



Andrea

In a quiet town, a 77-year-old woman sat down for an interview. Her name was Andrea. Andrea had been widowed for a year and now lived alone in a small, older house. At first, she seemed unsure, hesitating in her answers, but as the conversation went on, she became more comfortable and even enthusiastic. Despite being less mobile now, her independent spirit was clear.

When asked about her experience with heatwaves, she paused, trying to recall. "Yes, it's easy to forget. Let me think.... Last year, we didn't have a heatwave. It's hard to remember because so much has happened in the past two years, especially with my husband being sick and then passing away. When was the last heatwave?" After a quick search online, they found there were two heatwaves in 2019.

"Oh yes," she nodded, "we weren't camping in Oudorp anymore by then—it had become too difficult. Back when I could still walk easily, we would cycle to the beach in the summer, and it never bothered us much. Even the last heatwave didn't affect me that badly."

When asked what she does when it gets hot now, she said, "I look for shade, wear light clothing, and keep everything in the house shut. I try to do my shopping either early in the morning or in the evening."

She was aware of the health risks that come with heatwaves, though she admitted they didn't impact her much. "I mostly keep calm, drink plenty of water, and now that I'm alone, I pay more attention to these things."

To avoid suffering from the heat, she emphasized the importance of staying hydrated and maintaining a slower pace of life. "You can't keep up the same speed during a heatwave. Especially when you're older, you have to take it easy. Even with things like alcohol—it's tempting to have a few gin and tonics or a nice limoncello, but that's something I avoid in the heat."

Her knowledge came from experience and from what she'd learned growing up. "I've always been able to handle it well, probably from watching my parents. My mother, who had trouble walking because of polio, was always extra cautious during hot weather."

When asked where she goes during a heatwave, she explained how she used to move her chair around the campsite to stay in the shade. "I still do that at home now. And I go out for groceries only in the morning or evening. Otherwise, I don't go anywhere unless I have to."

Since becoming a widow, she shared that she could use some support during a heatwave. "It would be nice to have someone help with the shopping or just to talk to, someone to remind

me of what to do and not to do in the heat. Or even to help me bring the mobile air conditioner downstairs."

She learned about recent heatwaves through TV and her smartphone, but when asked how municipalities could better assist, she noted, "You see them setting up water sprinklers for children, but nothing really aimed at older people. I think they should check in on elderly residents, talk to them, and see how they're managing."

As for how she might support other seniors during heatwaves, she suggested inviting them over. "You could take turns visiting each other. I have air conditioning, so if someone else is alone, they could come here." She recalled how she used to check in on her 89-year-old neighbor, especially during the heat, sharing a chat and making sure everything was okay.

Finally, when asked for advice for other older people during a heatwave, she offered simple but wise counsel: "I'd share what I know. Find the shade, don't hesitate to knock on a neighbor's door, and sometimes two heads are better than one. People my age, the 'new' 70s, are more familiar with these things, and with technology. If I knew someone older who might need help, I'd reach out and make sure they're doing alright."



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