

## Pass me my poles, please!

IN THE ONGOING EFFORT TO keep our bodies beautiful, my wife and I have taken up pole-walking. It is (we learned on *Google*) the fastest-growing form of exercise in Nordic nations. And it appeals to us because it relieves us of a serious worry: namely, shrivelled shoulders. We both enjoy walking, you see. But though walking is good for your legs, it does little for your upper-body. And, up until three days ago, we've risked having marvellously-toned thighs, but withered, diseased-looking shoulders.

So, when we spotted these poles in a half-price sale, we snapped them up.

They aren't, I should explain, just any old poles. They're lightweight, expandable, sporty-type poles, with handle-straps at one end and little rubber knobs at the other. And the walking you do with them is not your common, garden-variety walking. Oh, no! Pole-walking is athletic, synchronised, *upper-class* walking – in the same category as fencing and jousting.

To be honest, our first attempt was a disaster. The synchronising is harder than it sounds, and we wasted a good hour stumbling along like uncoordinated giraffes. My wife kept tripping over her poles, and almost did a face-plant. And, while flailing away with mine, I scared several elderly amblers off the footpath and into long grass. Neither of us could stop giggling.



The second time out, we got into the rhythm, tapping/pushing/pulling with our fluoro-coloured extensions and striding along like Norwegians. As we recovered on the bed afterwards, we could feel the difference in our muscle-toned shoulders.

This morning we were well-oiled machines, covering mile after mile, uphill, down dale, and across several bridges. In fact, we did so well we rewarded ourselves with a café breakfast: creamy mushrooms on ciabatta bread!

The only thing that bothers us is the way onlookers stare. And smile, in a condescending, pitying kind of way. And talk about us as we pole-walk past. It's as if they've never seen anything so stupid in their envious little lives. But I'm gonna put a stop to that. I'm gonna buy us some dark sunglasses, and paint our fluoro sticks white!

Maybe, in future, people will think twice before mocking? 

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JOHN (GRAPEVINE'S FOUNDER) RECKONS "THE PROBLEM WITH THE YOUNGER GENERATION THESE DAYS IS THAT I DON'T BELONG TO IT ANYMORE ..."

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