

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

The young people who help you



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If you live with an illness, a disability, an addiction or mental health challenges, there may be a young person in your life who helps you each day or supports you during tough times. That person is likely a young caregiver. Recognizing their role is the first step to supporting them.

Who is this comic for?

This comic was designed to **shed light on the often-hidden role that children, teens and young adults can play** in supporting a loved one living with an illness, disability, addiction issues or mental health challenge. Whether it's a parent, sibling, grandparent or other important person in their life, these young people can be thrust into the role of care provider, emotional anchor and/or everyday task coordinator.

Often, neither parents, family, nor the young people themselves realize that this is what we call **young caregiving**.

This comic is designed to raise awareness, share information, and give adults the tools **to discuss the matter with the young people** in their lives.

What is young caregiving?

“Young caregiving” refers to situations where a child, teen or young adult helps look after someone in their immediate circle who needs support, whether due to disability, chronic illness, addiction issues or mental health challenges. Young people who take on this role are known as **young caregivers (or young carers)**.

In practical terms, young caregiving can involve:

→ Dealing with complex situations related to their loved one's health.

→ Taking on significant care-related responsibilities, like:

- Staying with the care recipient, seeing to their safety, entertaining them or listening to them.
- Helping them dress, get around, feed themselves, bathe, or take their meds.
- Accompanying them to medical appointments and, as needed, translating information from health professionals into their mother tongue.
- Taking on a major share of the household chores (cleaning, meal prep, shopping, etc.).
- Taking care of siblings.



How can I recognize a young caregiver?

A child, teen or young adult can be considered a caregiver when

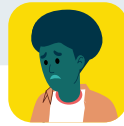
they spend time or energy supporting a loved one.

It doesn't mean they "do everything," simply that these responsibilities take up a meaningful part of their day.

Below are a few indications:



You or someone in the young person's immediate circle lives with an illness, disability, addiction issues or mental health challenge.



The young person often worries about that person's health or well-being.



They perform a greater share of the household tasks than what would normally be expected of someone their age.



They can have difficulty focusing at school or work, or appear fatigued.



They rarely discuss their feelings and may experience emotional difficulties.



They may have questions related to their loved one's health that they are too afraid to ask.



These signs don't necessarily point to a problem, but they *can* suggest that the young person is playing a caregiving role in your life or in that of another family member.

Recognizing this is a good first step toward initiating a discussion to see if they feel comfortable in the situation.

What being a young caregiver can entail

UPSIDE

Caring at a young age has its upsides.
For example, it can:

- Promote empathy, maturity and sense of responsibility.
- Cultivate openness to difference.
- Strengthen bonds.
- Lead to a sense of making a meaningful contribution.

CHALLENGES

However, it can also pose challenges:

- Feelings of stress, sadness or guilt.
- Lack of time for friends, homework or leisure activities.
- More responsibilities than they should have to shoulder at their age.

Every young caregiver will experience this situation differently.

What matters most is giving them a **space to be heard** and **opening up the conversation** to help them **achieve balance** and **get the support they need**. Be sure to tell them about the available resources, as well as seek out any guidance or information you may need yourself.

What kind of help is available?

There are various resources for young caregivers and their families:



Info-social helpline

Phone: 811, option 2

Appui
proches aidants

Caregiver Support Helpline for caregivers and their families



Phone:
1 855 852-7784



[Live chat](#)



Services available through your local CLSC

[Find a CLSC](#)



Aire-ouverte services (youth aged 12 to 25)

[Find an Aire-ouverte centre](#)

cap
santé mentale

Service for family and friends of people living with mental health challenges



Phone:
1 855 272-7837



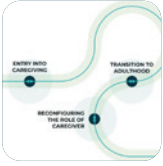
[Find a member organization in your region](#)

ami québec
Alliance en santé mentale
Alliance in mental health

To find organizations specializing in young caregiving:

[See AMI-Québec's list of resources](#)

To find out more



See the [Trajectory of young caregivers](#)



Catch the [young caregivers episode of the podcast](#).
[Des histoires qui résonnent](#)
(in French)



Read [Kare magazine](#)



Watch the video,
[Vous connaissez sûrement des jeunes proches aidants](#)
(in French)



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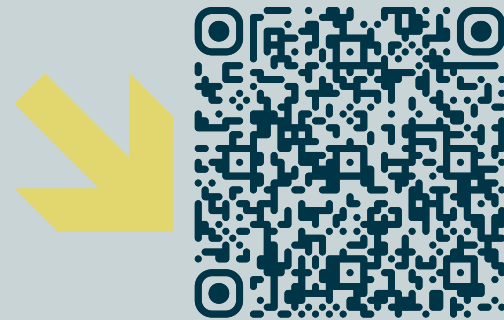
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To see the **other publications** linked to this project or learn more about the **process used** to put together this publication:



We welcome any comments or suggestions

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