adele Do you think you are Judith?

Judith

I think I am. Some values are a little bit different. I keep my values and my morals to myself a little.

Adele

And so, Judith, do any of your children have disabilities at all?

Judith

A slight borderline my second daughter with ID. As an adult she has a mental health more than anything else.

Adele

And so did you pick up on her mild intellectual disability when she was young?

Judith

No, I didn't. Not until she started pre-school, and they realised something wasn't right. Something was a little bit wrong. Then I started to notice it later when they told me. So I asked for help then.



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Adele

And did they include you in all the stuff that was happening?

Judith

Yes, yes they did.

Adele

That's excellent, yeah. Do you feel like, because you know what it's like to have an intellectual disability, you were able to understand your daughter a bit better?

Judith

I do, yes. When I first found out they said "get her support, give her help" and I did. On her level, like learning. She's doing fine. She's good reader, good spelling. She never gave up. Kept going. Like her Mum [laughs].

Adele

Sounds like it's part of your philosophy, Judith, to keep going. And did you have much support from your family and partner at the time?

Judith

No family support at all. No partner support.

Adele

Wow. That's really tough, isn't it?

Judith



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It was tough, yes.

Adele

And you did that with four children.

Judith

All four children.

Adele Wow, that's incredible. And so Judith, can you tell us a little bit more about what it was like doing all the first things? Like you first stayed home with your new baby? What was that like setting things up and organising yourself for a new baby in your life?

Judith

Was different. Was different, yes. I was a bit nervous and scared at first but then things got better.

Adele I think all new parents would agree to that.

Judith

Yes, yes.

Adele You had two babies under two at one stage, didn't you?

Judith

Yes, I had two babies under two years.



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Adele

And so what was it like juggling that?

Judith

I knew I can. I can get organised, look after two kids myself. Learning experience from my first one. It kept me busy.

Adele

I bet. And so what was the difference between having your first baby and having your second baby?

Judith

Extra chores, extra responsibility to have another child in this world, especially when the second one's a boy.

Adele

Yeah, and I guess you kind of knew what you were in for, did you?

Judith

I knew what I was in for and I knew what I had to do. More experienced.

Adele

And so with that, did you find that nurses or doctors or health professionals, did they treat you differently because you had an intellectual disability?



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Judith

No, not really no. The first time, the first baby nurse sister had a few doubts but it got better as it went along. I'm capable of looking after my baby myself, yeah.

Adele

And so now, if you were to have a conversation with a midwife or with a community nurse, people who are going to have contact with new mums and dads, anyone who's a parent, would you have any advice for them if they're going to be working with people with intellectual disability, working with new parents with intellectual disability? Would you have any advice for them?

Judith

Treat them equally like anybody else. Treat them the same. Everybody should be included the same, yep.

Adele

Lots of interesting things have been covered today. So stick around because we'll be back after this short break.

Fiona

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Adele

Welcome back. We've been talking to Judith about life as a first time Mum with an intellectual disability. Did you get to a stage, Judith, where you thought 'Oh God, should



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I tell my children that I have an intellectual disability, or should they just see me as Mum'? It's a tricky thing isn't it?

Judith

Both. I told them as they got older. Yeah, when their friends used to ask them 'Is there something wrong with your Mum?' because of my speech impediment, part of my disability. I talked about my experiences, about what it was like. The kids say "I love you Mum". They still loved me, yes, yes.

Adele

That is so good. And so Judith, I wanted to ask you, as your children were growing up and they were getting friends and going on playdates, did you have to discussions with other parents about your disability?

Judith

No, I didn't no. I didn't talk about it to other people. Maybe because I learned. I was bullied at school when I was young at school and that, they put me down, so I didn't want to talk about it to other parents.

Adele

And I guess you shouldn't have to keep telling people.

Judith

No, I didn't have to, no. I didn't tell too many people. Only ones who knew me from my childhood, see how I was doing as a Mum, they would be surprised I was doing well. Yeah.

Adele



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When you're a parent or a caretaker of a child, kids come home with homework. How did you deal when your kids started coming home with homework?

Judith

I did do my best to teach them to the best of my ability. Anything difficult I couldn't help them, only easy.

Adele

Yeah.

Judith

Easy to read and maths and easy stuff.

Adele

And were you worried that 'Oh gosh, if I can't help you, it'll make things tricky'?

Judith

It can be, yes. I went to high school but I couldn't help them anymore.

Adele

Yeah. As a parent and grandparent yourself, is there any advice you give to your children about parenting?

Judith



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Yeah, they're pretty confident as parents themselves. They're self-independent, and the two adults with mental issues try their best.

Adele

So I'm wondering Judith, if one of your girls with mental health issues called you today and said 'Mum, this is getting too much, the kids are driving me crazy.' What would you say to her?

Judith

Take time out. I say take time out. That's what I used to do. I go into my room, close the door, and go to my room for a while. The boys at school, that's what they do, take time out. When they're babies, sleep. Have a sleep. Spend time on themselves. They need their rest. Just don't take it out on your children. It's not good. It's not healthy.

Adele

What would you say, Judith, to any new Mums in the hospital at the moment. All of those doubts that you have in your mind, that you believe in yourself, what would you say to a new Mum?

Judith

Just believe in yourself. Don't put it in your mind or your mind will take over.

Adele

And so it's so great for you to be able to share with us that anyone who's a first time parent it's scary, you're worried, you're not sure if you can do a good job, but your philosophy of always trying your best and knowing that you are capable, that people started trusting that you were capable and I think that that's a great message.



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Judith

Yeah. If you want to have children, have them. Nothing should stop you, even with your ID. I've heard other people have their daughter's tubes tied. They're missing out on life, they have no choice, that's just harsh, really harsh.

Adele

Yeah, that's really harsh. It's really important that those sorts of things don't happen anymore and people have choice and control in their lives, right?

Judith

Yeah, sure do, yeah. I don't know what I'd do without my family. I had to have a choice. Wait for marriage or have children. I made the choice to have children. If I waited for somebody to marry me, I'd have no children at all. As an adult it was my choice. When I was 24, 25, I told my Mum that.

Adele

Yeah.

Judith

She did accept it later on.

Adele

And so you knew from an early age you wanted to have babies?



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Judith

I did, I did yes....I always knew. I never thought about husbands at all. I sort of knew in my heart what would happen. I love being a parent. If I didn't, I wouldn't have had anything to look forward to. It was a bit later but once I was pregnant I forgot that I was not capable. I left that behind.

Adele

That's so great and that shows a strength because I imagine a lot of people on the outside were perhaps saying that you couldn't and on the inside you were saying yes I can.

Judith

Yes I can. At least I can leave something behind on this earth. I can leave behind children and many generations to come.

Adele

Yeah, having a legacy.

Judith

Yeah, my own legacy, yeah.

Adele

Please join us again next month for episode 3 in our relationships series when we will be talking about the ins and outs of sexual relationships. Until then.

Fiona



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