

SHARE & CARE

THE RECOVERY OF HOPE - THE HOPE OF RECOVERY

2 for 1 ON OCTOBER 8TH

Join us online for the
Low-Beer Memorial Lecture & Awards presentation

We hope that you will attend both events!

Awards at 6pm
Low-Beer Lecture at 7pm

The 2020 Low-Beer Memorial Lecture

Can we do better for people living with mental illness?

Challenging historical perceptions and exploring alternatives

The lecture, titled: **Not So Abnormal Psychology: A Pragmatic View of Mental Illness** will feature Ronald B. Miller, PhD, a professor of psychology at Saint Michael's College in northern Vermont and the author of *Not So Abnormal Psychology: A Pragmatic View of Mental Illness* (2015), and *Facing Human Suffering: Psychology and Psychotherapy as Moral Engagement* (2004).

In his talk, Dr. Miller will challenge the historical perception that mental illnesses are genetically-determined malfunctions in the brain, and that psychotropic medications and cognitive-behavioural interventions are the only scientifically appropriate tools for symptom management. Dr. Miller offers alternative conceptualizations and treatments for psychological problems, including mental illnesses and developmental disorders. He suggests that alternative treatment modes that have too often been denigrated or ignored have long produced successful outcomes. In doing so, Dr. Miller challenges reigning orthodoxies, such as our tendency to pathologize psychological difficulties and to downplay or ignore subjective experiences of human suffering. □



Join us on October 8, 7pm on Google Meet for a refreshing outlook.

For details and link to join the event, visit amiquebec.org/LB20 or call 514-486-1448.

And the 2020 awards go to...

Every year we recognize individuals and organizations who stand out in their contributions to mental health. They work hard to help improve the lives of families and people living with mental health issues. The awards are usually presented during our Annual General Meeting in June, but they were postponed due to COVID-19. Instead, we invite you to join us at **6pm on October 8th** on Google Meet to celebrate our recipients!

Awards will be presented to:

Claude Allard

AMI-Quebec Award for Exemplary Service

Les Impatients

Ella Amir Award for Innovations in Mental Health

Tess McCrea

AMI-Quebec Volunteer of the Year

PSB Boisjoli

Extra Mile Award

Dr. Zoe Thomas

Exemplary Psychiatrist Award

October 8, 6pm on Google Meet

For details and link to join the event, visit amiquebec.org/LB20 or call 514-486-1448. □

BACK TO SCHOOL

Supporting Youth (and Parents too!)

With the coronavirus still present in our lives, “back to school” season is going to look very different. Changes in the daily workings of a school day that are meant to keep students safe may feel overwhelming for children, and new rules that need to be followed may cause stress for teenagers. Additionally, these emotions can feel amplified if the child has a pre-existing mental health issue like anxiety. During these unstable times it is important to understand what our children might be feeling and how we can help them cope with the stress they are experiencing. We have put together information to help you better understand your child’s feelings and how you can help them, but also how you can help yourself; you need to care for yourself if you want to effectively care for someone else.

What kids might be experiencing

Stress: With the complete upheaval of the way their lives used to be, it is normal for your child to feel stress going back to school.

Uncertainty: All the rule changes might confuse children, and in turn make them feel insecure. When their routine changes to something they are not used to, it might unbalance them, in turn making them feel uncertain about the things around them.

Sadness: Some children might be put in a different class than their friends and cause them to feel lonely, or, especially for younger children, sad because they want to give their teacher a hug but are told they have to step away because of social distancing.

Fear: Viruses are terrifying, and children might be scared of contracting the virus.

Frustration: Your child may feel frustrated because they wish for everything to go back to the way it used to be before the pandemic.

What parents can do for their kids

Be supportive: One of the most important things you can do for your child is let them know that you are there for them. By making it clear that you are supporting them during this stressful time, they will know that they are not alone. If they ask for your help, be there for them. By having someone they can rely on, your child will feel less overwhelmed.

Validate your child’s feelings: Usually, when we are feeling anxious, we like to confront our feelings straight on and try to fix the stress we are experiencing. Javeed Sukhera, Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Western University, suggests that this approach during a pandemic might not be the best course of action. He explains that trying to fix our feelings can cause more stress and

actually make things worse. Instead, he encourages families to use what he calls ‘acceptance-based strategies’, which consists of validating the feelings the child is experiencing and encouraging them to accept them. By doing this, Sukhera suggests that the individual will feel that their emotions are normal and they won’t fall into self-blame and self-criticism. He further explains that accepting our emotions as they are helps build resiliency.



Listen to their concerns:

Sometimes saying nothing is exactly what is needed. Providing a listening ear shows your child that you are there to listen to their concerns and thoughts.

Keep the home environment consistent:

Things outside the home have changed drastically, so if you keep a consistent environment at home it provides your child with stability that they might not feel they have at school. Make sure the home is clean and organized. Keep a dinnertime and bedtime routine that is predictable. These new routines might not always

turn out like you plan, but if you try to maintain them as much as possible it can make your children feel safe.

What parents can do for themselves

Accept that things are not perfect: No matter how much we want to be in control, there will always be something that does not fit with the perfect situation or scenario we try to create. It is impossible to make things perfect, so letting go of the idea of perfection will help you accept that there are things out of your control and focus on what is actually in your control.

Take care of yourself: You cannot take care of others if you do not take care of yourself. If you feel stress, take a break. Need a change of scenery from being in the house or work? Take a walk around the block. If you are not well, you will be less able to care for your children.

Trust in your abilities: This is especially important when it comes to resiliency during stressful times like these. Carolyn FitzGerald, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Wilfrid Laurier University, explains the importance of self-efficacy, which is how much we believe in our abilities. Someone with high self-efficacy has a high confidence in their abilities and having this can help an individual cope with stressful situations. Imitating this behaviour

continued on page 3

Is COVID-19 making us all obsessive-compulsive?

Does repeatedly washing your hands during COVID-19 and worrying about germs mean you are suffering from OCD?

Our daily habits have changed since the beginning of COVID-19. We are much more fixated on cleanliness and the need to disinfect what we touch. This in turn has made daily activities like grocery shopping extremely different: we are told we need to wear a mask, we must stand at a two-metre distance away from others and must wash or disinfect our hands when we enter an establishment and often times when we leave as well. Even outside of stores, we have developed this need to constantly use hand sanitizer the moment we might feel uncomfortable. Are these new habits a sign of being conscious of germs and microbes, or a sign of a developing mental illness? Is our constant handwashing a sign of developing obsessive-compulsive disorder?

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is an anxiety disorder characterized by intrusive thoughts (obsessions) that are followed by an action (compulsions) in order to diminish or remove the anxiety of the invasive thought. One of the most common obsessions includes a fear of being contaminated by germs and becoming sick. In turn, a common compulsion to ease the anxiety of this obsession is excessive washing of hands. Those who have OCD understand that the intrusive thoughts are illogical, but the need to carry out the obsessive act is too strong

to ignore. Some examples of intrusive thoughts might look like this: “If I don’t wash my hands right now, I will die”, or “If I don’t take a scalding hot shower my



whole family will contract an illness”. Irrational fears such as these are intrusive to the point that they affect the quality of life of an individual. They are irrational because there is no logical reason that the obsession will actually happen if a person does not carry out the compulsive act.

The important distinction between our increased need to wash our hands dur-

ing the pandemic and someone living with OCD is that there is a virus circulating in the world and washing our hands can help us avoid catching it. Since it is easy to come into contact with germs in public settings, handwashing stations and hand sanitizer bottles are a rational preventative method. There is evidence that hand washing is effective, therefore the actions are justifiable. When it comes to someone with obsessive-compulsive disorder, the thought and action is irrational. There is no evidence that the compulsion will actually prevent the intrusive thought from happening.

It is normal to feel anxious and wash your hands more often than you used to during these stressful times, but when should you worry about obsessive-compulsive symptoms? You should be concerned if your handwashing becomes out of control. Excessive handwashing becomes detrimental if it is not allowing you to complete tasks that you were previously able to do without trouble. If you are having intrusive thoughts that are taking over your daily well-being, consider calling Info Santé (dial 811) to speak to a psychosocial worker. They can provide you with advice and resources should you desire to seek further help. □

– Gabrielle Lesage

Visit amiquebec.org/ocd for organizations that can help with OCD in yourself or a loved one.

AMI has a support group once a month for family, friends, and people living with Anxiety or OCD; see page 6 for dates.

Please visit amiquebec.org/sources for references.

School ... continued from page 2

can also help your children, so it is a benefit for both.

Reach out to others: If you are feeling overwhelmed or you need help do not be afraid to reach out to family, friends, or community organizations. You are not alone during this pandemic. □

– Gabrielle Lesage

Please visit amiquebec.org/sources for references.

STAY INFORMED!

Find our most up-to-date information at:

www.amiquebec.org

For regular updates, follow **AMIQuebec** on:



Sign up for monthly emails:

amiquebec.org/email

Or call us: **514-486-1448**

(1-877-303-0264 outside Montreal)

DISCOVER OUR FALL PROGRAMS

Find help online with new workshops and perennial favourites

This year during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have moved all of our programs online for the safety of our participants, volunteers, and staff. We evaluate our workshops on a regular basis, and so are excited to introduce new one-time workshops, including *Anger and Caregiving Relationships* and *De-escalating Conflict*.

Our events use technology like Google Meet (it's like Zoom) and Facebook Live. Participants can participate from the comfort of their homes via computer, or anywhere by smartphone. Certain events can be attended by regular telephone.

Our popular *Facebook Hot Topics* series continues—live, online videos where you can use your computer or smartphone to interact with experts discussing trends in mental health. Topics this year include Young Carers, Racism and Mental Health, Eating Disorders, and Managing Anxiety.

Plus we have online workshops that will provide you with information and hands-on experience. They will help reduce stress and increase confidence. Read through the information below and you're sure to find something that suits you.



If you live outside Montreal, you can attend all of our programs online! Likewise, we can support you through counseling by phone, Skype, or Google Meet; our YouTube videos, SoundCloud podcasts, and Facebook Live videos; and if you give us a call we can help guide you to services in your area.

All our programs are free!

Call 514-486-1448 (1-877-303-0264) or visit amiquebec.org for details.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Open-agenda sessions facilitated by people who have experience, either as a caregiver or having lived with mental illness. No registration necessary. All our support groups start at 6:30pm on Google Meet. See Calendar, page 6 for dates and times or visit amiquebec.org/support

WORKSHOPS

Please note: space is limited for certain online workshops and registration is required.

Register at amiquebec.org/workshops

ONE-TIME WORKSHOPS
FOR CAREGIVERS ONLY
6-8PM ON GOOGLE MEET

NEW!

ANGER AND CAREGIVING RELATIONSHIPS

Anger is an important emotion to explore and understand within the caregiving rela-

tionship. This workshop will help you build a greater understanding of anger and your relationship to the emotion. Participants will be encouraged to articulate their feelings around anger and discuss how they express anger within their caregiving relationships.

September 8 with Melanie Hughes.

VALIDATION PRACTICE GROUP

If you have a loved one (family, partner, friend, etc.) who lives with mental illness and has difficulty managing their emotions, this group is for you! This is a practice group where we will practice validation, using examples from real life. We will also introduce the practice of boundaries and limit setting.

September 16, 6-7:30pm

November 18, 6-7:30pm

with Sylvie Bouchard.

CREATIVE EXPRESSION

This workshop is an innovative and creative way to explore your own challenges

and how they can be overcome. Led by Joyce Cohen, you will use your intuition to create small collage cards with magazine images, scissors and glue. You will then learn how to 'read' your cards to discover what personal and hidden meanings your card reveals to you.

No art experience is required. If you are a caregiver struggling to maintain your balance while caring for a loved one touched by mental illness, you may find the experience of self-discovery and respite rewarding.

September 24 with Joyce Cohen.

COPING SKILLS

We cope all the time. This workshop aims to bring to light the ways in which we cope within caregiving relationships, whether it be by coping positively or in maladaptive ways. Awareness of how we cope can increase our ability to notice when we engage in defensive patterns and move towards practicing new skills that will provide us with more safety, peace, and general wellbeing.

September 29 with Melanie Hughes

BOUNDARIES AND SETTING LIMITS

Caregiving relationships challenge everyone involved in discovering what's acceptable and what's not acceptable within the unique dynamic. The aim of this workshop is to identify these limits and learn to communicate the boundaries necessary to protect both the relationship and the caregiver.

October 20 with Melanie Hughes.

INTRODUCTION TO BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

This introductory session will provide basic knowledge on Borderline Personality Disorder: what it is, what are some of the challenges, and what can be done to reduce conflicts. You will gain a better understanding of the condition and how to cope.

October 29 with Sylvie Bouchard.

ACCEPTANCE AND LETTING GO

Loss is an inevitable and painful part of life. In the relationship between a family and their loved one with mental illness, experiencing loss can be complicated. In this workshop, we will identify and name losses, situate participants within their own grieving processes in relation to loss, and learn about acceptance which leads to healing opportunities.

November 10 with Melanie Hughes.

NEW!

DE-ESCALATING CONFLICT

This workshop explores de-escalation techniques and how to engage mindfully in conflictual situations. The workshop aims to encourage self-awareness and develop insight into effective communication techniques in conflict situations. Attendees will be invited to share specific situations they have experienced and unravel the new dynamics that influence the outcomes of these situations.

December 8 with Melanie Hughes.

ONE-TIME WORKSHOPS
 FOR FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND PEOPLE
 LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS
 6-8PM ON FACEBOOK LIVE

TYPES OF MENTAL ILLNESS

There is a wide spectrum of mental illnesses from depression to hoarding to bipolar disorder. This workshop goes over the various diagnoses and characteristics of each mental illness. This workshop is facilitated by doctors in McGill University's Psychiatry Postgraduate Program.

November 26

WORKSHOP SERIES
 FOR CAREGIVERS ONLY
 Must attend all days

MEDITATION

How do we gain the strength to work with life situations that are difficult and stressful? Resilience is certainly important but how does a person develop more resilience? For millennia meditation has been used to develop a personal centre — a place of peace and tranquility that people can go to at times of turbulence in their lives. Meditation is widely used today for stress reduction or to help cope with pain, anxiety, or depression. This workshop will use meditation to help participants get in touch with these deeper parts of themselves.

September 29, October 6, 13, 20, 27, November 3 with Bill Byers. There may be four additional sessions in November.

CAREGIVER GROUP

This group will offer an opportunity to explore how caring for a loved one with mental health challenges **affects the caregiver's experience and own wellbeing**. A group setting can be viewed as a social microcosm that offers opportunities for interpersonal learning and growth. As participants share their experiences and learn from each other, they can gain new insights. This experience can alleviate some of the isolation and other difficulties that are often associated with caregiving.

Interested caregivers will be inter-

viewed in order to determine whether the group experience could be beneficial to them.

Starts November 2 and runs for 6 weeks on Mondays, 7-8:30pm

With Ella Amir and Miriam Byers.

HOT TOPICS

For all

Use your computer or smartphone to spend some rewarding time learning about trends in mental illness and mental health. These videos are presented live by specialists in various fields. The hosts interact with you, and you can send in live questions and comments while watching. Registration not necessary, and you do not have to have a Facebook account. Videos are recorded and can be watched at a later date if you miss the live event.

7-8:15pm

Visit www.facebook.com/amiquebec

YOUNG CARERS

September 17

RACISM & MENTAL HEALTH

October 15

EATING DISORDERS

November 19

MANAGING ANXIETY

December 10

INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING

For family and friends

If you have a particular problem or situation where a family member with mental illness is concerned, we're here for you. Call our office to book an appointment with **SOS-Famille**.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, all counselling is held by telephone or videoconferencing software like Skype or Google Meet.

For details, visit amiquebec.org/SOS. □

FALL 2020

Please note: due to COVID-19, all our programs are taking place online and by phone, not in person.

Visit amiquebec.org/coronavirus or call 514-486-1448 for access details and the most up to date information.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Mondays, 6:30pm on Google Meet or by phone

For family, friends, and people with mental illness unless otherwise indicated.

For details visit amiquebec.org/support

FAMILY AND FRIENDS for relatives and friends

August 24, 31; September 14, 21; October 5, 19, 26; November 9, 16, 23; December 7, 14

BPD for relatives and friends

August 31; October 5; November 9; December 7

ANXIETY/ OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

August 31; October 5; November 9; December 7

BIPOLAR DISORDER

August 24; September 14; October 19; November 16; December 14

DEPRESSION

August 24; September 14; October 19; November 16; December 14

HOARDING

August 24; September 21; October 26; November 23; December 14

KALEIDOSCOPE for people living with mental illness

September 21; October 26; November 23; December 7

SOUTH SHORE support groups

Wednesdays 6:30pm

September 16; October 14; November 11; December 16

BOARD MEETINGS

Tuesdays 7:00pm on Jitsi

September 1; October 6; November 3; December 1

See pages 4 and 5 for information about our FALL WORKSHOPS or visit amiquebec.org/workshops

Is it possible to recover from mental illness?

RECOVERY AND SOCIAL CIRCLES

There have been many discussions about the concept of recovery and whether someone can fully recover from a mental illness. Some believe that once a mental illness is diagnosed the individual is doomed to a life of difficulty, while others believe that recovery is possible and that we need to focus on what someone is capable of doing instead of limitations because of their diagnosis. At AMI-Quebec, we are guided by the 'recovery model', meaning that a full and satisfying life is possible despite mental illness. Our programs are designed with this vision in mind. An important component of the recovery process is the social aspect, and we would like to explore these socio-cultural factors and how they impact an individual's recovery.

Up until the mid-seventies, and before the birth of the recovery model, many practitioners believed that someone diagnosed with a mental illness was ill-fated to live a life of challenges with various symptoms, unable to contribute to society like their peers with no mental illness. Sarah Lyon from VeryWellMind explains that this mindset was especially tied to those with schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, and bipolar disorder. But, as she further explains, many studies debunked this way of thinking. The emerging recovery model promoted more autonomy and trust in the diagnosed individual, and as Alain Topor, Inger Beate Larsen and Tore Dag Bøe from Mad in America put it, the recovery model gives people agency and recognizes their capabilities.

The recovery model has several facets that contribute to an individual's recovery; they include financial stability and work satisfaction, but also good relationships, community, and social inclusion. Whether it be maintaining close relationships with friends or family, or meeting new people, these connections are important in maintaining a good support system. When such support is available, the (diagnosed) individual feels less alone; strengthened coping skills help with their recovery.

Maintaining a social life, whether by talking to someone every day or once a week, allows a person to feel less alone and less isolated. One great way to maintain such social support is to attend support groups. Sharing similar experiences with other participants helps individuals to learn about themselves, learn to listen, and also to give and receive advice. This increases a sense of hope that things can and will get better. A sense of belonging that comes with attending these groups also aids in the recovery process.

Having someone in your life who believes in your ability to recover, whether a support group member or someone in your close circle of friends and family, is crucial in the recovery process. With this, the individual gains a sense of empowerment that helps them live a better life. This is why the social aspect of recovery is important, because if someone else believes you can recover, you can believe it too. □

– Gabrielle Lesage

AMI-Quebec offers support groups for various needs. For more information, please visit amiquebec.org/support/

For more on recovery, visit amiquebec.org/what-is-recovery

Please visit amiquebec.org/sources for references.

AMI-Quebec’s Education and Outreach Program

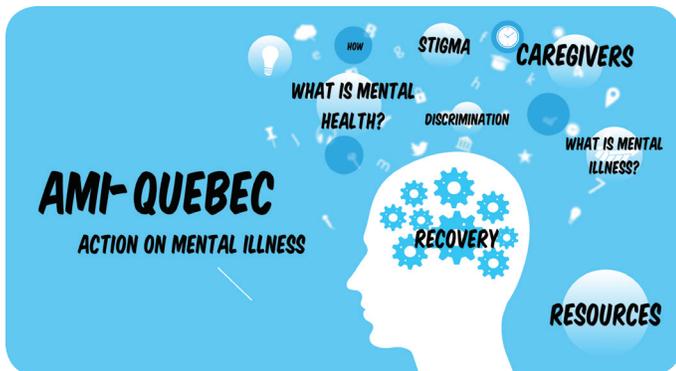
Interview with Tony Alfonso, Outreach Coordinator

What is the Education and Outreach program?

We do presentations and hold discussions in person and online. Our programs bring awareness to the stigma around mental illness. We want to talk about mental illnesses and dispel the myths around them and try to show how people can support each other, whether it be caregivers, those living with a mental illness, family members, employers, anybody really.

What is your role?

I coordinate all the presentations that we give. I also try to come up with new presentation ideas and different outreach program initiatives. We focus on the presentations and interactive content: for example, we have live videos on Facebook about what we call “Hot Topics” once a month. We talk about a specific issue, like mental health in the workplace, and we have a health or other professional and a host that engage in a discussion where



we can explore the questions of the public. It’s not a debate, more of a conversation. We have pamphlets with information on different mental illnesses as well.

How does it work? What about the COVID-19 situation?

We reach out to organizations, or they reach out to us, to give a presentation. Right now, with the current COVID-19 situation, we are doing all of our presentations through Google

Meet. Our “Hot Topics” segments are done on Facebook Live.

Who is the program for? Is it just schools?

It’s definitely not just for schools! We don’t have one specific group we target for our presentations. We speak to students, community organizations, medical professionals, businesses, corporations, caregivers and people suffering from mental illness. There are no limitations on who we try to reach.

What does a typical presentation look like?

In a typical presentation, a volunteer, who has lived experience as a caregiver or having a mental illness or both, talks about various mental illnesses and the stigma and discrimination associated with it. There is some educational content, but also practical content because they tell their own story and try to give context for what living with all of this looks like in the real world. At the end of the presentation there is a question period where the audience can ask about the general subject presented or ask something specific to the presenter themselves. In the future, I personally want to do follow-ups with these different organizations for more discussions to take place after the audience has digested the information they were presented with and to allow for more back and forth dialogue instead of just the presenter speaking.

continued on page 8

TRIBUTES & MEMORIALS

In honour of the Danowski Family
Elizabeth M. Danowski

In memory of John, Douglas, Barbara, and Colin Simpson
Kay Simpson

In memory of Angelina D’Amico
Anna Maria Falduto
Antonio Falduto and Anita Evangelista

In memory of Carlos Modesto
Krystyna Budzynski

In memory of Antonia Caruso
Emilia Falduto and Family

In memory of Frances Rotman
Lynn and Andy Nulman

In memory of Tyler William Anthony
Levasseur
Diane and John Aubin

Barry Garber

Elizabeth Guevara

Priscilla Larsen

Annette McKinnon

Melissa Palander

PEPP Team, Douglas Hospital

Rebecca Rupp

Michele Sparling

AMI-Québec extends sympathy to the bereaved and appreciation to all donors for their generosity. If you wish to honour someone with a donation, please phone 514-486-1448 or visit amiquebec.org/donate.

amiquébec

Agir contre la maladie mentale
Action on mental illness

AMI-Québec, a grassroots not-for-profit organization, is committed to helping carers* manage the effects of mental illness through support, education, guidance and advocacy. By promoting understanding, we work to dispel the stigma still surrounding mental illness, thereby helping to create communities that offer new hope for meaningful lives.

*Carers (*proches aidants*) are those in the circle of care, including family members and other significant people, who provide unpaid support to a person in need.

Donna Sharpe, *President*
Anne Newman, *Vice President*
Joyce Cohen, *Secretary*
Henry Olders, *Treasurer*
Norman Segalowitz, *Immediate Past President*
Ella Amir, *Executive Director*

SHARE & CARE

THE HOPE OF HOPE - THE HOPE OF RECOVERY

Share&Care is published quarterly.
Ella Amir, *Editor*
Diana Verrall, *Associate Editor*
Marc Griffin, *Associate Editor*
Liane Keightley, *Designer*

Articles and comments are invited. Anonymity will be respected if requested. Guest articles reflect the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of AMI-Québec.
Legal deposit: Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec, National Library of Canada.

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Member of Avant de craquer

Outreach ... continued from page 7

Why is it important to have these types of programs?

I think the biggest problem around mental illness is the stigma associated with it, and I think the Education and Outreach Program allows people to have open and honest discussions around mental illness as a caregiver, someone with a lived experience of mental illness, or simply just information to better understand where people are coming from and where they are at. This allows for a discussion; even little talks about language, for example, can make a big difference. Education and talking about it is the best way to address stigma, because if we don't talk about it, it will remain this great unknown.

Is there a particular presentation that had a big impact on you?

Every single one of our volunteers has such an amazing story that I can't pick out one. They all impress me with their resilience and commitment to helping others through their own actions. □

– Gabrielle Lesage

Visit amiquebec.org/outreach for more information or to request a presentation.

This issue of *Share&Care* has been made possible by a grant from the Otsuka-Lundbeck Alliance.



YOUR SUPPORT SUSTAINS OUR FREE PROGRAMS

Although AMI receives some government funding, we need to raise more than half of our operating budget each year.

We need your support!

Donation: \$ _____

I wish to make this donation in honour of: _____ in memory of: _____

FOR US TO ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR GENEROSITY, SUPPLY DONEE'S NAME AND ADDRESS

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