



## Respecting Human Dignity

**Human dignity is the most fundamental ethical principle. In the words of the famous philosopher Emmanuel Kant: “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.”**

Definition according to the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms:

You have the right to respect and dignity of your person. Therefore, you must be considered a person with physical, psychological, spiritual and social needs, regardless of your status and gender.

In addition, you must not be subject to retaliation, discrimination or coercion. In this regard, the Commission shall ensure, by all appropriate measures, the promotion of and respect for the principles contained in the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. (s. 71.9 of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms).

**Little Brothers**



## Reflection

*“The only strength, the only value, the only dignity of all is to be loved.”*

Charles Péguy

Help Age Canada recently spoke with Canadian seniors from coast to coast to understand what it means for them to age with dignity:

“The themes that emerged from these conversations are stirring: a desire to age with grace and maintain good health as long as possible, the questioning of one’s value in society as one ages, loneliness and its harmful consequences, and the desire and importance of imparting wisdom to younger generations. And during these exchanges, we heard one word repeatedly: respect.”

Source : <https://helpagecanada.ca/>



## Good practices

- Accept the person as they are, with respect and sensitivity;
- Consider the person before the need. Establish an agreement. Give mutual consent to the preferred type of companionship;
- Respect your companion’s pace;
- Acknowledge the person’s contribution to the community and to your life;
- Acknowledge their concerns, their fears, their worries without minimizing them and without judging them;
- Allow the person to express their choices, orientations, hopes and desires;
- Consult professionals to ensure appropriate support and care.

## Attitudes to adopt

- Show compassion for the senior, even if they are not always polite or kind to you. This can be a protection mechanism after years of pain and frustration. Try to understand their reluctance. Give yourselves time to get to know each other.
- Keep in mind that your empathy makes all the difference.
- As a volunteer, share your observations: your coordinator can provide you with perspective and support for challenges you may encounter.
- As a caregiver, do not hesitate to consult specialized services or professionals to ensure appropriate support.



## Things to avoid

- Deciding for the person without consulting them;
- Talking to the person like a child;
- Treating people as beneficiaries rather than people with limitations;
- Considering your companionship like a duty;
- Taking all of your companions problems upon your shoulders.

## Additional resources

### Telephone

Info-Aidant : 1855 852-7784  
or <https://www.lappui.org/en/>

### Reading

de KONINCK Thomas, *De la dignité humaine*, Presses Universitaires de France (Paris), 1995.

### Online

Little Brothers, *Privacy Policy*,  
<https://www.petitsfreres.ca/en/about-us/policies/>

WikiHow, *Comment respecter les personnes âgées*,  
<https://bit.ly/respect-personnes-agees> (in French only)

Help Age Canada, *Aging with Dignity. Together*,  
<https://helpagecanada.ca/dignity/>

