



A companion for *family caregivers*

Getting a diagnosis of breast or ovarian cancer can be an overwhelming, life-changing experience. **Cancer not only affects the woman who has been diagnosed, but also her family and friends.** It can be particularly challenging for a woman's partner or spouse, as they strive to be a supportive caregiver while dealing with their own emotions. They are likely to be experiencing many of the same feelings that she is, such as anger, sadness, anxiety, and fear.

Survivors tell us what their family means to them



"To live this experience with my son binded the relationship forever."

Chantale



"The hardest thing to do when you're sick is ask for help, but it's necessary. The experience of the disease is made more bearable with family."

Josiane



"To be in this together with my husband meant the world to me...he was my rock."

Sarah

Almost **900,000** people in Canada care for a loved one with cancer. **You might feel alone but you're not.**

Helpful **tips** that can keep family caregivers from *tipping over*

1- Be ready to be overwhelmed at some point in the journey.

We're not suggesting you plan for stress and anxiety, but dealing with cancer involves challenges, and unexpected twists and turns, some good and some bad. Some of those caregiving experiences will be beyond your control. Developing resilience in the face of difficult circumstances can mean the difference between walking a fine line and tripping over it.

2- Slow and steady wins the race.

When someone you love is hurting, nothing can happen quickly enough. You're going to be tempted to take on a lot of responsibility very fast and shoulder a weight that can feel superhuman. Pause first and take stock of the resources around you, including friends and family that can be of support. Caregivers who go out of the gate too hard and too fast are often the first to burn out and the last ones to ask for help.

3- You can be a caregiver, a partner and a person at the same time.

A sense of identity loss is common among caregivers, especially when the caregiving role becomes very intense. You might notice this happening when people ask you "how you're doing" and your first response is "**we're** doing okay". The subject of that question was you, but all you see is us. With time, this way of thinking can create feelings of resentment, anger and loneliness; you have permission to help, to be helped, and to take a break from helping.

Canadian **Support** resources for family caregivers

- + Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation**
Nationwide movement to raise awareness and mobilize action on breast cancer.
1-800-387-9816 / www.cbcbf.org
- + Ovaire Espoir**
A support group for women across Quebec affected by gynecological cancers.
1-844-637-7647 / www.ovairespoir.ca
- + Ovarian Cancer Canada**
Support for women with ovarian cancer and their family members.
1-877-413-7970 / www.ovariancanada.org
- + Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation**
Free support and information service, anywhere in Quebec by telephone or e-mail, plus information services.
1-877-990-7171 / www.rubanrose.org
- + The Caregiver Network**
Tele-learning network for family caregivers offering content on a broad range of health and wellness issues.
1-866-396-2433 / www.thecaregivernetwork.ca
- + Willow Breast & Hereditary Cancer Support**
Provides free-of-cost support, insight and information.
1-888-778-3100 / www.willow.org

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