

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? 

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