

My Home, My Way: Podcast Transcript.

Episode 3 – Brodie Moves Out! Overcoming my Fears as a Parent

Jake Briggs: For us people with disability, living in our own home isn't something we expect to just happen...

Justine Hall: No one is ready to move out of home before they move out of home. It's the moving out of home, that enables the independent living skills.

Jake Briggs: Often, we have to make it happen - by ourselves, or with our family and our allies.

Brodie: I look at it as in there is hope but then there's also a point where you actually have to make it happen instead of hoping it will.

<short music sting>

Jake Briggs: I'm Jake Briggs and welcome to *My Home, My way* - A podcast about people with disability making their home, their own.

Living in a group home is often given as the only option for people with a disability - but that's not true.

It's not always what's best for us.

And group home living is not the typical way we make a home.

We don't say "hey I'd like to live with 5 strangers with the same diagnosis as me, that someone else chose, and have our home run by a service."

So what's the alternative?

My Home, My Way has practical advice and stories of people with developmental disability, their allies and families, making a home on their terms.

... Coming up with unique support models that enable, even people with complex needs, to live in their own home.

By the way, this podcast is sensory-friendly, with a sensitive use of music, so you can listen comfortably.

In Australia, 50% of young people live separately from their parents, and this includes people with disability.

Moving out of home is one of life's big changes. And change can be scary.

Justine Hall: The predominant feelings were really around fear. Fear of things going wrong.

Jake Briggs: In this episode of My Home My Way, you'll meet Brodie, and his mum Justine and find out, from a parent's perspective...

What were Justine's biggest fears about Brodie living out of home?

Jake Briggs: How did she tackle these fears when he first moved out, and how does she deal with worries that come up *now*?

And... what difference did Brodie moving out make to *him*...

and to Justine and the rest of their family?

Brodie is a 27-year-old guy, who keeps pretty busy. He's studied hospitality and music at TAFE and he's become a qualified Personal Trainer and has a job as a Fitness Trainer.

I used to go to two day programs, but I like Box Hill more because I learn about my passion, and I like the people.

Jake Briggs: Brodie's home is pretty typical of a young guy, living with other guys, in a share house, says his mum, Justine. He lives with a flatmate in a share house.

Justine Hall: The home that Brodie's in now - it's a three-bedroom house, kind of a shared suburban house that he rents with a long-term friend of his.

It's got a garden, close to his things like his gym as PT, and his church and a shopping centre.

In the backyard, there's a large garage and they've made into a pretty fancy, home gym. Because his absolute passion at the moment is personal training and being a bodybuilder. He's a qualified personal trainer, but he's also working toward entering a competition as a bodybuilder.

And it's got a barbecue. To both like to cook outside, grill their meat, that sort of thing.

Justine Hall: It's pretty comfortable, but I'd say spare. So probably what you'd expect of two young guys, just moved out of home.

Jake Briggs: Brodie moved out of home in his early 20s. He's been living in his own place for about 4 years.

Justine Hall: It was definitely one of Brodie's goals to move out . We'd had conversations in the circle around it and we'd done some things to prepare.

Jake Briggs: When Justine says 'circle', she's talking about a group of unpaid friends and allies, called a Circle of Support.

A Circle of Support can be useful and you'll hear more about them in Episode 5.

In the meantime, Brodie puts it like this...

Brodie: ... A circle of support, which is people like you helping people like me get to have a good life.

Jake Briggs: So, Brodie and Justine had talked with their Circle of Support about Brodie moving out. They'd done preparation too. Then something surprising happened.

Justine Hall: The opportunity kind of presented itself a bit unexpectedly and it was quite sudden. Brodie was invited to share a house.

So initially it was offered as a short term, sort of three-to-six-month arrangement. And we saw it as an opportunity for Brodie to trial living in a share house situation.

I remember the day that Brodie moved out. I didn't really feel prepared at all, probably because it all happened quite quickly.

And I was definitely nervous.

But over and above that, I was really excited for Brodie. I just... It's such a big milestone. And he was so ready in terms of what he needed for his own happiness in his growth as a person.

Jake Briggs: While Justine was really excited for this big milestone, she was also worried. Especially about her not being there all the time.

Justine Hall: I was worried about things going wrong. What might happen and say concerns around personal safety... What will happen if he didn't have the parental kind of control overseeing everything?

All of those things, then they were, they weren't really based in any realistic.. They were just mindless fears really.

Jake Briggs: Justine got over those worries. But then another fear began to niggle. Would Brodie be *ready and able* to live out of home? And was she *able* to support him?

Justine Hall: So when I think back about 15 years ago or so, I had a completely different mindset and my mindset was really had been conditioned by the institutional systems that were in place for people with disabilities. So, you know, the special school that he'd gone to, the day program that he was attending...

That there was a particular pathway that he needed to follow, and that was, you know, especially carved out for people with disabilities, a kind of parallel world really.

I felt as if there were experts in that field that just knew better than me, that were going to put all these to do all these things for us as a family. I didn't really feel that I was capable, and better one by someone else.

Justine Hall: The biggest myth that I needed to bust was this idea around capacity. I really felt that there was this idea that people needed to be ready to move out of home before they moved out of home.

I think what helped me change well, absolutely what helped me change that mindset was really hearing other family stories around what they'd done.

And in particular stories of people who... because I was limited by this idea of capacity. So people that I saw as being, having less capacity than perhaps Brodie, and they were still doing these amazing things.

Justine Hall: And I thought, well, if they can, then we obviously, why, why not us? We could do it too. So that was hugely influential.

Our experience has been that Brodie's capacity has grown as he's had the experience. Just like anyone else. No one is ready to move out of home before they move out of home.

It's the moving out of home, that enables the independent living skills. That's how we all grow and develop.

Jake Briggs: That was my experience too... I learnt how to live out of home.. by living out of home.

And with something new, like moving out for the first time, there are always challenges and they are different for everyone. The person who's living out of home, and their family.

For Justine, it was the challenge of supporting Brodie at a distance.

Justine Hall: I've needed to learn how to let go of control over needing to know everything that's happening and everyone that's there. All of the things. Like that isn't practical for me.

And so stepping that back and releasing and seeing that as handing Brodie the reins to his own life, really.

I was used to, as a parent, holding all the pieces, you know, all the little details of, "Well, I know he's going to this on Thursday and before we get there, we'll need to be doing... I'll need to have conversations around this or I'll need to prepare them about that." because I help him Brodie self-managed his NDIS funding. So, so just doing that at a distance.

Coordinating all the different support, pieces and communicating. Not that I've had to do that, but we've had to, as a team, learn how to do that.

You know, just putting the things that he's going to be doing, the different appointments or different goals that he's got on WhatsApp and sharing it with the other team members so that we know, and we can anticipate, and we can check things off when they've been done.

Jake Briggs: Justine is also aware that the support that Brodie needs changes over time.. And that people are supporting Brodie in lots of different ways, paid and unpaid....

Justine Hall: When I think about the support that Brodie needs know, to live in his own home. It has changed over time and I expect it to continue to change over time.

This is natural just as he grows as a person and develops his own skills and capacities through the experience of, of living.

The idea isn't to have no support. We're all getting support in different ways. Paid support. We pay people to do things around our house or help us in different ways. No one's expected to be completely independent and that's not really the goal.

Brodie does have paid and unpaid supports in place to enable him and empower him to live in his own home. His housemate first and foremost, I mean, he's a friend over five years now. But we also do pay him to support Brodie toward a few goals and a small amount of hours.

So for example, he might be paid to do support with Brodie to make doctor's appointments or get to a doctor's appointment, or that the bills are paid on time.

There's also a whole lot of unpaid time as well, doing just regular housemate stuff. There's also other paid supports from different people that come into the home and he has unpaid support with family, his Circle of Support, and just friends and other people.

Jake Briggs: Justine has some strategies to deal with her worries.

I think when I'm faced with uncertainty, there's a few different strategies I've found really helpful.

Justine Hall: Probably the first one is talking, just conversations, really. Just talking with Brodie and perhaps with others, maybe in his Circle, maybe his housemate as well.

Just just putting forward my wonderings around different ideas. Not projecting my fears onto him at all, but putting it in a pretty neutral terms. " I'm a little bit worried about this."

And then just seeing what his thoughts are. And look, most of the time, he's already thought through those things, and he's already come to his own conclusions. And that's a really good way for me to relax.

Quite often as well, when I run it through other people - this is one of the advantages to having peers around that don't have disabilities, but are similar age to Brodie, that I get their feedback, you know, from a point of view of a young person. That for them, that seems really reasonable and okay. And that helps me relax because there is a bit of, you know, there's still that generational gap that occurs where we didn't have meetups when I was a young adult, they do now.

I've got to say as well, that being able to sit with fear, just sit with uncomfortable emotions in your body using mindfulness techniques. They're the main things for me. Letting the feelings be there, but not necessarily reacting from them. And just watching and observing.

Jake Briggs: She's also aware of how important respect and boundaries are, just like any parent who's getting used to their kids growing into adults, and living in their own place.

Justine Hall: The biggest one I would say is just respecting his privacy and being aware that I have in my home and in my immediate family, the culture that I think is okay for me, that's comfortable for me.

The particular culture that he's developing with his housemates is depending on what they feel good with. And that isn't necessarily going to be the same as mine. So just being aware of those differences, allowing those differences to be there, being very respectful of those things.

Things like, do I ring before I come around? You know, do I knock on the front door and wait for the front door to be opened before I just walk in?

Or, you know, there's lots of ways that I could potentially overstep my boundaries as a parent. So I really think carefully around consent. Am I overstepping and is that making someone uncomfortable?

So just checking in all the time with people, is this okay if I do this, is it okay if I help you fold your clothes? Are you going to find that helpful or is that going to be annoying? You know, and just being prepared to take my guidance from him, my cues from him at all times.

Jake Briggs: There's one boundary that she doesn't cross.

Justine Hall: I don't go near the fridge. I just, I do have a, I did tidy work with him, helping him tidy his room. Yeah. And I caught myself making comments.

I do some work privately helping people tidy or declutter in their home. And I was helping him get his room organised. And I know I just, that I started, you know, saying little comments were just a bit out of line around, "Oh, you eat in your bed." And things like that.

And just hearing myself say that I realised, wow, I just wouldn't say that to someone else. I wouldn't say that to a client that I was working with. Why do I feel it's okay to say that to him?

And just pulling myself up and apologising and just correcting myself. But it's just the little things like that.

I think that it's important to realise it's his home. It's his place. Not mine.

Jake Briggs: Brodie living in his own home, with a housemate, has made a huge difference to Justine and Brodie's relationship.

Justine Hall: It's just lovely to go and visit him.

And he'll offer to make me a cup of tea and we'll sit down and have a chat and I get to catch up. And there's things that are happening in his life that I don't know about, you know, things he's been up to or people he's caught up with. I don't have any idea just as he doesn't necessarily have any idea of things in my life. So it's just this regular relationship, I guess, of mother and adult child.

It's kind of easier for me as a parent to see him with fresh eyes. He's kind of exploring who he is, what he likes, who he likes, the kind of people he enjoys spending time with what kind of home he wants, what kind of routines suit him, the kind of culture he wants in his home and the life he wants to create.

As he's discovering this and exploring that, I'm letting go of my image of who I think he is or should be. And let myself kind of be surprised and get curious about, about the man that he's emerging and evolving into.

Yeah, there seems to be a new depth to our relationship. He's definitely bringing new interpersonal skills. So as he's working through all the daily housemate things that go on, you know, the conversations about jobs and cleaning, that's a big one, isn't it?

All the other things, you know, that go on with this sort of negotiating and basic conflict resolution type skills, he's bringing those skills to our relationship too.

Jake Briggs: Justine's noticed big changes in herself too.

Justine Hall: I'm far more relaxed.

Stepping back a bit. Realising that my way isn't necessarily the right way or the only way. Being more curious, being more open.

These are all really personal growth skills that have changed me as a person and only just benefiting myself and my other children and all the people around me really.

And I just love the stepping away from... the ability to untangle my role as a carer, to just being a mum and just enjoying that.

Jake Briggs: And she's noticed changes in how the family gets along....

Brodie has younger siblings. It has meant that it's freed up some more time, my energy and time to, to turn toward them and meet their needs a little bit more too.

When Brodie he comes over, he can be this really bit of a celebrity, big brother that comes and really celebrates a special time, when he's with his siblings. So that's beautiful.

Jake Briggs: ...and she's noticed how much Brodie has grown, as a person.

The main one really is how much he loves his own space and, and really enjoys his own company hanging out at home.

Just potting around, deciding for himself, you know, when he's going to do his dishes or do his washing, or whether he's going to ring a friend or watch a movie, all of the things that you do when you're just hanging out at home.

Justine Hall: There's been quite a few changes in him as a person. Definitely an increase in his self-confidence. In himself, knowing who he is as a person, his self-personhood. His ability to stand up for himself, say what he wants, form his own opinions, make wise choices, consider other ways of doing things.

What do I wish I knew before I started? Well, I would look for in housemates is quite different today than it perhaps was at the start.

I think what's essential is people with really high emotional intelligence. Really high level interpersonal skills, because that's the main thing that they are mentoring.

And the main way that we pick up those skills of , you know, patience and kindness and, um, conflict resolution is really through the experience of, of, of being with someone who's displaying those and giving those to us. And I can really see that difference in Brodie.

I wish I'd realised that the twists and turns and things going wrong are all part of it.

Justine Hall: I guess what I want to put across, as there are things that can go wrong. For sure. There are things to be concerned about and make sure like safety concerns, things like that's realistic, but it's being able to work out the difference between, you know, reasonable risk and putting safeguards in place.

What I'd like to put across is that our children are just always so much more capable than what we think that they are.

I really trust Brodie that's the main thing I've, I've developed a deep certainty in his capability and right really to live his own life, his own way, and I see all the evidence that that's the way it is and that's how it will continue. So it's exciting. I'm excited by the changes I see in him and in the direction he's going. There's no going backwards. Absolutely.

Jake Briggs: For Brodie, it's all about living a good life, like all of us want... and deserve.

Brodie: If they want their kid to live a good life, where they're not a day service, they have to have in their mind, they want a kid to live out of home in a shared house with other people with disabilities or not. I look at it as in... there is hope but then there's also a point where you actually have to make it happen, instead of hoping it will. Sometimes when you hope it never happens and you give up.

And some people like me, have it easy, but then there's people without, with disabilities that don't. I get that. You got to make the best of that life for that person has by helping that person have the best life they can so... I guess when the time comes that they're dead or not there, they've had a life where it's not wasted.

Jake Briggs: That was Brodie **Hall** and his mum, Justine Hall.

Parents - remember that your adult kids are more capable than you think.

Worries and fears are natural. So get strategies and support to help you.

Talking to other people and families in the same situation can be a good place to start.

In Episode 4 of My Home My Way, you'll find out how to make your home *actually feel* like home, and not a hospital or a workplace.

Sherryn West: When there's that changeover of staff and people come in. That you don't just come in. You knock on the door and say, Hi Marisha. And she'll let you know you're welcome to come in.

Jake Briggs: To see videos of Brodie, and a transcript, go to the Show Notes for this episode.

The My Home My Way website also has lots of resources, stories and tips for you to get your own place on your terms, or to support someone else to.

Type My Home My Way into a search engine, or go to www.myhomemyway.com.au

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Thanks for listening.