Author and multiple stroke survivor has her life back, thanks to NDIS

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Sydney author Desney King is a natural optimist.

She's a dedicated practitioner of mindfulness and gratitude meditation and a great believer in the therapeutic benefits of morning journalling.

Desney says she was born with an 'almost naively optimistic, Pollyanna' approach to looking on the bright side of life.

But after surviving multiple strokes—and spending more than two years isolated at home, mostly confined to her bed—even Desney was doubtful she would ever enjoy being out in nature again, let alone fulfil her dream to finish the novel she'd begun years before her first stroke.

"After the fourth stroke, I had roughly two and a half years housebound, living on my bed, with minimal physio assistance, getting weaker and weaker," said Desney, who, pre-stroke, enjoyed a successful career as a book editor.

Before her first stroke in 2012, Desney had been a 'fit and healthy 60-year-old' with a passion for camping, road trips and long walks on beaches and in the bush.

Multiple strokes left her trapped at home, living with debilitating fatigue, cognitive impairment, muscle weakness and sensory overload issues.

"I had no strength, and crippling fatigue," said Desney.

"I was unable to work on my manuscript. I didn't think my book would ever make it to print."

But Desney's life—and her hopes for the future—changed dramatically after she joined the NDIS.

She began receiving therapies and supports, including a customized manual wheelchair, so she could start to venture out again and regain her independence, with help from NDIS support workers.

"Slowly, little by little, support workers helped me to build up the strength to go out again for little wheelie walks and for short rides in the car to visit family.

It really was like a miracle, even to be wheeled a block to the local park and see children playing.

"That was when I realized the NDIS had given me back my life."

Desney's NDIS plan includes funding for occupational, physical, and hydro therapies, which have helped to build up her strength, mobility and capacity to manage fatigue.

She chooses her own support workers to help her with domestic tasks, including cooking, cleaning and washing, which she can no longer manage on her own.

“I know it sounds dramatic but I don't think I'd still be alive without the NDIS,” said Desney.

Today, Desney has a team of support workers who help her to live independently. She continues to receive support while in lockdown.

“I’m a very independent person and it is my first goal in every plan to remain fit and healthy enough to continue living independently in my own home, and they are helping me to do that,” she said.

Last year, Desney fulfilled her dream of becoming a published author. Her first novel, Transit of Angels, was met with excellent reviews.

“It was a joyous moment when I got to hold a copy in my hands for the first time,” she said.

Desney was a finalist in the 2021 Stroke Foundation Awards in the Creative Award category, and is working on a memoir.

With her first grandchild on the way, she is excited about her future.

“For me, the NDIS means freedom,” she said. “It means life. Being able to be in nature and truly being out in the community.

“There's just no comparison with my life now and before the NDIS. I still live mainly on my bed, but I have a rich and wonderful life now and I was just surviving then.”

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