

THE 14 PRINCIPLES by Ken Alexander¹

- ✿ **REALISE** that schizophrenia is not rare. It may seem to be but that's because it's 'not talked about'. Even within Australia's small population there are about half a million people who, like you and me, will face this illness in their immediate family.
- ✿ **LEARN** as much as possible, as soon as possible, about schizophrenia: its cause, its course, its outcome.
- ✿ **BEWARE** the fires of self-blame! They can destroy your chance of coping, **FOREVER**. They can destroy **YOU**. Kill them with the modern knowledge that schizophrenia is **NOT** caused by relatives.
- ✿ **SEEK** professional helpers who are **EFFECTIVE**. Identify them by their compassionate natures, informative style, eagerness to have you as their **ALLY**, and ability to ensure you receive comprehensive education in understanding and coping with schizophrenia.
- ✿ **CONTACT** a self-help group for families with schizophrenia.
- ✿ **ACCEPT** that with an illness as complex as schizophrenia, the promptings of our natural instincts are often an unreliable guide to coping and caring. We, the relatives, **DO** need training.
- ✿ **GET TO KNOW** the origins of the pressures, the ever-increasing pressures, to which we, the relatives, are subject.
- ✿ **PAY GREAT ATTENTION** to the needs of the other members of the family.
- ✿ **TAKE HEED** that unlimited unconditional self-sacrifice on behalf of someone with schizophrenia is fatal to effective caring and coping.
- ✿ **BE AWARE** that spending massive amounts of time with the person who has schizophrenia can make matters worse.
- ✿ **MAINTAIN AND ESTABLISH** friendships, activities and hobbies, particularly those that take you outside the home.
- ✿ **SET YOUR SIGHTS** on appropriate independence for your relative **AND** for yourself.
- ✿ **DON'T BE SURPRISED** to discover that in the end, it is the ability to change, to look at things differently, that distinguishes relatives who will cope from those who will not.
- ✿ **TAKE** very great **CARE** of yourself.

¹Alexander, Ken. Understanding and Coping with Schizophrenia: 14-Principles for Relatives, Wilkinson Books, Melbourne, 1991.