



## Helping Seniors Cope with the Benefits, Losses, and Transitions Associated with Ageing

We all dream of acquiring wisdom and serenity as we grow older, living in the moment, and enjoying every joyful occasion to the fullest.

Nonetheless, this stage of life is difficult to define since it may vary significantly from one person to another.

At the heart of this experience are the losses, gains and adaptations required to cope with transitions that affect our identity, our autonomy, and our sense of belonging. We must give ourselves the right to choose what has the most value and where we will devote our time and energy.

*"Old age is an age of acceptance, which leads us to a profound quest for meaning."*

*Fernand Dansereau*

### A new definition of aging

Aging is an existential transition resulting from a conflict between one's natural desire to grow and the biological and social decline that come with age.

We wish you pleasant reading and a gratifying companionship journey.

**Little Brothers**

## The benefits of support during periods of transition

*What adequate companionship provides for the aging person:*

- Changes the perception of feelings of abandonment and anonymity;
- Acknowledges the person's value and their life experience;
- Conserves or revives the desire to be autonomous;
- Allows seniors to make decisions and express themselves;
- Provides opportunities to create new relationships;
- Creates a human connection;
- Improves psychological well-being.

## Good practices

- Be authentic, open and available;
- Respect the older person's differences and uniqueness;
- Focus on your connection with the person you support: in what way is it the relationship special for you?
- Encourage the sharing of meaningful life experiences. What are the positive impacts of these memories?
- Assess and highlight the person's strengths and abilities. Discuss what they would still like to learn;
- Listen to their favorite music, look at photo albums, talk about their passions;
- Acknowledge their whole life experience.

**Consult if you feel helpless or if the situation changes.**



## Attitudes to adopt



- Keep in mind that your presence and empathy make a big difference.
- Share your observations as a volunteer. Your coordinator is available to gather information about your companion's health and can provide you with perspective and support for challenges you may encounter.
- As a caregiver, be sure to maintain ties with a trustworthy network and support groups. Discuss what you are going through.
- Be sure to respect the framework and limits of your commitment. To enjoy your companionship journey and its teachings, you must also take care of yourself.

## Things to avoid

- Minimizing adaptations and losses;
- Denying feelings and emotions;
- Infantilizing your companion;
- Doing things for someone that they are able to do themselves.

## Additional resources

### Readings

ROBERT Jocelyne, *Viellir avec panache*, les Éditions de l'Homme, 2021.

LECLERC Félix, *Viellir en beauté et en sagesse*, Poème.

SINGER Christiane, *Où cours-tu? Ne sais-tu pas que le ciel est en toi?*, Éd. Albin Michel, 2001.

BIANCHI Enzo, *La vie et les jours : propos sur la vieillesse*, Éditions Salvator, 2018.

### Online

Radio-Canada, *Discussion about the documentary: Le vieil âge et l'espérance*, <https://bit.ly/RC-reflexion- vieillissement-dansereau>, 29 avril 2019 (in French only).

Government of Canada, *Life changes experienced by older adults*, [https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mental-health-wellness-all-ages/older-adults\\_life-changes.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mental-health-wellness-all-ages/older-adults_life-changes.html)