



## The Value and Meaning of Companionship

**Being a volunteer or caregiver comes with many benefits: it allows you to connect to your community and make new friends, helps you develop new skills, increases your self-confidence, and improves your physical, emotional, and mental health.**

All these benefits give way in turn to passion and commitment and have a positive impact on those around you.

According to a report by the National Seniors Council of Canada on volunteerism among seniors and positive and active aging, "more than two-thirds of Canada's volunteers reported that volunteering had provided them with interpersonal skills." The report goes on to say that "volunteering strengthens social networks, improves access to information and reduces the likelihood of isolation."

Another report, from the Public Health Agency of Canada, affirms that volunteering can even help seniors "through the major transitions of life, including the retirement or death of a spouse or loved one."

In this factsheet we want to highlight the advantages and benefits of this commitment which, despite the challenges, can be extremely rewarding.

We wish you pleasant reading and a good companionship journey!

**Little Brothers**

## Testimonials

Here are a few vibrant testimonials we have collected for you:

*"It brings me more than I thought, it makes me see the scope of small gestures. We can be useful at any age!*

*Their personal stories teach me about history, they talk about themselves, and I learn. There is a real sharing of knowledge. It inspires young people and places value on the elderly. The relationship puts our own lives and worries into perspective. We feel that we are appreciated, and seniors feel that they matter to someone.*

*I see my level of empathy and appreciation for others increase. The relationship gives me renewed confidence in human potential and improved social awareness."*



## Good practices

- Show interest in the person's personal history;
- Highlight important life experiences;
- Reflect on what the person means to you, what they contribute to others: what is special about them? Share your thoughts with them;
- Acknowledge their emotions;
- Have fun, share readings, watch movies or look at photo albums, enjoy a little treat, if possible;
- Trust in your companion's abilities, recognize and highlight their strengths;
- Acknowledge that love and romantic relationships also exist in old age;
- Bring joy and humour to your relationship;
- Celebrate small victories;
- Discover the mysteries, revelations and teachings of old age, together;
- Seek advice from your companion.

**Refer to specialized support services if you feel helpless and the situation changes.**



## Testimonials

*"I learn resilience by example. I feel more gratitude about little everyday things. Let yourself be carried away by the strength of this relationship.*

*Friendship. Strength. Love. Tenderness. Complicity. Laughter. Shared Emotions. Secrets. Legacy and Life Experience."*



## Attitudes to adopt

- Keep in mind that intergenerational relationships enrich lives, promote mutual discovery and nurture a better understanding of the human experience.
- You are not alone: as a volunteer, remember that your coordinator is available to gather information about your companion's well-being. Share your positive testimonials!
- As a caregiver, refer your observations to the caregiver network and qualified staff. Celebrate special moments, and share what you have learned from your experience!
- Be kind to yourself, take care of your own well-being to provide better support for others.

## Additional resources

### Reading

Bouchard L., *Le bonheur de vieillir : une approche "positive" du vieillissement*, Pratiques psychologiques (vol. 18), 2012.

### Online

Centre d'Action bénévole L'Actuel, *Benefits of Volunteering*, <https://www.lactuel.org/en/?s=benefits&lang=en>.

Santé log, *Viellissement : L'âge a aussi ses avantages*, <https://bit.ly/avantages-age> (In French only).

ChartWell, *Four mind and body benefits of aging*, <https://chartwell.com/en/blog/2017/07/4-mind-and-body-benefits-of-aging>

DANSEREAU Fernand, *Le vieil âge et l'espérance*, [Série et balado] <https://ici.tou.tv/le-vieil-age-et-l-espérance> (In French only).