

# LOVE

THE LAST CHAPTER

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR  
FAMILY CAREGIVERS





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**Written to accompany the feature-length version of “Love: The Last Chapter” (2021, Keller Media and the National Film Board of Canada).**

# INTRODUCTION

Social interactions, connections and familiarity are critical aspects of familial relationships, especially in old age. However, limited research has focused on older adults’ desire for emotional and physical intimacy. As the aging population grows, current stereotypes and myths on topics like love and sexuality, requiring family caregivers are being challenged and explored to better understand their aging loved ones’ emotional, intimate and sexual health.

Although family caregivers may better accept love and intimacy in senior marriages, older adults who have outlived their spouses or have been divorced may experience later-in-life romantic relationships. Such companionship in old age may affect family caregivers’ attitudes, as they typically provide support with their aging loved one’s emotional health and sexual expression.

Personal beliefs, perspectives, attitudes, culture, religion, etc., may significantly influence how family caregivers react to supporting the older adult’s emotional and physical health and needs. Lack of understanding and empathy may be a result of a family caregiver perceiving certain behaviours and relationships as problematic. Instead, it is an expression and opportunity for fostering social connectedness and the basic human need for love, as so strongly demonstrated in the documentary film, ‘**Love: The Last Chapter**’(Keller Media & the National Film Board of Canada).

Among the various theoretical frameworks presented, the film illuminates the life span perspective (Roberto & Jarrott, 2008). This perspective provides an integrated representation of human development by incorporating multiple disciplines

(including biology, psychology, and sociology), which recognize diverse experiences and influences encountered by individuals throughout their lifespan. In this context, the theory proposes that as individuals age, their development is lifelong, multidimensional, contextual, and multidirectional, involving gains and losses (Roberto & Jarrott, 2008).

The theory investigates the outcome of caregiving interactions through three specific developmental influences:

**(1) age-graded**, which analyzes biological or culturally influenced changes in chronological age. As portrayed in the documentary regarding this influence, some of the older adults caring for their spouses or partners experienced various health changes that affected their ability to continue their caregiving responsibilities.

**(2) History-graded influences** refer to the attitudes and behavioural differences among other aging cohorts. The film demonstrated a family caregivers' disapproval of the older adult's romantic relationship as a key example of this influence.

**Lastly, (3) non-normative events** are recognized to be unanticipated where the film captured marriage in later life and those older adults caring for one another.

**'Love: The Last Chapter'** presents an in-depth understanding that debunks current ageist ideologies surrounding love and intimacy. The film can help family caregivers to further understand the personal experiences of older adults by showing the importance of love, social connections and intimacy in old age. Ultimately, as the family caregiver, you can help support your aging loved ones by discussing taboo topics like love and intimacy in old age through having an open and understanding conversation.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Using the film as a reference, how did the family caregivers support their aging loved ones?
  - a. Is there anything you that struck out to you?
  - b. Is there anything that you would've done differently?
  
2. Challenging your own biases and attitudes, how does the film portray the importance of love in later life in long-term care facilities?
  - a. What new knowledge did you gain from watching the film?
  - b. If possible, can you provide a specific example that challenged your misconceptions?
  
3. As the family caregiver, how can you build a trusting relationship with your aging loved one and speak about stigmatized topics like love and intimacy?
  - a. What do you think are some effective ways to have open communication?
  - b. Imagining yourself as an older person, how would you want your familial caregiver to address such matters with you?
  
4. Can you identify social factors that may impact older adult intimacy?
  - a. How can you as the familial caregiver support your aging loved one?
  - b. In what ways is social connections and love important for older adults?





# GROUP EXERCISES

1. Addressing matters of love and intimacy as the family caregiver can be uncomfortable. Brainstorm hypothetical ways to bring up the topic of love and intimacy with your loved ones. How can you create a safe environment to allow your aging loved one to discuss their emotional and physical health and needs?
2. The film portrayed various family caregivers, including spouses/partners (**film time code 42:18-44:05**), adult children (**film time code 29:35-30:05**), extended family members (**film time code 14:25-16:05**), etc. As a family caregiver, reflect on one specific caregiver scene from the film that resonates best with you and discuss how to better care for and support your aging loved one. How did that caregiver positively or negatively help the older adult showcased in the film?
3. Family caregivers often experience changes in roles, expectations, and responsibilities. In fact, the majority of family caregivers experience high rates of stress and burden. Over time, it may diminish the relationship the older adult has with their familial care provider. How can you establish trust and comfortability as roles change?
4. Considering the importance of social connection and intimacy, especially in old age, discuss interventions that can help foster open communication between family caregivers and their aging loved ones. What specific strategies can be used to engage older adults and their family caregivers?



# ADDITIONAL READING

Chapman, G. D., Barr, D., & Shaw, E. G. (2016). *Keeping love alive as Memories fade: The 5 love languages and the Alzheimer's Journey*. Northfield Publishing.

Brassolotto, J., Howard, L., & Manduca-Barone, A. (2020). "If you do not find the world tasty and sexy, you are out of touch with the most important things in life": Resident and family member perspectives on sexual expression in continuing care. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 53, 100849. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2020.100849>

Didyk, N. (2020). *Sex when caregiving: Navigating your changing relationship (even if there's dementia)*. Retrieved from <https://betterhealthwhileaging.net/navigating-sex-when-caregiving-or-dementia/#comments>

*Love later in Life: Aging Parents, dating, sex, and remarriage*. Care Management and Home Care. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.soundoptions.com/blog/love-later-in-life-aging-parents-dating-sex-and-remarriage>

Tarzia, L., Fetherstonhaugh, D., & Bauer, M. (2012). Dementia, sexuality and consent in residential aged care facilities. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 38(10), 609-613.

Wiskerke, E., & Manthorpe, J. (2018). New relationships and intimacy in long-term care: The views of relatives of residents with dementia and care home staff. *Dementia*, 17(4), 405-422. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1471301216647814>

# RESOURCES

## Federal Caregiver Advocacy Organizations

- Alzheimer Society of Canada
- Caregiving Matters
- Carers Canada
- Saint Elizabeth Health

Caregiver Advocacy Organizations	
Province/Territory	Organizations
British Columbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Caregivers of BC</li> <li>• Alzheimer Society of British Columbia</li> <li>• Rainbow Caregivers Network</li> </ul>
Alberta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caregivers Alberta</li> <li>• Family Caregiver Centre</li> <li>• Alberta Health Services Home Care</li> </ul>
Saskatchewan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saskatoon Council on Aging</li> <li>• Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan</li> <li>• Adult Day Support Services</li> </ul>
Manitoba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manitoba Caregiver Coalition</li> <li>• Friendship Centres</li> <li>• Rupert's Land Caregiver Services</li> </ul>
Ontario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ontario Caregiver Coalition</li> <li>• Change Foundation</li> <li>• Ontario Caregiver Organization</li> </ul>

## Caregiver Advocacy Organizations

Province/Territory	Organizations
Quebec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avant de Craquer Network</li> <li>• Federation of Quebec Alzheimer Societies</li> <li>• Regroupement des aidants naturels du Québec</li> </ul>
New Brunswick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canadian Mental Health Association, New Brunswick</li> <li>• Alzheimer Society of New Brunswick</li> <li>• New Brunswick Home Support Association</li> </ul>
Nova Scotia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caregivers Nova Scotia Association</li> <li>• Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia</li> <li>• VON Caregivers of Nova Scotia</li> </ul>
Prince Edward Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospice PEI</li> <li>• Canadian Mental Health Association PEI Division</li> <li>• Alzheimer Society of Prince Edward Island</li> </ul>
Newfoundland and Labrador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Resource Centre Caregiver Support Program</li> <li>• CareGivers</li> <li>• SeniorsNL</li> </ul>
Yukon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canadian Mental Health Association, Yukon Division</li> <li>• Hospice Yukon</li> <li>• Yukon Seniors and Elders</li> </ul>
Northwest Territories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alzheimer Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories</li> <li>• NWT Senior's Society</li> </ul>
Nunavut	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospice Palliative Care of Nunavut</li> <li>• Community Wellness Centre, Family Services</li> </ul>



# REFERENCES

Pinho, S., & Pereira, H. (2019). Sexuality and intimacy behaviors in the elderly with dementia: The perspective of healthcare professionals and caregivers. *Sex Disabil* 37, 489–509. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11195-019-09589-0>

Roberto, K., & Jarrott, S. (2008). Family caregivers of older adults: A life span perspective. *Family Relations*, 57(1), 100-111. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40005371>

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Wiskerke, E., & Manthorpe, J. (2018). New relationships and intimacy in long-term care: The views of relatives of residents with dementia and care home staff. *Dementia*, 17(4), 405–422. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1471301216647814>

# DISCUSSION SHEETS MADE POSSIBLE BY



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