Caregiver's Bill of Rights:

I have the right to:

- Take care of myself. This is not an act of selfishness. It will give me the capability of taking better care of my relative.
- Seek help from others, even if my relative objects. I recognize the limits of my own endurance and strength.
- Maintain areas of my own life that do not include the person I care for, just as I would if he or she were healthy. I have the right to do things for myself and my health.
- Get angry, be depressed and express other difficult feelings occasionally.
- Reject any attempt by my relative (either conscious or unconscious) to manipulate me through guilt, anger, depression or other means.
- Receive consideration, affection, forgiveness and acceptance when I offer these qualities in return.
- Take pride in what I am accomplishing and to applaud the courage it sometimes takes to meet the needs of my relative.
- Protect my individuality and my right to make a life for myself that will sustain me in the time when my relative no longer needs my full-time help.
- Add your own statement of rights to this list. Read this list to yourself everyday.

About this Project:

Families are an important part of a person's recovery and well-being. The Schizophrenia & Community Integration Service (SCIS) are committed to strengthening the role of families at each step of a person's recovery. This brochure was developed by family members and healthcare professionals and is one in a series of six including:

- 1. Caregivers How Are You?
- 2. Managing Relapse
- 3. Communicating with Health Care Professionals
- 4. Encouraging Medication Adherence
- 5. Fostering Independence
- 6. Goal Setting How To Help?

St. Joseph's | Schizophrenia & Community Integration Service

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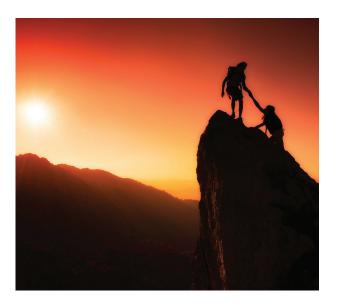
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www.stjoes.ca

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Supporting the Supporters

Schizophrenia & Community Integration Service



Caregivers How Are You?

St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton

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Ask Yourself...

- Have you had trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing?
- 2. Do you feel you cannot leave your family member alone?
- 3. Are you feeling overwhelmed?
- 4. Have you felt stressed between work and family responsibilities?
- 5. Have you been upset that your relative has changed so much from his/her former self?

It can be hard to support a family member when he/she is ill. When your family member was first diagnosed with a mental illness, you may have experienced a sense of grief or loss over the person you once knew.

Grief is a process. It usually starts with a sense of shock and includes denial, anger and sadness. It may be helpful to:

- Learn more about the illness and additional ways to manage.
- Talk to someone you trust.
- · Remember to breathe.

Tips To Remember:

It is important to take care of yourself. Try not to let the mental illness of a family member take over your life. Remember there is nothing you could have done to prevent it. Think about the following:

- Keep family life as normal as possible. Maintain routines.
- Take care of your emotional, physical and social needs.
- Get involved in a family support group. Call Patient & Family Collaborative Support Services 905-522-1155 x35599.
- Be aware of what frustrates you and find ways to cope. Take one day at a time.
- Each day, take a few minutes to yourself to do something you enjoy.
- Contact a professional to gain additional insights into yourself.
- Develop confidence, by having a plan to assist your family member in tough times.
- Celebrate successes, however small.
- Acknowledge that you are doing your best!

What Can You Do To Help Your Family Member?

- Share your own feelings and encourage your family member to share.
- Help your family member learn more about his/her illness.
- Make time for other members of your family.
- Talk about your family member's embarrassment and discomfort with those you trust. Stigma is real!
- Talk to other family members about their role in caring, when you are not able to be a caregiver.