

help tip 3

Understanding feelings of guilt and mental illness

- Guilt is the feeling we have when we think we have done something wrong.
- When we have a loved one with a mental illness we may feel guilt because we feel responsible and want to protect them.
- We feel this guilt because we care.
- We might feel *'why him or her and not me?'*
- We might blame ourselves and say *'...if I'd done things differently he/she would be well.'*
- We might accept unreasonable behaviour from our loved one because we feel guilt. In this situation we need to ask ourselves *'would I accept this behaviour from anyone else in the family?'*
- We may feel we have lost control and need answers so we might blame family members or situations *'...if my husband hadn't brought us to Australia our son would be well...'*
- As carers we need to keep in mind that it is the illness speaking or acting and not the person.
- If you feel overwhelmed ask for professional help.

Remember that looking for someone or something to blame may stop you from seeing what needs to be done and being helpful to your loved one.

