

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
Healthcare  Hamilton | Integration Service

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Supporting the Supporters

Schizophrenia & Community
Integration Service



Caregivers How Are You?

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Ask Yourself...

1. 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.