

Caregiving takes many forms, and each person can live it in his or her own way, according to his or her reality and choices. One aspect of it may be overlooked. Some people provide support from a distance. Not only do they not live under the same roof, but they are often geographically far apart.

Family caregivers then become specialists, like astronauts manipulating spacecraft their networks and resources are several kilometers away.

Living far away or at a distance can mean being separated by a few kilometers apart, a province, a country or even an ocean.


 When some nights you're too lonely  
 Look up in the sky and you'll see a slow-moving light  
 At first you think it's a star  
 It's not a star  
 It's me dan sun sputnik

Extract from the song  
 Sputnik from Daniel  
 Bélanger 2001

## What challenges might distance bring?

- Creating and maintain effective and supportive relationships with the professionals involved with the person being cared for;
- Identifying or becoming aware of the actual physical and/or cognitive state of the person being cared for;
- Maintaining a meaningful relationship with the person being cared for, especially if he or she is experiencing challenges to cognitive or intellectual autonomy
- Getting to the person being cared for may be expensive or physically impossible (e.g., not owning a vehicle or having a car or having limited financial means);
- Having a precarious state of physical or psychological health that limits travel;
- Working and/or having a family to support.

## What could be the advantages of choosing to be a long-distance caregiver?

- Maintaining ties with the person being cared for, especially in the case of major past conflicts;
- Reducing the risk of burnout; in fact, distance can be an effective way of clearly identifying limits and respecting them;
- Taking a more global view, i.e., stepping back from the situation;
- Imagining innovative solutions based on what's available close to home;
- Facilitating the sharing of responsibilities with the immediate entourage or with the various professionals who are closer to the person being cared for, due to the need to set up a social safety net.
- Gaining self-confidence through the need to learn and master certain technological tools to facilitate communication.



Here are a few examples of the needs of remote caregivers

- To be reassured;
- To feel confident;
- To create links (with the network of allies that revolves around but also with the person being helped themselves);
- To know what services are available and are appropriate to the situation;
- To have access to safety and/or warning devices that work remotely;
- To Familiarize yourself with existing technologies.

*"Having the responsibility to accompany someone doesn't mean deciding everything for them, but rather to use their power to act to make decisions that best represent their wishes and needs."*

Since creativity is important when helping a loved one at a distance, we suggest that you think of this situation as if you were an astronaut piloting a satellite orbiting a planet. There are a number of strategies that can help the caregiver take a more global view of certain situations, and feel comfortable piloting the satellite.

- 1 Questioning your own needs and identify them clearly;
- 2 Choosing your allies well could make a big difference for you. It's a good idea to determine who might be helpful in your eyes, and solicit these people for different situations (nurses, pharmacist, Residents' Committee, Volunteer center, ESSAD, neighbors, siblings, corner store, etc.).  
These allies can be :
  - o Someone who can keep an eye and an ear on the person being helped;
  - o Someone who can be trusted;
  - o Someone who has more or less time and/or energy to invest, depending on the need;
  - o Someone who can reassure you about your loved one's physical, emotional and cognitive health.
- 3 Making an overview of the resources available to you and the person you are helping (811, resource directory Info-Aidant service, etc.).
- 4 Creating and maintaining a bond of trust with the person you're helping, to reinforce or nurture honesty and transparency;
- 5 Establishing an emergency plan to be prepared in case of need;
- 6 Objectivizing risks, remembering that 0 risk does not exist;
- 7 Using gerontechnology tools (technological tools specific to the maintenance and well-being of seniors in their own homes) that are available to you;