

# Helping men in **DISTRESS**



## COMPANION DOCUMENT

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*FATHER FRIENDLY  
INITIATIVE  
WITHIN FAMILIES*

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## LANGUAGE EDITING

Marc Gauthier

Mr. Gauthier, a journalist, collected the testimonials of health and social service practitioners that appear in this video.

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Copies of this DVD can be obtained by contacting:

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# Helping men in **DISTRESS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Male socialization is based on principles such as independence, competence, self-confidence, boldness, autonomy, and aggressiveness, at the expense of vulnerability. Men are also socialized to be stoic in the face of adversity, which leaves them little room to express fear, suffering, or distress. As a result, they often perceive asking for help as a sign of weakness and as a failure. Men therefore ask for help less often than women and typically, they wait until they are in much greater distress to do it.<sup>1</sup>

This tendency to avoid help influences the relationship that develops between men and health or social service practitioners. On the one hand, practitioners are mainly women who can find it upsetting to interact with a man, particularly if he is angry or depressed. On the other hand, the principles of helping relationships have developed in a way that encourages emotional expression, verbalization, and introspection as main strategies during a crisis situation, strategies that men rarely use. As a result, relationships between men and health or social service professionals often develop with difficulty, and men use or appreciate services very little, since they judge them as neither useful nor helpful.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the request for help is a process that begins with perceiving and taking ownership of a problem. The decision to act is sometimes confronted by the responsiveness of the healthcare system. The search for help can therefore become complicated for men. It is a question of engaging men in a relationship in which their strengths are recognized and their active participation is supported.<sup>3</sup>

## **OBJECTIVES**

This video informs health and social service practitioners who come into contact with men in crisis (e.g. bereavement, depression) regarding nuances to consider in working with them. It stimulates reflection with regards to intervention and equips practitioners to develop successful practices for working with men.



## TARGET CLIENTELE

This video is produced for students in the fields of health and social services, as well as health and social service practitioners who come into contact with male clienteles experiencing crises such as bereavement, depression, a traumatic experience, etc.

## CONTENT

Through the testimony of seven health and social service practitioners – nurses, a social worker, a doctor, a psychotherapist, educators, researchers – this video illustrates different emotions and reactions that men can experience. The practitioners share their way of establishing a relationship of trust with a man in crisis and propose interventions to reach men who are entrenched in silence, who are depressed, aggressive, or angry. This accompanying document presents activities that could be implemented to facilitate discussions related to the video.

## METAPHOR

The labyrinth metaphor illustrates that men's search for help is interwoven with critical moments, dead ends, and a few more brightly lit pathways. Men and the practitioners who accompany them will be transformed by this meeting in the heart of the labyrinth. Each shares their experience with sincerity, showing different ways of perceiving men, of perceiving themselves as practitioners, and of taking action to reach out to them.



## SUGGESTED FACILITATION ACTIVITIES

The video can be used in different contexts, for example, in initial training or during the training of health, social services, community, and education professionals. Five activities are proposed.

### 1. *PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS IN REGARDS TO MEN'S EMOTIONS*

#### OBJECTIVE

To initiate reflection on perceptions and beliefs regarding the emotions expressed by men.

#### PROCEDURE

Question participants so that they can formulate their perceptions and their beliefs regarding the emotions experienced and expressed by men.

#### EXAMPLES OF FACILITATION QUESTIONS

- How do you perceive the emotions expressed by men?
- What emotions do the men around you express most often?
- What emotions do they express more rarely?
- How do they express their emotions?
- What influence can male socialization have on the manifestation of emotions?
- What cultural influences can there be on the emotions expressed by men? On their way of expressing them?
- What are the emotions that you feel most comfortable with? What emotions are the easiest to accept?



## 2. MEETING A MAN IN CRISIS

### OBJECTIVE

To reflect on and discuss different ways of intervening with men in distress or in crisis.

### PROCEDURE

Following the viewing of the video, the facilitator initiates a discussion with the question: According to you, what are the differences and the similarities between men and women in distress?

In a second step and depending on the time available, the facilitator can choose one of the following variants to facilitate a discussion with the participants.

#### **Variant A. The angry man**

In the section of the video on anger and aggression, the practitioners propose different ways of coping with men's anger. What ways do you have?

#### **Variant B. The depressed man**

In the section of the video on depression, the practitioners describe different reactions of depressed men. How do they correspond or differ from what you observe in the men that you meet?

### ADDITIONAL FACILITATION QUESTIONS

- Tell me about the first time you met a man in crisis or in great suffering.
- How did it go? What did you say? How did you feel?
- What are the situations in which you felt overwhelmed?
- What have you learned about men and crisis?
- What “tricks” have you developed to support men in crisis?
- In working with men in crisis, what have you learnt about yourself?

### 3. *MEN ASKING FOR HELP*

#### OBJECTIVE

To discuss one's beliefs and experiences, and the challenges that men's request for help pose, for the men themselves and for the practitioners.

#### PROCEDURE

To facilitate a discussion about the challenges surrounding men asking for help.

#### EXAMPLES OF FACILITATION QUESTIONS

- What are your beliefs about men and their relationship to help?
- How do men indicate that they need help?
- How do you usually respond to this type of request?
- How can women's perceptions and beliefs influence the choice of interventions conducted with men in crisis?
- What values are transmitted by society with respect to men who ask for help?





## **4. CRITICAL MOMENTS WHEN ASKING FOR HELP**

### **OBJECTIVE**

To reflect on the critical moments for men asking for help and services.

### **PROCEDURE**

The facilitator initiates a discussion by presenting the DVD. The DVD serves to launch a facilitated activity about the critical moments in asking for help and services.

### **EXAMPLES OF FACILITATION QUESTIONS**

- What are the critical moments for men asking for help and services?
- What elements of men's life experiences are associated with these critical points?
- What are the challenges for fathers along their service pathway?
- Normally, what steps have men already taken once they arrive in your services?
- Who encouraged them or contributed to their asking for help?
- How can the critical moments experienced by men influence the relationship that you will develop with them?
- Can you identify testimonies of practitioners in the video that illustrate particular critical moments?



## REFERENCES

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3. Dubeau, D., Devault, A., & Forget, G. (2009). *La paternité au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval.

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### For professionals

deMontigny, F., Devault, A. et Gervais, C. (2012). *La naissance d'une famille : accompagner les parents et leurs enfants en période périnatale*. Montréal : Chenelière Éducation.

Cerif.uqo.ca : Keep on the lookout for more recent publication, as we publish on this subject regularly.

### For parents

deMontigny, F., Verdon, C., Lord Gauthier, J., Gervais, C. (2017). *Décès périnatal : le deuil des pères*. Montréal : Éditions Ste Justine.



## THE PRACTITIONERS



*"You can't be afraid to ask difficult questions."*

**Laurence Barabé**, B. A. social worker,  
*Donne-toi une chance* organization

*"Men wait to be deeper in crisis before consulting... they have exhausted their network, their resources."*

**Louis Bourbonnais**, M.A. psycho-  
therapist, mental health team, CISSS  
Montréal-Ouest



*"Men don't have their own places to talk with each other. The Bird House project gives them this space, it allows them to give hope to others."*

**Manon Cyr**, B. Sc. nurse clinician,  
CISSS Montréal-Ouest



*"Listening to dads, taking them aside, not letting them leave without having spoken with them."*

**Johanne Duval**, M.D, family doctor,  
obstetrician, CISSS Outaouais







Photo Francine de Montigny : Marcel La Haye

*"I use images to explore the suffering of men: how is your engine working? Are there bridges between you and those close to you that are more fragile?"*

**Francine de Montigny, R.N., Ph.D.,** professor, researcher, and facilitator of the bereavement group *Les étoiles filantes*, UQO

*"I advise them to not hesitate to see their doctor."*

**Amélie Tétreault, B.Sc. N.,** in-hospital perinatal nursing care consultant, CISSS Outaouais



Photo Chantal Verdon : André Nadeau

*"What's the point of seeking help? The point is to get out of the forest to see the extent of it."*

**Chantal Verdon, R.N., Ph.D.,** Nursing professor, researcher, and facilitator of the bereavement group *Les étoiles filantes*, UQO

# Helping men in **DISTRESS**

## **BOBO – LES COWBOYS FRINGANTS L'EXPÉDITION ALBUM (2008)**

Today his head hurts  
Even his heart is no longer invited to the party  
Now he has to bandage his wounds  
And keep from hitting the wall again  
It'll take time and rest  
Faced with grief, first he has to save himself

{Refrain}

*We all have deep within ourselves  
Long rocky roads  
Pianos on our shoulders  
And huge willow tears  
Brighter paths  
That lead to happy mornings  
And this strength that carries us  
In life's dark moments*

Then one day, our head hurts less  
Our heart quietly rejoins the party  
Dreams and projects will return  
This flowing sap, this reborn April  
But to experience these moments of grace  
You sometimes need to know where the dead end is

{Refrain}

We grow through experience  
Maybe that's what gives meaning to existence  
But when we can't move forward  
That's when we have to stop at the turn  
To understand where the hurt comes from  
And finally get this burden off our back

*Because we all have deep within ourselves  
Long rocky roads  
Pianos on our shoulders  
And huge willow tears  
Brighter paths  
That lead to happy mornings  
And this strength that carries us  
And makes us love life*

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