

# Age And Stage Episode 1

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Elderly care, caregivers, practical advice, social life, dementia, legal issues, financial planning, independent living, family dynamics, loneliness, technology, gadgets, health issues, emotional support, expert guidance.

## SPEAKERS

Daisy McAndrew, Annabel James, Stephen Burke

### **Annabel James** 00:08

Welcome to Age and Stage, a new podcast for everybody, caring for or supporting their elderly, parents, relatives, friends, even neighbours. In this first episode, a chance to get to know the two of us,

### **Daisy McAndrew** 00:19

A friend of my mum's, who was wildly social, and I always looked up to her, was very sort of glamorous. And she always said that every year, she was determined to make a younger friend, because she knew that her friends would start dying off, and she wanted to ensure her future social life by getting younger friends. You know, she was like, she wasn't saying one or two years younger. She was like, 20, 30, 40, years younger, to keep her going, and it was fantastic. But not everybody's like that, and particularly there is that pressure isn't there on caregivers, carers to also be the social life.

### **Annabel James** 00:52

In the coming weeks, we'll bring you practical guidance, expert help and inspiration to help navigate all aspects of elderly care and old age.

### **Daisy McAndrew** 00:59

Every episode, we'll tackle a different subject in conversation with guest experts who each will bring a wealth of experience and expertise. We'll talk about all the different kinds of care, the money side of things, the legal side of things, everything you need to think about the practicalities of helping our parents and relatives remain living independently and safely for as long as possible at home,

### **Annabel James** 01:23

Subjects such as having the driving conversation, getting a diagnosis of dementia, we'll discuss family dynamics and plans to put in place.

### **Daisy McAndrew** 01:32

We'll also not run away from the difficult stuff. We'll talk about death. We'll talk about grief and those times when things go wrong, and how we can help you find a way through it.

**Annabel James 01:44**

However, Age and Stage won't be a gloom fest. We're going to talk to experts about holidays, gardening, food and, importantly, gadgets and gizmos to help make the everyday easier and, of course, the lighter side of getting older.

**Daisy McAndrew 02:04**

Hello and a very warm welcome. My name is Daisy McAndrew, and I'm with Annabel James. Annabel, you and I are going to do this podcast every week. But it's really your brain child, your baby. This is something you've been working in for a long time.

**Annabel James 02:17**

Yes. I think I've become an elderly care nerd, which is not what the careers advisor would have suggested I don't think. So I set up Age Space nearly 10 years ago, really, as a result, of what happened with me and my mum. She had a massive stroke. They were in their 70s, enjoying their retirement. We hadn't had any of these conversations, and overnight, we appeared into the elderly care department, and I always felt we failed her. We were always behind the curve. We were never making the right decisions at the right time. We didn't know who to talk to, we didn't know how to get her home from hospital. We didn't know what to do when she got home. And as I talked around friends and colleagues, it seemed that there came a point where you sort of just start to parent your parent, and it's lonely and it's quite scary and it's complicated, because it's not just about the care, it's about the practicalities, it's about the finances and the legals. So we set up Age Space, really originally, to try and help other people not have that same experience, actually, so guiding people to the right information and resources. And I hope that this podcast will be a sort of amplified audio version of that really.

**Daisy McAndrew 03:25**

Well, exactly, a one stop shop where you can get practical advice, but also not be alone. You've already mentioned it - the loneliness of caring for somebody and the guilt that comes alongside it because you never feel you're doing enough. You never feel you're on top of everything. You're always wondering, should I be doing more? How could I do more? How can I find out more? And then there is also, obviously the loneliness and guilt of the person you're looking after. We know that the elderly and we're going to come to what we are going to call, this cohort of people who we care deeply for. There doesn't seem to be a good word. We are known as the carers, but what are they known as? They're not the care-ees. We don't want to call them the infirm or the senior citizens, or whatever we might call there doesn't seem to be a decent word, so we're going to come back to them. But it is that idea, I think, with this podcast, that we want to be those friendly voices helping people find some answers, or if there aren't answers yet, just saying we get it

**Annabel James 04:24**

Absolutely. I think one of the things I've definitely learnt is a lot of it is quite grim, but there are amazing organisations and extraordinary people doing great work every day of the week to help, whether that's about funding care or some of the legal issues, or people living with dementia. So if we can just pass on just some of that information to make it a bit easier, you know, that would be success for me.

**Daisy McAndrew** 04:50

And we hear in the news all the time, by trade, I'm a journalist. I've been a journalist for 30 years, and particularly in political news, and you're always hearing about the demographics, the ageing population, the population over 60 and over 80 are growing exponentially, and it's a ticking time bomb, and it's a problem, and it's something to be sorted, and obviously it also should be celebrated. The fact that we're all living older is a great achievement, but it's not easy,

**Annabel James** 05:16

No, and it's coming at a price. You know, it's lovely to be living longer, but actually, if you're living longer, but with multiple health issues, then that's really hard. And I saw somebody the other day who said people are coming to care later because it's becoming more expensive, but also coming to it later with more things wrong. So the whole thing is almost taking on a life of its own, really, which I think is really difficult, as you say. There's lots of positives, but what we can do is going to be really interesting, I think.

**Annabel James** 05:45

Thank you so much for listening to this episode of Age and Stage. Please, if you could share the show with someone you know who might also benefit from listening. We want to make a difference with this series, and with your help, we really can. You can message direct from your podcast app, and we've also included a link in the show notes. Now back to the conversation.

**Daisy McAndrew** 06:09

Let's go back to what are we going to call the cohort of people that we are talking about? Because there are so many, frankly, quite offensive or banal words that we could hear. We could call these people who we love dearly 'senior citizens'. That sounds awfully American or 'seniors' or 'the old' so when we talk about middle age, it's not somehow an insult. So when I think we would both describe ourselves as being middle aged, I don't have any shame about that, but when we talk about old age, it comes with all these connotations. So some of our friends, who I'm sure we'll be discussing over the weeks, who have a lot to say, because we're all in that sandwich generation, they call their parents 'the old's, or 'the oldies', or the 'radio rentals', or the 'rentals', the 'pensioners'. You know all of these phrases, which are, you know, some of them are cute and some of them, but elders. Do we like elders? I was talking to some friends last night, but to me, that sounds like a sort of tribal leader, elder or something.

**Annabel James** 07:11

It's really difficult, because, exactly as you say, and different people have different views about it, and if it comes because you love them, in a way, it doesn't really matter what you call them. I think, as you alluded to, I think it's really easy to go down the slightly banal route where, dare I say it's all got a bit PC. You know, you wouldn't call your parents older people, quite formal or equally...

**Daisy McAndrew** 07:35

An old age pensioner, does that mean you have to be drawing a pension to be an OAP? And it always makes me think of, you know, the road sign with the decrepit couple with the walking stick, and that seems rather rude as well.

**Annabel James** 07:47

Yeah, I think I should have took my own lead from my dad, who, for years, called himself an older man, and then he did turn into an elderly man, and that's what he called himself.

**Daisy McAndrew** 07:57

An older gent.

**Annabel James** 07:57

Yes, well, I always took my lead from him, really. So I think it's really difficult. Maybe other people listening might have some particular views. So maybe over the weeks, we'll arrive at some expressions that we all feel. But I think the important thing to say is it's never intended to be pejorative or to be damning. However we call people, and I think some of our guests will use different terms as well. Some of it is because it's all about the paperwork, or it's all about the legislation or what have you.

**Daisy McAndrew** 08:23

And I suppose one of the things where we're talking about caregivers, carers, when do you go from just being a son or a daughter or a niece or nephew to a carer? And how do you know that you've sort of crossed that rubicon? Because somebody who might pop around once a week and take some shopping, they're not necessarily a carer, but they're still going out of their way to help somebody who perhaps can't do their own shopping.

**Annabel James** 08:45

Nobody wants to talk about old age, and nobody really wants to talk about death, and particularly in their own families. Somehow it's got to be a bit about planning ahead, I think, unlike my family, who bounced into it in the middle of the night,

**Daisy McAndrew** 08:57

Yeah, sometimes it creeps up.

**Annabel James** 08:59

It really creeps up on you. So I think somehow it's about paying a bit more attention when you go home and when you see them, you know what's the fridge looking like? I don't want anybody looking in my fridge. If things start to be massively out of their sell by date, or there isn't much food in the fridge.

**Daisy McAndrew** 09:14

And somebody who was always very house proud, just it starts feeling different, smelling different,

**Annabel James** 09:20

Exactly, and things like is the post being opened? Somebody was telling me the other day that it transpired that their mum hadn't opened the post for five months since her dad had gone into a home, because her dad had always opened the post. So just things like that, really and then, as you say, smells and whatnot, is really difficult, but you know it when you see it, if mum's looking a bit more dishevelled than usual, maybe talk to the neighbours, if you can. Or, you know, if they have a cleaner,

the cleaner is always the first to know I think, if things are not great, and then if you can recognise a bit of what might be happening, it's then trying to start those conversations. And that's where, obviously, life becomes quite complicated, because nobody really wants to talk about this stuff, but I think there are three questions that, if you can ask them, do, which is, where do you want to live? Do you want to stay in your own home? Would you think about down-sizing or do you want to come and move in with me? The second question is, let's think about care in the abstract for now, if you're going to need care, what would you like? Would you have people living in? Do you only want people who come in the day? Is there a care home locally that everybody would like to go into should they need to? And then the third question, which is the real biggie, is, how's that going to be paid for? I think particularly at the moment, of course, but those start to shape, I think how you can begin to think about care, or later life, or whatever you call it.

**Daisy McAndrew** 10:45

Exactly, and you can use that structure of where do you want to live, but I suppose even before you get that stage, it's, do you think you need help? Because particularly with that generation, we know how stoic they are, you can offer help and the answer you'll very often get is, I'm fine thank you very much. And you know, can be taken as an insult, and that can lead to, you know, family. And obviously I want to say we will be referring to, you know, parents and families, and we know that not everybody is related to the person that they're caring for. It might be a neighbour, it might be a friend, but the other thing you know, some of the statistics on the ageing population, which I referred to earlier, are extraordinary. Millions more in the next 10 years will be over 85 and all the issues that that brings with it. And then, of course, the sandwich generation, that's exactly where I am. I have teenage kids who are about to be 19 and 17, and a mother in her mid 80s with a lot of mobility issues and some memory issues. A few generations ago, your kids would leave home at 18 or 20, and your parents would probably be in their 60s. Now, you've still got kids at home that you're having to look after, but because so many of us have children later, in your 30s or even 40s now, and your parents need a lot of help at the same time, it's a completely different ball game than it was for our parents generation.

**Annabel James** 11:23

Definitely and also, as you say, more women working, working longer. A lot of us living further away. Back in the old days, people didn't move so far away, so it was much easier within a family unit. So everything has changed, and there's some crazy statistics that they reckon. It's between seven and 10 million people providing unpaid care every week for an elderly parent or relative. And from this year onwards, there are going to be more people in the workplace with elderly dependents than those with childcare responsibilities, and we just seem to have sleep-walked.

**Daisy McAndrew** 12:12

I mean, that's an interesting topic that we can look into another week. You get time off work, not officially, but unofficially. You would definitely get time off work if your child is sick and so on. But do you necessarily get that time off work if you need to accompany an elderly parent to a hospital appointment or something like that. The system and the structures aren't set up for the way we live now and the difficulties that a lot of us face

**Annabel James 13:09**

Absolutely I mean, that's slightly changing a bit. Just to be geeky, the Carers Leave Act came in last year, and that gives everybody in employment a week of unpaid care leave every year. So it's beginning very slowly to be useful, but we've got a long, long way to go before it's anything like, for example, maternity or paternity leave. Thank you so much for listening to Age and Stage from Age Space. If you'd like to find out more about how we can help, then go straight to [agespace.org](http://agespace.org) we've got loads of resources, information and guidance on all aspects of elderly care, from different care options to funding, the legal things, as well as some of the practicalities of the day to day. Now back to the conversation.

**Daisy McAndrew 13:58**

Obviously, we are not going to be talking about all the sort of the gloomy stuff, because there are so many innovations around that people don't. You know, whether it's gadgets or gizmos or things that you can buy or things you can use technology. We know about a lot of these things, the panic buttons and so on, that people can use. But we're used to, when you have a young child, you know, you're used to finding ways to make your house safe for a toddler. But there are, I mean, this now is going to sound very patronising, I don't mean it that way at all, but there are now some really impressive gadgets and gizmos that you can use to help the person you're caring for's home be as safe as possible.

**Annabel James 14:35**

Absolutely and we were just speaking the other day about these fancy schmancy, tiny lifts that you can now put into your house. I mean, they're really expensive, but exactly there's lots of really practical stuff. I mean, even in the kitchen, my mum loved cooking, and actually it became a real nightmare for her because of her mobility. But there were all sorts of little funny non slip things and stuff that we were able to do in the kitchen that really just made a difference for her, actually. So there is loads of good stuff as well, which we shall enjoy speaking about, I think, you know, holidays and interesting things to do so.

**Daisy McAndrew 15:07**

And then there's the other, we talked about the loneliness and the guilt, but one of the themes that's come up, you and I have discussed a lot recently with a lot of our friends, is siblings, and what a big deal that is, when you are caring for somebody because the resentment that seems to bubble over in so many families between the one who feels like he or she and it is more often a she, but not always, he or she is doing the lion's share, and then the other sibling that tends to think that their brother or sister is a martyr and is constantly banging on about how much they're doing and constantly blaming or pointing the finger. And so it's not just the relationship between you and your parent or the person you're caring for, but between you and the rest of your family that is fraught with danger and problems

**Annabel James 15:52**

And there's never an easy answer, is there? Because every family is different. The thing I have heard more than once, which I really like, if it's possible to do, is to try and share the responsibility kind of before you need to, if you can. So, you know, somebody's living in Australia, maybe they can do the finances, or, if somebody's really close, they look after the home, and somebody else might look after the actual care. So I think it's about playing to people's strengths, maybe somehow, so that everybody



does feel they have a) an involvement, but also responsibility to be involved. So it isn't all left to one person who happens to live closest, or happens to appear to be the least busy of everybody, but we'll come back to that, I think, quite often, in terms of trying to find the best way forward for people. Definitely and I think some of it is also about just being you've just got to be horribly practical as well. So dare I say incontinence? Don't know why that's flashing through my mind today, particularly. But you know, there are some really good products out there now, and actually trying to engage in those conversations is really important. And actually people are incredibly sympathetic. And there's some really easy stuff that you can do.

**Daisy McAndrew 16:37**

And we're going to talk about lots of practical things, like power of attorney, how to help somebody with their medication, with their doctor's appointment, what developments there are in medicine, particularly with dementia drugs or other things. We'll talk pain relief - it's such a big deal, and also these awful expressions, because obviously the experts in this field are Geriatricians, which has this horrible word geriatric in it. But we do know that that's medical parlance. But there are some exciting developments out there that I think we want to make people aware of I think it's really valid that you bring up incontinence, because it's one of those issues. Nobody wants to talk to their parents or to their children, you know, or to the younger generation about incontinence, because these are your parents. These are the people who brought you into the world, who've looked after you, and we've talked about us 'parenting the parents' is a phrase that's come up a lot when we've been discussing this, and it's not comfortable for you and it's not comfortable for them. So maybe that's one of the things that you want a third party to talk to your parents about, because it's just one of those issues that's very difficult for everybody.

**Annabel James 18:08**

Absolutely, third party involvement is in many of these cases, a really good idea, isn't it, whether it be a friend of theirs and a peer, somebody who can kind of almost nudge them and say a bit like any generation really, you listen to your peers or the GP, if they have a good relationship with them, or someone who's in the house a lot is a really good person to have those conversations. It's hard, though

**Daisy McAndrew 18:29**

And then that reminds me of something else we've talked about a lot, which is often by the very nature of ageing, your social circle gets smaller and smaller as your friends die. I remember a friend of my mum's, who was wildly social, and I always looked up to her, was very sort of glamorous. And she always said that every year, she was determined to make a younger friend, because she knew that her friends would start dying off, and she wanted to ensure her future social life by having younger friends. You know, she wasn't saying one or two years younger. She was like 20, 30, 40, years younger to keep her going, and it was fantastic. But not everybody's like that, and particularly there is that pressure isn't there on caregivers, carers, to also be the social life as a lot of the older generation who we're looking after either find it too difficult to keep up with their friends, or really, they just want to rely on their nearest and dearest, and that puts an added pressure. And I think that's something we can talk about in the future. How do you encourage, you know, people say, oh no, they can join Bowls Club or, well, we're not in that generation anymore where people want to go and play bridge or play bowls, but you

do want to encourage socialisation and a social life, and sometimes it is because the pressure on you to be that social life as well as the carer, is huge.

**Annabel James** 19:42

Really. It's very difficult, isn't it? And that kind of daily phone call, or whatever it is that you find yourself doing is lovely, but as you say, it becomes very stressful when you feel that you're the only person and making that contact with somebody. I love the idea of a younger friend. I think I might start that too.

**Daisy McAndrew** 20:00

I think it's, it's very wise. I was reading so Age UK found that more than a million older people go at least a month without speaking to a friend, neighbour or family member.

**Annabel James** 20:12

It doesn't bear thinking about, does it? Which in weird ways, you know, why things like the postman is so important, and those lovely meal delivery companies, I think part of their job is to make sure that they say hello and have a little chat, you know, which is, in a way, a terrible indictment, isn't it, of kind of where we're at. So yeah, we definitely need to talk about all of that as well. Oh, definitely and then, of course, driving.

**Daisy McAndrew** 20:32

That's a biggie. And we need to talk about the legal side, Power of Attorney. What does it mean, and how do you go about it? And also, I know one of the things that we're going to talk about a lot is the risk of being scammed when we're talking about financial areas, and the fact that the older generation are so vulnerable when it comes to being victims of scams. And how can you navigate that area?

**Annabel James** 20:36

And again, that awful conversation about when somebody may or may not perhaps like to stop driving. It's rich and varied, Daisy. I don't think we're going to be bored.

**Daisy McAndrew** 20:58

We are not going to be bored. We are going to aim to do a podcast a week, every week. We will be talking about the age old question, and whatever that question might be will come out. So you know whether the age old question is, as you were just saying, when to tell your dad he shouldn't be driving anymore, the age old question of telling your mum that she's needs to get out more. And there is also the personality thing of thinking my parent has changed. And I don't just mean with dementia, I mean with old age, and that's difficult to come to terms with. Sometimes you look at this person who was the life and soul, who was somebody who you emulated, and probably are very like, and you see them changing, and it can be difficult to deal with that aspect.

**Annabel James** 21:53

It's almost like the grieving process starts, dare I say it before? And of course, you don't necessarily, don't recognise it for what that is, do you?



**Daisy McAndrew** 22:01

And of course, that's with somebody who doesn't necessarily have advanced dementia or Alzheimer's.

**Annabel James** 22:08

They've just changed

**Daisy McAndrew** 22:09

In that instance, then you really are grieving when they're still alive. And so we will be, and I think we'll be asking some real experts on how to deal with that for yourself, as well as because you also have to look after yourself, as a carer.

**Annabel James** 22:22

Number one, because if you can't look after yourself, you can't care for somebody else,

**Daisy McAndrew** 22:26

Right. Well, our in tray is huge, but also, obviously we want to hear from our listeners, is there something that we've missed? Is there something that is top of your list? So we will be posting all the ways to get in touch with us. But we really hope you enjoy this podcast.

**Annabel James** 22:42

Oh, it's lovely to be here, Daisy. It's going to be exciting. Many thanks for listening to this first episode of Age and Stage. We'd obviously really welcome your questions and any suggestions you've got for things that maybe we can look at in the future. So email us. The address is [ageandstage@agespace.org](mailto:ageandstage@agespace.org), or you can follow the links in the show notes to this episode. Next time we're going to be talking care homes with Stephen Burke.

**Stephen Burke** 23:11

We tend to spend much more time choosing a car or a new house than we do in finding a care home. Partially because it's difficult but also we're not quite sure what to ask. But there's no reason why you shouldn't go to a home, have a meal at the home, see what the activities are, meet other residents. You need to speak to as many different people.

**Annabel James** 23:32

So please, if you enjoyed this first show, there's plenty of advice and guidance coming in future episodes, so click follow or subscribe in your podcast app to make sure you never miss them.

**Daisy McAndrew** 23:43

And in these early days, it really would genuinely help us out if you leave a rating or a review for the show with your podcast platform. And of course, please tell your friends who you think would benefit from hearing Age and Stage

**Annabel James** 23:56

See you next time.