

# ME and my role as a caregiver

The aim of this tool is to address the issues encountered in relation to one's identity through a caregiving experience.

At times, caregivers report having to put aside cherished activities, to feel torn, abandoned or jostled by delicate choices that make them feel less true to themselves.

**Is it something you've felt before?**

*Identity is not given once and for all, it is constructed and transformed throughout life.*

*Amin Maalouf*



## What is an identity marker?

Identity markers can be defined as the elements that make up your sense of identity. In other words, what I like, what defines me, how I perceive a situation, the aspects that enable me to maintain my individuality.

*For example :*

- The feeling of similarity with oneself (what we call being true to oneself).**  
I am a punctual person, I like to arrive on time.
- The feeling of continuity in who I am despite the passage of time.**  
I've always been a punctual person. but with my loved one's health situation I adapt to changes (it may take longer). So, I choose strategies to to arrive on time.
- Identify affinities between my priorities and those of the people I surround myself with.**  
When going out with friends, everyone makes a point of arriving on time or to let them know of being late.



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## My role versus my identity

**Do you ever find yourself needing to separate your role as caregiver from your identity (in a definition of who you are, what you love) in order to make better decisions or see things more clearly in certain situations?**

### Reflection on my role as a caregiver

Do I accept the help I'm offered, or do I tend to feel a sense of obligation to do everything myself for my loved one I'm accompanying?

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Am I currently going through a period of transition with my loved one that requires me to reconsider how to accompany him or her? For example, I'm currently going through a housing transition with my loved one, and I need to rethink how I share responsibilities and how I position myself with the care personnel who are new to me.

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Do you ever wonder where you fit in? Finding it hard to pinpoint your field of action? For example, in a particular situation involving a decision to be taken for, by and with your loved one, in your relationship with care professionals or with your family and friends?

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### Reflection on my identity

Does it seem easier to put into words the various tasks and responsibilities involved in your role as a caregiver than to define what's important to you, what you like, your strengths, your preferences?

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Depending on the frequency and intensity of your care, have you given up things you enjoy, taken time away from your own activities, or even felt that some of your habits and values have been disrupted?

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What connects me to the person I am in my role as caregiver? For example, commitment, my sense of duty, making a difference in someone's life, my emotional ties with my loved one, shared affinities, etc.?

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*Someone close to me is pressuring me to have my loved one taken in, but I don't feel ready. I've decided to keep communication with this person to a minimum, and have gone in search of support to make our daily lives easier and more secure, and to give myself time to prepare for this eventuality.*

*I've always loved taking walks, it keeps me fit and it's good for my mind. Except that now, I can't leave my loved one at home on his own, and his condition prevents him from walking with me. I feel like a prisoner in my own home.*

*My loved one has a neurocognitive disorder, and sometimes I have to avoid arguing with him to make him see reason. As honesty has always been a very important value for me, it makes me particularly uncomfortable when I'm not honest and transparent with him.*

Throughout your caregiving career, a number of changing situations and contexts can make your role more complex.

That said, as a caregiver, having support, respite and respite time to take care of yourself, taking up a hobby and maintaining other relational and family ties are all elements that can help you maintain your identity through your role as caregiver.

Maintaining my own individuality:

- By setting my own limits
- By including myself at the center of actions and reflections
- By allowing myself to seek support when my choices require it
- By identifying what turns me on, what I like and what I want for myself
- By refusing certain requests
- By delegating responsibilities, care or certain decisions

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**Even if you have a lot of responsibility as a caregiver, we'd like to invite you to recognize yourself and shine a light on yourself.**

