



Coping with Challenges and Difficult Situations

How to prepare

In the case of a difficult companionship, it is essential to be in a good mental mindset. Your best tool is yourself. Prepare for your visit and possible unforeseen events by doing some reading in advance. Choose the times when you are most available emotionally and stay focused on the person.

If the person is agitated, aggressive, confused, in a state of mental disorder or exhibiting other difficult behavior, ensure your own safety and that of your companion. Maintain a physical and psychological distance while observing the situation and focusing your attention on the person. Be yourself and try to see the person beyond the behavior.

This sheet will provide you with some concrete tips.

We wish you pleasant reading and a gratifying companionship journey!

Little Brothers

What you should know

Disturbing behaviour can be the manifestation of a communication problem or difficulty in exercising social skills. It may also be the expression of an unmet or poorly treated need. Keep in mind that these more difficult behaviors are not directed against you personally, but rather they are a way of communicating and saying that something is wrong.

As a volunteer or caregiver, you don't have to know everything! Give yourself time and consult with professionals in your companion's caregiving network.



Good practices

- Take the time to listen to the other person, and to yourself, with respect;
- Be tolerant about the way in which the person shares and do not confront them about it.

Note: you do not have to tolerate insults, racist behaviour, or sexual allusions.

- Give yourself the right to feel emotions related to the situation;
- Express your limits, keeping in mind that the person does not necessarily behave a certain way on purpose;
- Create a safe environment by maintaining a routine and using consistent behaviour.
- Lower your voice and speak more slowly;
- Accept silences, just be present;
- Normalize their behaviour: tell them it's normal to feel this way, show understanding;
- Offer choices. For example, ask your companion what they would prefer or what would be helpful;
- Focus on positive learning. Encourage them to use their capacities to the fullest. Look for their strengths;
- See past the particular incident and assess what the person has learned from the situation;
- Lead the person towards self-acceptance, one step at a time. Be patient;
- Consult professionals to discuss issues and adapt your companionship practices.



Attitudes to adopt



- Keep in mind the specificity, uniqueness, and dignity of the person in the situation.
- You are not alone: your coordinator is in close contact with the health network and is available to collect and update information about your companion's health with your input. They can also provide you with perspective and support for challenges you may encounter. Share your observations!
- If you are a caregiver, pass on your observations to the caregiving network and the qualified staff in the person's entourage. Do not stay alone.
- Think of yourself: if the atmosphere is tense or difficult, don't linger. Keep yourself and the other person safe and seek appropriate help. Tell the person you need to leave. Assure them that you will return.



Things to be avoided

- Becoming a target;
- Developing negligent behaviors;
- Confronting or blaming the person;
- Judging the person or the situation;
- Taking on the role of a social worker.

Additional resources

Telephone

In case of emergency: 911

Quebec Suicide Prevention Line: 1 866 APPELLE (277-3553)

Resources: 211

Info-Social: 811

L'Appui : 1 855 852-7784

Online

Centre de crises régionales,
www.centredecrise.ca/ (in French only)

Proche en tout temps (an informational website for care workers for seniors aged 65 and over living with a mental health problem),

www.procheentouttemps.org (in French only)

AMA Diem, Stratégies d'accompagnement, [vidéo]
www.youtube.com/user/amadiem/. (in French only)

L'Appui, Practical tips, <https://www.lappui.org/en/practical-advice/>