THE AMBULANCE STAFF CHARITY

# Coping with a loved one's mental illness

## How to help yourself

1

### Educate yourself about mental illness

Read about your loved one's condition, its treatment options, as well as tools and strategies for coping with the illness and seek support through TASC. You do not have to suffer in silence. You can find enormous relief from sharing your thoughts and feelings in a supportive environment among those who understand.

2

### Accept the reality of the situation

While you can offer valuable support and love, you cannot cure your loved one's mental disorder. Their symptoms may get better or they may get worse. Always speak to your GP as medication can help to restore stability and functionality, but may not heal the condition.

You may have to lower your expectations of what your loved one can do. For instance, they may only be able to work part-time or, in some cases, not at all.

3

### Set boundaries and clear limits

If you feel strong resentment, you are giving too much. If you need a break from the situation, find a way to get it. Don't tolerate violent behaviour. As hard as it is, consider if you need to leave the situation or make other arrangements for support and care.

4

### Don't lose hope

Advances in our understanding and treatment of severe and chronic mental illness occur every day. People get better and learn effective ways to cope. While your loved one may never completely heal, and coping with the situation may challenge you like nothing else, it is possible to learn how to manage the stress of the situation as you care for your loved one as well as yourself.