



# Caregiving by men : is it really that different?



In Quebec, 42% of family caregivers are men.



Nearly half of all caregivers are therefore men.

**What is their situation? Do they have specific needs? Do caregiving resources face challenges in adapting to their reality?**

### SOME FINDINGS FROM SCIENTIFIC STUDIES:

#### Perceptions of the role and tasks associated with caregiving

- Certain tasks, socially considered "feminine," may be perceived as contradictory to traditional masculine identity;
- Few men express feelings of fatigue, abandonment, or lack of time for themselves, a marked difference from their female peers;
- A majority see their role as that of a protector, a manager, called upon to meet challenges and solve problems;
- Male caregivers cite the following values as central to their caregiving journey: loyalty, autonomy, and commitment.

#### The needs they express... or don't express!

- Practical services, such as medical assistance, help with hygiene or household chores;
- Respite;
- Information, practical training, management and/or intervention strategies;
- Discomfort when expressing their emotions or difficulties;
- A desire for recognition and for assistance tailored to this particular challenge.

#### Words from a caregiver :

*"We should be given a caregiver handbook right from the start. Something that brings together tips, knowledge, and resources related to the role of caregiver."*

#### Their hesitation to ask for help

- Lack of awareness of resources: 39% of male caregivers have no idea what services are available to them.
- A perception that asking for help is a sign of weakness: 92% of male caregivers who responded to a survey said they "don't like being controlled by others";
- A desire to preserve the privacy of their family unit and their independence.

The expression of emotions is influenced by social norms and expectations surrounding traditional masculinity and femininity. Certain emotions are therefore expressed more readily in men (anger) and women (sadness).

However, is it possible that the expression of emotions involves feelings other than those learned socially, in both men and women?



Men cry out their sadness.  
Women cry out their anger.

Gilles Tremblay,  
Professor of Social Work,  
Laval University



The combination of these characteristics (perceptions of the role, expressed needs, and reluctance to ask for help) can lead to isolation, exhaustion, and the deterioration of the caregiver's physical and mental health.

\*THE FINDINGS PRESENTED ON THIS PAGE ARE MAINLY INSPIRED BY CAREGIVING FOR MEN | A CHALLENGE FOR THE SERVICE NETWORK | CHU DE QUÉBEC-UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL (CHU DE QUEBEC.CA). THE STATISTICS PRESENTED ARE TAKEN FROM THIS STUDY.

# The challenge : A BRIDGE TO CONNECT US



## FOR MALE CAREGIVERS :

- Recognize myself as a caregiver;
- Recognize and identify my needs, including those specific to my personal and masculine identity;
- Question the values underlying my hesitation to ask for help;
- Consider this help while respecting my values and limits, at my own pace;
- Open up discussion and reflection by drawing on everyone's strengths;
- Combine my strengths with those offered by the resources available to caregivers;
- Dare to express some of the challenges of my commitment as a caregiver and feel the emotional burden they imply.

*"Don't believe, my child, that men don't cry. With every tear, I grew up. Look at me. Men cry too."*

Dan Bigras

## FOR RESOURCES :

- Listen to the needs of each caregiver, regardless of gender and differences;
- Adapt support and services to maximize the contribution of all these differences to the community as a whole;
- Promote the involvement of caregivers of all gender identities;
- Recognize the strengths of male caregiver experts, be willing to listen to them and welcome them;
- Recognize that signs/manifestations of distress may be different in men (e.g., different requests for help);
- Recognize that the expression of emotions may be different in men (e.g., do not immediately attribute aggressive behavior to violence);
- Live and instill the values of openness and identity recognition in our communities.

## WHAT YOU MIGHT FIND IF YOU DARE TO ASK FOR HELP...

- A welcoming environment and support that recognizes your unique characteristics and leverages your strengths
- An opportunity to express your experiences, needs, and challenges in your own way
- Assistance with the day-to-day organization of your dyad
- Guidance in planning the journey ahead
- Information on medical conditions, aging, loss of independence, and more
- A community of peers, enriched by your presence, with whom it is good to share
- A space that you will co-create, in your own image

## WORDS FROM A CAREGIVER

*My peers confirm that what I do is useful, recognized, and understood. Whether you're a woman or a man, we all need that!*

