

The Magazine for Young Caregivers

# Kare



Quiz

**ARE YOU A  
YOUNG CARER?**

**BEING A PARENT TO  
YOUR PARENTS: LETTER  
FROM A YOUNG CARER**

**HOW TO TELL  
YOUR TEACHERS**

# IN THIS MAGAZINE

- 4 Are You a Young Carer?
- 5 QUIZ: Are You a Young Carer?
- 6 Some Facts About Young Carers in Quebec
- 7 Dear Abby
- 10 Risks of Bullying
- 12 How to Tell Your Teachers
- 14 Taking Care of Yourself
- 15 Emotions, Your Super Power
- 17 The Emotions Wheel
- 18 Emergency Kit: Tricks from the Pros
- 19 Rest, Our Greatest Ally!
- 20 Recommendations for You
- 22 Exciting Projects Around the World
- 23 Young Caregivers Tell Their Stories
- 25 Being a Parent to Your Parents : Letter from a Young Carer
- 26 Horoscope
- 27 Getting Help: Resources
- 28 If You're a Teacher



Oh, so you've come across our magazine? Great! We swear you're going to enjoy reading it (that's our humble opinion, haha!).

We wanted the content to echo the stories of young people who find themselves in a caregiving situation. And the first, and often least obvious, step is to **recognize yourself as a caregiver**.

Through fun tests and anecdotes, you might learn more about your role. Or recognize people around you who are.

If you do, we want you to know that it's perfectly normal to need help sometimes. Your role is important, but **it's only part of who you are and who you'll become**. So it's essential that you also look after your own wellbeing. OK?

With this magazine, you'll learn a little more about how to take care of the great person you are, and the resources that can help you. And we hope that the reflections it contains will help you make your day-to-day life a little easier.

**Take care of yourself!**



**Valérie**  
RAANM



**Oliver**  
AMI-Québec

**YOUNG CARER**

*WHAT DOES IT MEAN?*

**This video describes the reality of being a caregiver**

*click Here*



**A YOUNG CARER** is someone between the age of 6 and 25 who is affected by or cares for a loved one who has a chronic illness, disability, mental health or substance use issue and/or problems related to old age. It can also mean being a caregiver for someone who doesn't live with us or isn't part of our family, such as a friend, neighbor or other relative. Or it could mean having more responsibilities at home because one of our parents is a caregiver.

# ARE YOU A YOUNG CARER?

Does someone close to you have a disability, chronic illness or mental health challenges?

No

Yes

Yes, we're very close

Yes and I am a significant caregiver for them

Do you feel that there's an impact on you?

Not really

Yes

Do you find you walk on eggshells around them, or worry if they'll be okay?

No

Yes

**This means you're likely a young carer!**

Do they need your help for certain things?

No

Yes

How do you feel about the support you provide?

I feel like I'm the only one who has to do this

I feel overwhelmed by the tasks I take on, or like I don't have time for myself



### Learn more about young carers and spread the word!

There are likely 3 young carers in your class! Sharing information like this makes their lives easier by helping others understand.



### Find community and support

There are several community organizations with support groups and activities for people dealing with similar situations!



### Tell people who can help

Social workers, your loved one's care team, and your teachers are there. Go to **pages 12-13** for an example of what to say.



### Find services that can mitigate the amount of care you need to provide

Respite services give you a break, while in-home care or specialized organizations may be able to train you or help you hire a professional caregiver. Go to the resource list on **page 27**.

**Still have some doubts? Go to the next page to take the quiz!**

# QUIZ ARE YOU A YOUNG CARER?

**1** In class, do you often worry about someone close to you that you help to support?

- Yes 2 POINTS
- Sometimes 1 POINT
- No 0 POINT

**2** Do you often have to look after your siblings because your parent is taking care of another loved one?

- Yes 2 POINTS
- Sometimes 1 POINT
- No 0 POINT

**3** Do you help to feed, dress or give medication to someone, at home or elsewhere?

- Yes 2 POINTS
- Sometimes 1 POINT
- No 0 POINT

**4** Do you often accompany your parents, grandparents or someone else to appointments or on errands so you can translate for them?

- Yes 2 POINTS
- Sometimes 1 POINT
- No 0 POINT

**5** Do you have a loved one with a disability, chronic illness or that has had a serious accident?

- Yes 2 POINTS
- Sometimes 1 POINT
- No 0 POINT

**6** Do you sometimes turn in homework late because you were helping someone close to you?

- Yes 2 POINTS
- Sometimes 1 POINT
- No 0 POINT

**7** Do you have a job so you can contribute financially to your family?

- Yes 2 POINTS
- Sometimes 1 POINT
- No 0 POINT

**8** Does someone close to you often confide in you about their worries or mental health struggles?

- Yes 2 POINTS
- Sometimes 1 POINT
- No 0 POINT

**9** Is it hard for you to find the time for activities, sports or to hang out with friends because you're helping someone out?

- Yes 2 POINTS
- Sometimes 1 POINT
- No 0 POINT

## RESULTS

Calculate your score (Yes = 2 pts; Sometimes = 1 pt; No = 0 pt).

**Between 0 and 1 point:** You probably aren't a young carer, but keep reading the magazine, because it could very well be that people around you are!

**Between 2 and 10 points:** You may be a young carer! Your responsibilities are greater than most people your age. You should know that being a caregiver when you're young is a lot more common than you might think! And yet, few young people identify themselves as caregivers.

**Between 11 and 20 points:** You're clearly a young carer. These responsibilities can weigh heavily on your shoulders, even though there are many positive aspects to being a caregiver (such as developing a strong bond with the person being cared for, or a sense of purpose, for example). Do you worry a lot about your loved one's condition? Is your family situation causing you stress? Can you invest as much time as you want in your studies and hobbies? **Know that there are services for young carers. In this magazine, we present resources and tips to help you make the most of your situation.**

**10** Are you nervous or shy to talk about what happens in your family?

- Yes 2 POINTS
- Sometimes 1 POINT
- No 0 POINT

# SOME FACTS ABOUT YOUNG CARERS IN QUEBEC

Caregivers come from all ages, backgrounds, origins and family situations. You almost certainly know a caregiver!

Between **2 and 3**

students per classroom are caregivers.



**26%**

of young carers begin caregiving between the ages of 6 and 12 years old.

**2/3**

of young carers are afraid of not succeeding in school

**1/5**

of young carers miss a day or two of school per month because of their responsibilities.

**70%**

of young carers are girls



# DEAR ABBY

## MY PARENTS WON'T ACCEPT THAT MY BROTHER HAS DEPRESSION

**Q:** Dear Abby, my brother has been struggling with his mental health for as long as I can remember. It's like my parents don't want to admit there's a problem, which means that it falls on me to be there for him and help him. It's really frustrating.

*ConcernedSister*

**A:** Dear ConcernedSister, We all have different levels of knowledge about mental health. Our parents and grandparents didn't grow up hearing about it like we have. Socially and culturally there can be many reasons why parents might not want to admit that their child is dealing with mental health challenges, too. They might even think it's their fault.

★ **Mental health professionals are used to dealing with varying levels of understanding** about mental health. They could refer you to family psychoeducation or family info nights on depression. That may help clarify things and give your parents concrete ways to help.

★ There are also **support groups** for caregivers that can help when someone close to you has received a diagnosis. Some groups are structured so that the whole family can participate. Often, hearing other families discuss their challenges and solutions can help them move towards acceptance, and feel less alone.

Take care, Abby

## FALLING BEHIND IN SCHOOL

**Q:** Dear Abby, How can I explain to my teacher that I'm not lazy, I'm just busy? I've really fallen behind in school since my dad got sick. I feel like I'll never catch up, and I know this is going to be an issue next year too... It seems like the teacher just thinks I'm slacking off, but between hospital visits and looking after my siblings, I'm tired, and I haven't been able to focus.

*StudyWoes*

**A:** Dear StudyWoes, It sounds like you're having a really tough year. You're taking care of your sick father and your siblings on top of your studies. It must all be very demanding! I think it's never too late to explain your situation to your teachers, giving them the information you feel they need to understand what you're going through right now. You could also discuss with them the best strategies for getting back on track, such as: make-up assignments, setting up a personalized help plan, adjusting assignment due dates, or finding a compromise on what you absolutely must hand in within a reasonable timeframe.

It can be done, and the teachers are there to help you succeed!

You've got this!

Abby

## AWAY FROM FRIENDS

**Q:** Hi!  
I want to know how to tell my friends that I'm not ghosting them on purpose; I'm just stuck at home. My friends all hang out almost everyday after school, but I have to get home to get dinner made and take care of any errands my grandparents have. I spend lunch time with my friends, but I feel a little left out. I feel like they think I don't even want to spend time with them.

*FriendshipHasSailed*



**A:** Hi FriendshipHasSailed,  
It sounds like you take really good care of your family! Your friends may surprise you in their ability to understand what you're going through, **if you speak honestly with them about your family situation.** If you feel comfortable, letting them know why you often can't join them. It will let them understand you better, and they might know others who are going through the same thing!

Broaching the topic within **your family may also help.** You can see if there are other family members that could take on some chores one day a week. It would make a difference for you. There are also organizations in your area that offer respite for caregivers, which would give you more opportunities to be with your friends. I encourage you to talk to your grandparents and their doctor to see what services they could benefit from. Your local CLSC would be a good place for you and your family to start.

Take care!  
Abby

## SETTING BOUNDARIES

**Q:** Abby,  
How do I tell my mom that I need space? I know the answer is "boundaries" but can you please explain how I'm actually supposed to make her respect them? She calls me all the time, sometimes with a crisis and sometimes for apparently no reason. I am not a help line! Plus, I'm at CEGEP full-time!

*OutofBounds*

**A:** Hi OutofBounds,  
Respecting your own limits can be very difficult. But if you don't respect them yourself and you answer her every time she calls, why should she stop? Here are a few tips to help you.

- ★ You have no way of knowing when your mother calls if it's an emergency or not. Maybe you could ask her to text you instead, if the situation can wait.
- ★ Since you're going to school full-time and need to concentrate, you could set a boundary by telling her you won't take her calls during school hours. And to make sure you don't worry too much, you could answer her texts on your lunch hour.
- ★ Putting your phone on "do not disturb" mode or leaving it in your bag can help you resist the temptation to pick up the phone when she calls. Be aware that you may feel a little anxious at first. This is normal, as you're used to always being available for her.

Hang in there,  
Abby



## NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!

**Q:** Dear Abby,  
I don't know what to do! In public, people often come up to me and my sister to ask why she uses a wheelchair. When she's not around, they also ask me about her cancer and her chances of recovery. I don't think it's my place to explain, and it really makes me feel uncomfortable. How can I answer?

*PrivacyPlz*

Hi PrivacyPlz,

**A:** First off, it's totally normal to find these questions intrusive, even if people mean well. You have a right to say that your sister's health is her business. Having a "ready-made" phrase to use in these situations can really help, by remaining honest and polite, but firm. For example:

*That's a pretty private subject. Yes, she has been through a lot, but it's not my place to talk about it.*

*Why don't you ask her directly? She might know how to answer you better than me.*

*It makes me uncomfortable to talk about her like that. Ask her directly, if you want to know more.*

It takes some practice, but you will become more confident with time. I hope that this gives you a few ideas to start!

Abby





## RISKS OF BULLYING

### **Sometimes, young carers can experience bullying.**

At school, other students might consider them “different” and tease, harass or exclude them. Young carers can be bullied because of class absences and lateness, their clothing, their family's economic situation, or because they don't have the right equipment for school activities, for example.

This can have a negative impact on their emotional wellbeing and self-esteem.

**If you find yourself in this kind of situation, YOU SHOULD TALK ABOUT IT.**

Explain the situation to one of your teachers, a trusted adult or someone in your family, and give examples of what you're going through.

Talk to a friend about your caregiving situation: this can help them better understand your reality, and support you in the event of bullying or hurtful comments.

Because my brother was 'weird' they said I was 'weird.' It hurts, but I can't change my family.

In addition to defending themselves, young carers often find themselves defending their siblings with disabilities from bullying, or feel they need to shield other family members from judgment. Being the one to always step in and stop their sibling being bullied can make the young carer feel even more alone and different from their classmates who are less accepting.



I'm always in trouble because I'm often late to morning classes, even though I can't help it. The class laughs when our teacher calls me out.

Sometimes, teachers can unknowingly make the situation worse by punishing young carers for things that are outside their control, or intervening in a way that reinforces feelings of being different. Letting them know about the situation is really necessary; they'll be more likely to understand how it affects young carers' education.



I didn't want to bother my parents—they have a lot going on already.

Many young carers choose not to confide in their parents about the bullying and isolation they face at school. They believe their parents already have a lot on their plates and don't want to be a burden. Unfortunately, this further isolates them, preventing them from seeking help.



I try to focus on how this has made me more mature, but I wish I didn't feel different from everyone.

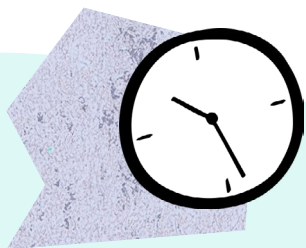
The worry about a loved one's health, the knowledge required to provide care and support, and the day-to-day responsibilities of young carers aren't typical. They also give these young people the impression that there's a gulf separating them from others their age. What's more, the limited time for leisure and extracurricular activities makes it difficult for young carers to make friends.



# HOW TO TELL YOUR TEACHERS

Are you unable to get involved in your studies because of your family responsibilities? Do you feel stressed by having to attend all your classes and take care of someone close to you? Do you think school should take your family situation into account? If you answered yes to at least one question, then read on—we've got some advice for you!

It may seem awkward to ask for help in advance. But when it comes down to it, what you really want is consideration for your family situation and the opportunity to succeed in your school year. You have a right to those things!



## THE SOONER, THE BETTER!

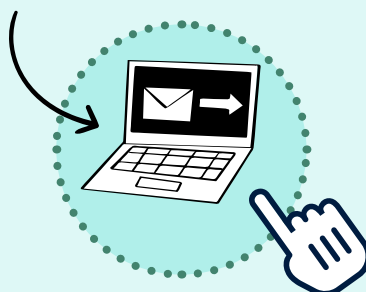
Talk about your situation as soon as you can, if possible at the beginning of the year. When you're going through a stressful period, you won't have to add to your stress by starting from zero; your teachers will already know. If more difficult times arise during the year, this will allow you and your teachers to adjust your workload and expectations.



## WHERE TO START?

Stay after class or visit the teacher's office. This will give you a confidential space to introduce yourself, explain your situation and what's involved (e.g. variable hours, fatigue, little time for yourself, etc.).

An e-mail could also be a good start. **We've prepared a template that you can copy and paste to suit your needs. [Just click here to download the file.](#)**



## HOW DO I SAY THIS?

Start requests with “So I can pass my course” or speaking about “My needs as a student”: this clearly indicates your good intentions, and that you'll need flexibility and collaboration to achieve them.

One in three adults in Quebec is a caregiver. It's even possible that your teacher is one too, and understands your challenges. Starting the conversation with “I'm a caregiver to...” is a great place to start.



## DO I NEED TO GIVE ALL THE DETAILS?

It's your choice, you have to feel comfortable. What teachers need to understand is how your situation may affect your studies.

You can simply say that the person you're supporting is going through a difficult time, or has a major health problem, or that you need to do more at home, or that you need to work to help your family.



## WHAT DO YOU NEED?

- More time to hand in your work?
- Flexibility in case of emergency?
- Receiving class notes when you're absent because of responsibilities?

Your teachers will work with you to find simple solutions that will help you succeed.



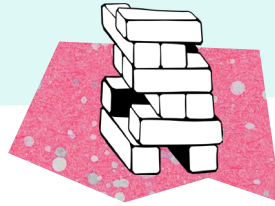
## IF I TALK ABOUT MY SITUATION, WILL MY FAMILY GET IN TROUBLE?

Many young carers are reluctant to talk about their situation and the support and care they offer a loved one, for fear of judgment or intervention by Youth Protection. Teachers only make a report if the safety or development of a child under 18 is compromised. Helping and taking care of each other in a family is simply being a caregiver, and they should know the difference.



## THE DUE DATE IS TOMORROW MORNING AND I HAVEN'T STARTED

It's okay! People hand in assignments late, or forget assignments for all kinds of reasons. If you can, emailing your teacher as soon as possible is always a good idea.



## I'M FALLING BEHIND BECAUSE OF MY CAREGIVING ROLE AND MY TEACHER DOESN'T KNOW

You haven't told them yet? That's okay, but the sooner you let them know, the better.

Teachers will be able to adjust the weighting of your work and assignments, review due dates and find a balance between your responsibilities and what's required of you at school. This kind of accommodation for students is an integral part of their work, and teachers are used to making these types of adjustments.



## I DON'T THINK MY TEACHERS CAN HELP...

Teachers are certainly capable of understanding your family situation and how it might affect your learning. Their goal is also your academic success!

The last part of this magazine is specifically for teachers, offering practical tools that can help them too.



# TAKING Care of Yourself

It can be hard to think of yourself when you are worrying about someone else. But, it's essential for your wellbeing. Plus, you'll be in better shape to help those around you.

## 1 Find what makes you feel good

Do you like reading? Would you like to learn to play the piano or draw manga? Or take 30 minutes to soak in a bubble bath? Go ahead, treat yourself!

- Find something that lets you unwind, learn new things, or develop yourself. Nurturing your interests is one way to give yourself a break.
- Once you've found what motivates you, make it a habit and make sure you set aside time for it.

## 2 Get Moving!

Two thousand years ago, someone very wise said: "A healthy mind in a healthy body." It must be true if the saying has endured this long!

- Taking care of your body is just as important as taking care of your mental health. You don't have to go to the gym 5 times a week! Even a 15 minute walk can make a difference in your energy levels.

## 3 Learn to respect your limits and say no

We often only notice our own boundaries when they're crossed. To better recognize them, we need to listen to ourselves and to the emotions that certain situations provoke in us. For example, if a situation makes you feel uncomfortable, it probably means you've hit your limit. Your feelings are yours alone, they're valid and can't be denied!

- Naming your boundary clearly will do you good; it's a gesture of respect towards yourself. The other person might react negatively, and that's okay. It takes time for everyone to adapt to change. The important thing is that you recognize how you feel, because it's still valid.

## 4 Don't neglect your social life

Being a young carer can sometimes isolate you from others. Your responsibilities don't always allow you to take part in activities or go out with your friends. And yet, it's so important for your well-being!

- Build one or more times into your schedule when you can be with the people you love.
- Can't make it in person? Use technology! A FaceTime coffee with your BFF can feel just as good!

## 5 Ask for help

It's not a sign of weakness to ask for help. The hardest part is asking!

- Is there an organization near you that can help with housework or meals? Can a family member take over grocery shopping during your busy week? Could the person you're helping receive support through the CLSC?
- At the end of the magazine, you'll find resources that could be of use to you.

## 6 Don't expect too much

Give yourself a break! Like everyone else, you only have 24 hours in the day, and the accumulation of tasks doesn't always allow you to get everything done.

- When things pile up, take the time to set your priorities and do what you can in order. And remember, just being there for your loved one is extraordinary!



# emotions, YOUR SUPER POWER

In the course of a day, you can experience sadness, joy, worry, love... sometimes all at the same time! It's perfectly normal and happens to everyone. You manage this flow according to your personality, your experiences, your state of fatigue and the situations you find yourself in.

In fact, what we feel gives us a lot of information about ourselves and the situation. It's like an inner alarm signal. And learning to cope with what's going on inside you has multiple benefits:



Being able to be aware of your emotions allows you to relate better to others, to better communicate how you're feeling and to recognize how others are feeling.



You'll feel more secure in your decision-making if you better understand what you're going through and are able to take a step back.



Being able to name what you're experiencing will reduce stress, which will improve your emotional well-being.



If you learn to manage your emotions better, you'll learn to identify situations and people who make you react strongly.

## In the heat of the moment, how do you stay in control and not let your emotions overwhelm you?

In stressful situations, take a deep breath! Often, when we're experiencing something intense, we tend to stop breathing. Breathe in and out slowly— it calms you down and reconnects you to your body.

Put a name to the emotions you're experiencing. Recognizing and identifying emotions helps you deal with them.

If the time is right, calmly and clearly express your feelings to the other person. If this isn't possible, creative activities such as drawing and writing, or sport, can help to clear the air. You can also talk about it with someone you trust.

Take stock of what's going on in your body when you're faced with an intense emotion. Sometimes you're less patient or you get angry simply because you're physically unwell, tired or hungry.

If the emotion you're experiencing is too intense, isolate yourself for a while to relieve the tension and take stock. It's better to withdraw from a situation than to say or do things you'll regret later.

If things get too confusing and you feel overwhelmed by what's going on in your life and how you feel, don't hesitate to find support. Is there someone you know who can give you some time? Do you have a trusting relationship with a social worker at your school? Would you like to find other young people going through the same issues as you? The important thing is that you're not alone in what you're going through.

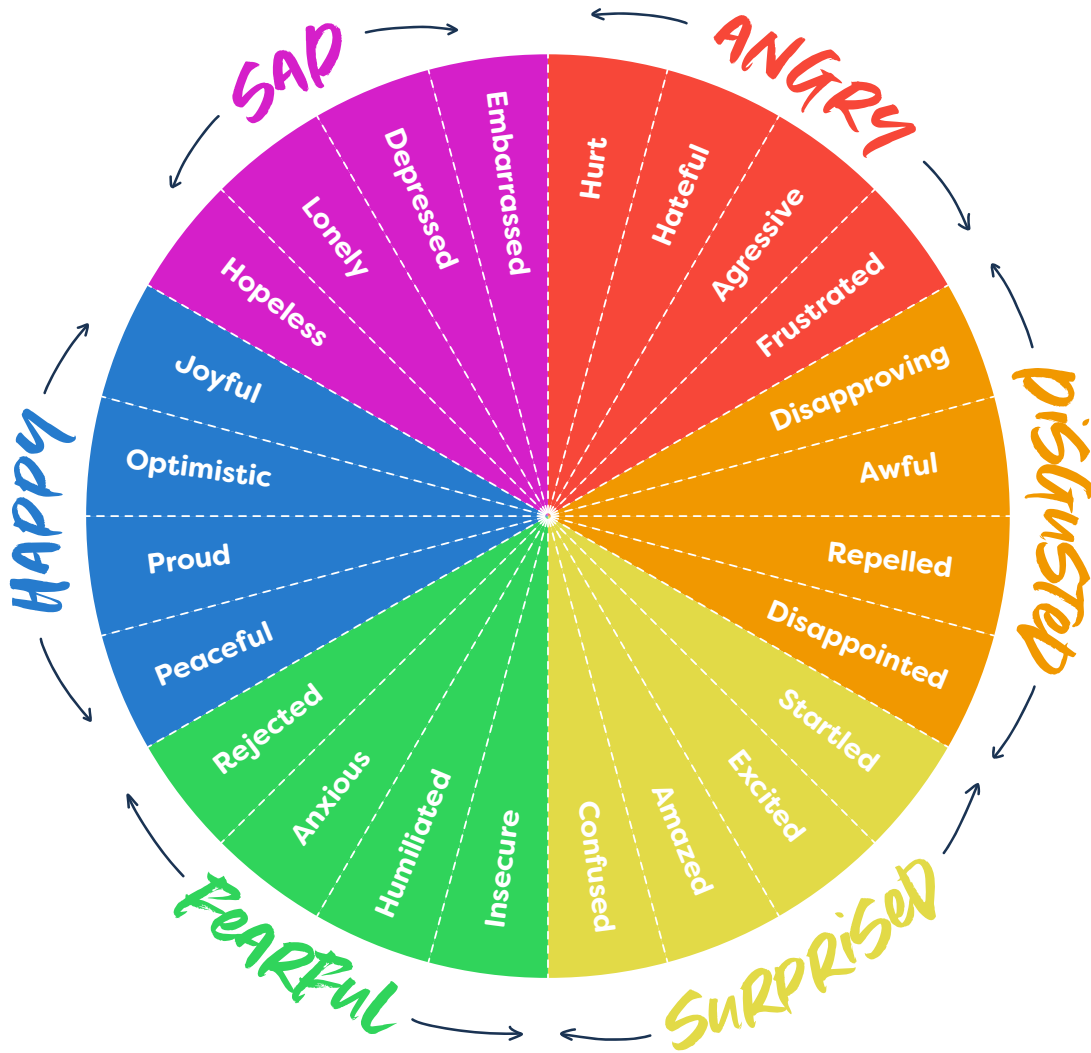
Have several strategies in mind to help you cope with your emotions. Some things may work, others may not. Over time, you'll learn to identify your triggers, i.e. the situations and people that make you react strongly.

And above all, be patient with yourself. Anyone can get a bit too emotional, or have difficulty communicating it to others. We ask for forgiveness, learn from the situation and move on!



# The emotions wheel

Is it hard to put how you feel into words?  
Here's a tool that can help!



# EMERGENCY KIT TRICKS FROM THE PROS



**Valérie**

Running, double chocolate ice cream, and the listening ear of my best friend are my essentials!

Writing in my journal and drawing lets me take a step back and relax.

I cook cakes because it makes everyone at home happy. We get to sit together and forget about dad's cancer.



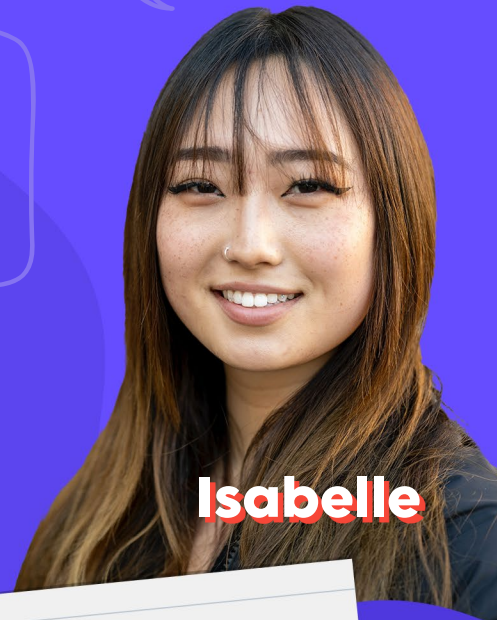
**Martin**

I talk about it a lot with my girlfriend. She is good at reminding me that with my mom's illness, a lot of things are outside my control. Watching an action movie with her on the couch helps me clear my head.



**Alex**

I give myself permission to be average. I'm often super busy and sometimes I have to cut corners. I never put pressure on myself to do everything perfectly!



**Isabelle**

What's in your emergency kit?

- ✧
- ✧
- ✧

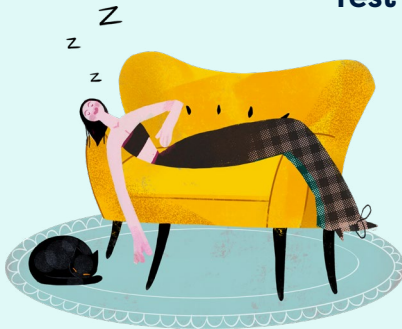


**Katia**



# REST, Our Greatest Ally!

Over the course of a day, there are lots of ways for us to rest our bodies and minds. Here are the 7 types of rest that you need to be at the top of your game.



## PHYSICAL

A good night's rest, taking a nap, closing your eyes for 5 minutes if you feel the need.

## MENTAL

Take a break, enjoy your time off, plan nothing for a whole day and follow your desires. Put what's bothering you in a notebook and get it out of your system.

## SOCIAL

Surrounding ourselves with people who calm us or who give us energy.

## SENSORY

Being in silence, walking without headphones and music, disconnecting from your phone for 1 hour.

## SPIRITUAL

Connecting to something larger than yourself. Doing yoga or meditating.



## CREATIVE

Drawing, painting, gardening, daydreaming, no matter how talented you are!

## EMOTIONAL

Having a space where you can just be yourself. Where you can freely express yourself without thinking about pleasing others.



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOU

## Podcasts



### Caregiver Compass

PODCAST WITH  
STEPHANIE MUSKAT

An uplifting, inspirational podcast talking about all things caregiving. Therapist and caregiver Stephanie Muskat takes you through real-life caregiving stories from her own therapeutic experience and gives you the raw and personal details on her own caregiving experiences as a young caregiver.

 [Listen here](#)



### Connecting Disability to... Being a sibling

PODCAST BY ACCESSIBLE  
MEDIA INC

The sibling relationship can be the longest and most complicated relationship in someone's life. Today, we're chatting about how disability and chronic illness influence siblings. Guests sisters Holly and Amy Mathers talk about how Amy's disability has impacted them throughout their lives and what it took to go from being siblings to friends.

 [Listen here](#)

## Movies

### CODA

COMEDY-DRAMA  
BY SIAN HEDER,  
FRANCE-USA, 2021



As a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults), Ruby is the only hearing person in her family. When the family's fishing business is threatened, Ruby finds herself torn between pursuing her passion at Berklee College of Music and her fear of abandoning her parents.

 [Where to watch?](#)

### I Am Still Your Child

DOCUMENTARY/SHORT  
BY MEGAN DURNFORD,  
CANADA, 2017

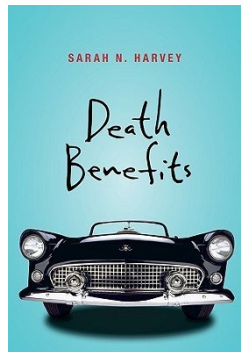


Jessy, Sarah and Von are all familiar with the "ups and downs" of living with a parent who suffers from mental illness. I'm Still Your Child immerses us in a bewildering, yet hopeful, world through the stories of three compelling subjects who have found ways to cope—and even thrive!

 [Watch on Youtube](#)

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOU

Books



## Death Benefits

BY SARAH N. HARVEY,  
ed. ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS

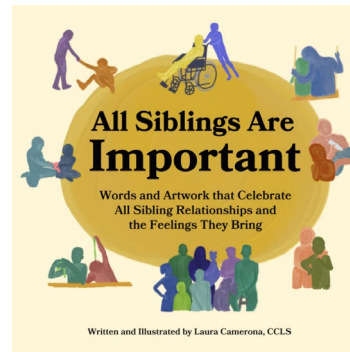
Royce is pressed into service as a caregiver for his ninety-five-year-old grandfather and gradually comes to appreciate the cantankerous old man.



## He Never Liked Cake

BY JANNA LEYDE

A coming-of-age memoir encompassing the acute and lasting effects of brain injury on both survivors and their loved ones. The summer before ninth grade, a car accident on a rain-slicked highway flipped Janna's safe and happy world upside down, and her adolescence dissolved into a summer of restraining belts, feeding tubes, therapy schedules, and chicken salad sandwiches from the hospital cafeteria.



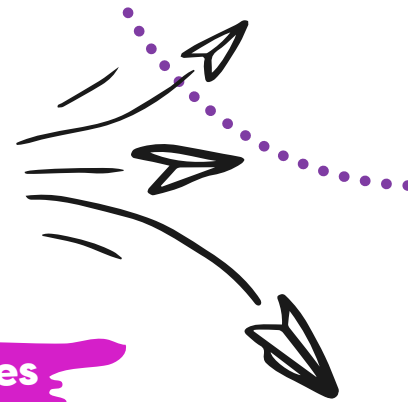
## All Siblings Are Important: Words and Artwork That Celebrate All Sibling Relationships and the Feelings They Bring

BY LAURA CAMERONA,  
ed. WORDS WORTH REPEATING

This book honours the many feelings that come with being a sibling and is a good conversation starter for talking about the dynamics or feelings happening within a sibling relationship or because of a sibling's struggles.



# EXCITING PROJECTS AROUND THE WORLD



## In Canada

**Siblings Canada** is a non-profit organization that works to recognize the important role siblings play when one of them has a disability. As more and more people with disabilities outlive their parents, it's often siblings who take over care and support. With virtual events where people meet, and a mentoring program and research, they support and empower siblings in their role as caregivers.

**CAP Santé Mentale** is a network that brings together, supports and mobilizes organizations that support the friends and families of people with mental health challenges. On its site, a teens and young adults section is packed with relevant information that can be of use to young carers who want to support someone who struggles with their mental health. Check it out!

**Young Caregivers Association**, created in 2003, was the first Canadian organization dedicated to supporting young carers and their families! The Powerhouse program was developed for young people between the ages of 5 and 25, and aims to develop life skills, strengthen the resilience of young caregivers and break the isolation young people experience. Powerhouse offers virtual workshops that connect young carers across Canada.



## In the United States

The University of Wisconsin offers a program called **YCARE**. Realizing that many young people were providing care to loved ones with complex medical needs, a researcher decided to set up a hospital-based training program for young people. Supported by various healthcare professionals, the young people learn more about the care they offer and the devices they use. It also gives young carers the opportunity to ask questions, talk to other young people about what they're going through, and receive support. [Watch the video, it's very moving](#).



## In France

**The JADE** (jeunes aidants ensemble) organization uses an artistic project to offer support and respite to French young carers. The cinema-respite workshops take place during the autumn and winter vacations, in residence. Supported by a team of audiovisual professionals and psychologists, the young carers have the chance to use film as a medium to talk about their realities. As an added bonus, when the short films are completed, family and friends are treated to a screening in a real cinema!

*click here*



## In Belgium

In Belgium, there's a youth center dedicated to young carers. The organization **Jeunes et Aidants Proches** came up with the idea. Open since 2018, it's a place where you can receive support and information from the intervention team. Young people come here to rest (there's even a room for napping!), take part in workshops, do their homework, relax and share with others in a similar situation.



## In the United Kingdom

Run jointly by Carers Trust and The Children's Society, the **Young Carers in Schools (YCIS) program** in England is one of the widest-reaching programs that supports young carers' educational attainment. They provide a step-by-step guide for schools to start identifying and supporting students who are carers, including setting up a go-to contact for young carers' concerns, and host an annual Young Carers in Schools Award ceremony that celebrates advancements each school is making.



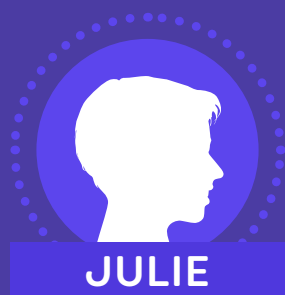
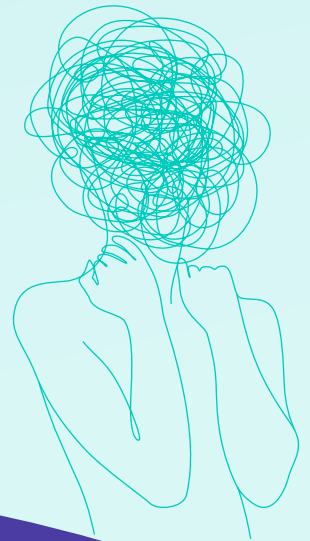
# YOUNG CAREGIVERS TELL THEIR STORIES

Nathalie became her mother's caregiver at the age of 11. After an accident at work, her mother struggled with her mental health. So, Nathalie found herself managing the day-to-day chores in at home, looking after her little brother, and offering emotional support to her mother. Living in a single-parent family, she became the "parent" that was responsible for everything.

She remembers that she didn't talk about her family situation because at the time, like it still is today, mental health was a taboo subject. **"I knew the situation wasn't typical, but I didn't have the words to explain it."** Although she met several adults at the time who could have helped her and validated her feelings that her situation was a burden, none did. **"If no one around you reacts to the fact that the responsibilities you're carrying are too much for someone your age, you end up believing you're asking for too much and start doubting your own needs."**



**"As a healthcare professional or teacher, if you spot a young person who could be a caregiver, offer support! Never trivialize the situation once you've identified it."**



Julie's mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis when Julie was 8. **"I remember being terrified because my uncle had the same disease and his health deteriorated very quickly."** Julie did what she could after her mother's diagnosis, helping with housework and meals, offering emotional support and sometimes looking after her little sister. Fortunately, the family received a lot of help from friends and neighbours. In her opinion, her mother's difficulties made her become independent very early. **"I was careful not to add to my mother's fatigue, and I never asked her for anything."**



She recalls that adolescence was a difficult time for her emotionally. **“You can never be angry with your parent, never be upset with them, because inevitably you feel guilty because they're ill! It wasn't easy to separate the sick person I was helping and my mom in her role as mother.”**

The illness also affected her relationship with her sister. It was hard for Julie to see that her little sister didn't feel the same obligation to take care of their mom. Since her sister wasn't a carer for her mom, Julie also felt they were able to have a healthier relationship than Julie and her mother.

**“Even if you take care of someone, that doesn't mean you don't need to be taken care of. Find someone you trust and that you have a strong bond with so they can support you.”**

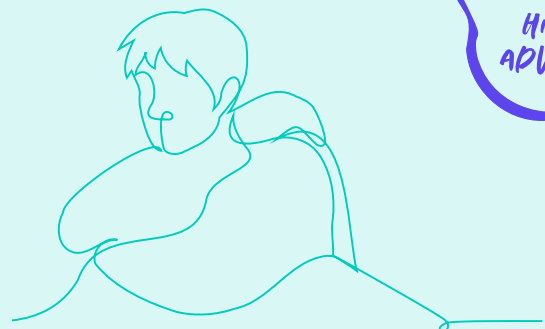


**DANIEL**

Daniel's brother recently experienced a psychotic break, and was diagnosed with schizophrenia. **“It was really a blur. I wasn't home at the time, so I came back and my brother was in care, and my parents were scared.”** Since his brother has returned home, Daniel tries to connect with him and encourage him to interact with the family. **“It's hard because sometimes he's on a new medication that makes him really low-energy, and stay in his room, but if he decides to go off his medication, it can be hard to follow what he's really talking about. I miss talking with him; we were really close.”**

Daniel's parents aren't comfortable talking about his brother's condition, and have forbidden him from discussing it outside the family. Even his closest friends no longer come by the family home or know the details, only that Daniel's brother is between jobs. **“I feel like my friends wouldn't understand anyway.”**

**“It's powerful to actually talk about it, just for yourself. Keeping it a secret makes it weigh more, so even if you need an anonymous place, it's worth it.”**





# BEING A PARENT TO YOUR PARENTS

## Letter from a Young Carer



I'm supposed to be thinking about what university I'd like to attend, but instead I'm thinking about what specialist I need to bring my mom to.

I've always been there for my mom. If she has a bad pain day, then I do the simple things like picking up around the house or making meals, bringing her medicine. On other days it's less simple. I help keep track of her medications when that list gets longer. I remind her to make appointments and I keep track of requisitions and prescriptions. I research specialists in our area and support groups for her... not that she always wants to go.

Lately it feels like there are more bad days than good days, and I'm getting worried that she won't be okay if I leave for school. I've started looking at how I can stay home, but I feel so tired from dealing with her care that I feel like I don't have time to make a real plan.

I love my mom, and I love that I get to be there for her. I know that my friends don't have the same connection and understanding that we have. They also don't know all the things I do about medications, mental health, and adult things like bills and paperwork. But, that also means they wouldn't understand if I talked with them about this. I told one of my closest friends and they just blankly told me "well you have to do what's best for you." What's best for me is knowing my mom is safe and feeling like I can cope with what I need to.

Part of me is scared because I saw my older sister move to another province and she has struggled. She says mom calls her all the time when I'm at school. I know mom talks about how much better it would be if my sister were here, almost like her health would be better somehow.

My sister has been encouraging me to go, and that between the two of us we can check in as much as is needed. I understand why that could be a good choice, I just feel guilty; it's hard to know the right thing to do.



# HOROSCOPE

## ARIES



**MARCH 21–APRIL 20**

Your sign is linked to the planet Mars, so you've got energy to spare! You give a lot of time to others, but without forgetting yourself. You take advantage of your free time to play sports or see your friends, and that's important! Taking time for yourself will recharge your batteries.

## TAURUS



**APRIL 21–MAY 20**

Solitary by nature, people born under the sign of Taurus tend to want to do everything alone, sometimes even at the cost of their health and well-being. Never hesitate to ask for help—it's not a sign of weakness, but rather of courage!

## GEMINI



**MAY 21–JUNE 21**

For Geminis, anxiety rises quickly. Be careful not to let yourself be overwhelmed by stress and worry. A good way to deal with it? Take the time to talk it over with someone you trust. Who knows, they might be able to help you see things differently.

## CANCER



**JUNE 22–JULY 23**

The full moon can bring out your emotional side. Learn to focus on the things you need to accomplish for your wellbeing, one task at a time. And to succeed, learn to say no! The people around you will understand that you have to put yourself first.

## LEO



**JULY 24–AUGUST 23**

Loyalty and commitment are strong Leo values. However, these qualities can play tricks on you and make you choose the well-being of others over your own. You have to seize the opportunities that life offers and keep yourself at the center of your life and your decisions!

## VIRGO



**AUGUST 24–SEPT. 23**

Your shy and mysterious nature often arouses the curiosity of those around you. You need time to reveal yourself. To feel at ease in all situations, don't hesitate to tell people they're too curious. Be firm and assert your boundaries!

## LIBRA



**SEPT. 24–OCT. 23**

Always on the lookout for balance, Libras often juggle the different spheres of their lives to keep everything in harmony. But no one is perfect. Even if things don't always go your way, that doesn't mean they're going badly! Stay optimistic!

## SCORPIO



**OCT. 24–NOV. 22**

Your positive attitude is noticeable, and those around you are grateful for your support. You feel good about yourself and it shows! But watch out for moments of fatigue, when you may lose your cool and react strongly!

## SAGITTARIUS



**NOV. 23–DEC. 20**

Don't let negative thoughts overwhelm you. Don't be your own worst enemy—take time to congratulate yourself on all your good deeds and remind yourself that you are an exceptional and generous person. Treat yourself with love and kindness.

## CAPRICORN



**DEC. 21–JAN. 20**

You can be fully confident that you have what it takes to face life's obstacles. Your tenacity and balance enable you to keep your head above water and remain firm even in the face of the most complex situations. But don't forget to take a break for yourself!

## AQUARIUS



**JAN. 21–FEB. 19**

Aquarians are persevering, but tend to forget themselves in tasks. The result is fatigue and pressure on your shoulders. Always take the time to breathe and set your priorities. By giving yourself a break, you'll be better off!

## PISCES



**FEB. 20–MARCH 20**

The ties that bind you to your family are strong and meaningful. Life sometimes forces us to stick together, and that's exactly what you're doing. But don't forget to take care of your body, your heart and your emotional health!

# GETTING HELP: RESOURCES

If you feel you need help, many people can give you a hand, through different community organizations, at school, or in the healthcare system.

In CLSCs and at schools, there are what we call “psychosocial teams.” Made up of social workers, psychoeducators, and special education technicians, these people are there for you. They will take the time to listen, help you find solutions, and connect you to community organizations that can help.

There are **community organizations dedicated to caregivers**. These organizations oftentimes focus on a specific cause a cause, for example, cancer or mental health. Others support carers no matter the health condition of their loved one. It is worth reaching out to them—they know what you’re going through and their help can make a big difference.

Here are some helpful resources. On their sites, you’ll find more information about their services, and how to get in touch. Take the time to look over them to see if a service appeals to you.

## Organizations that offer information and support to young carers

**amiquébec**  
Alliés en santé mentale  
Allies in mental health  
47 ans years  
1977-2024

**Regroupement des aidantes et aidants naturels de Montréal**  
raanm.net

**Le RAANM**  
www.raanm.net  
(services in French)

## Other tools and trainings for young carers

**AMI-Québec's Toolkits for Young Carers**



## Services for caregivers

Mental health:

→ **Cap santé mentale**

Organizations that will refer you to the right place:

→ **L'APPUI**

→ **Proche Aidance Québec**

Find services according to your loved one's health condition:

→ **AMI-Québec**

## Youth Services Offered by CLSCs in Montreal

→ **CLSC de l'Est**

→ **CLSC du Nord**

→ **CLSC du Centre-Ouest**

→ **CLSC du Centre-Sud**

## Services for youth aged 12-25 in many regions of Québec (including Montreal)

→ **Aire ouverte**

## Confidential Helplines

→ **Kids Help Phone**

**1-800-668-6868**

→ **First Nations & Inuit:**

**Hope For Wellness Helpline**

**1-855-242-3310**

# IF YOU'RE A TEACHER

**In addition to the measures your school has put in place to accommodate students' needs and counter harassment and bullying, there are special considerations to keep in mind when dealing with a young carer.**

- Confidentiality is paramount for young carers. If you have questions about a loved one's health, difficulties contacting parents, concerns about absenteeism or school performance, talk to the student in private.
- Refer the student to the school's psychosocial team, or to the health and social services network for support resources.
- If you have any doubts about whether a young person might be a caregiver, opt to start the discussion. They may not know how to do it, and may feel uneasy about disclosing their family situation due to stigma.
- Remain available for these students, offering your support and attentive listening. Sometimes, these young people are also victims of bullying and harassment because of their situation.
- Discuss possible accommodations with these students so that they are not too penalized by their situation at home and can succeed.

**Young carers can teach us a lot about empathy...**

It's a quality they demonstrate every day in caring for their loved ones. By cultivating empathy, we foster environments that are more compassionate and better equipped to fight bullying.

## IDEAS FOR ACCOMMODATIONS

- Greater flexibility in deadlines for handing in homework or assignments, to accommodate appointments or more intense moments related to caregiving responsibilities.
- Sending course notes and learning materials by e-mail, if the student cannot be present in class.
- Avoid assigning a percentage of the final grade based on class attendance. Arriving late or being absent is often beyond their control.
- Allow students to use their cellphones in class if they are waiting to hear from someone close to them.
- If punishment or extra help are necessary, opt for times that suit the student's schedule. Lunch may be preferable if they have other responsibilities after school.
- Give them the QR code for this magazine.
- Refer them to a local organization that helps young carers (check our [resource page!](#))

This magazine is a collaboration of the **Regroupement des aidantes et des aidants naturels de Montréal (RAANM)** and **AMI-Québec**. Its production would not have been possible without the generous contribution of the **Fondation de la fédération des médecins spécialistes du Québec** and the **Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence**.



Canadian Centre for  
Caregiving Excellence | Centre canadien d'excellence  
pour les aidants

## AUTHORS AND COLLABORATORS

Content prepared by

**Valérie Boucher, RAANM**

**Oliver Fitzpatrick, AMI-Québec**

Translation

**Oliver Fitzpatrick, AMI-Québec**

Graphic design and cover illustration

**Annie St-Amant**



Regroupement des aidantes  
et aidants naturels de Montréal

**raanm.net**

**info@raanm.net**

514 374-1056

5800, rue St-Denis, suite 602

Montréal, Québec H2S 3L5

**ami**québec

Allié.e.s en santé mentale

Allies in mental health

**amiquebec.org**

**reception@amiquebec.org**

514 486-1448

Toll free : 1-877-303-0264

5800 boul. Décarie

Montréal, Québec H3X 2J5

**Kare**