

Common Stressors

- **Loss of parental attention, time and closeness:** real or imagined due to either the one parent's illness or the need of other parent to care for them, go to work, and carry on household routine. In the case of child illness, parent(s) focus on the needs of the ill child.
- **Loss of family routines:** time is now spent going to hospital and doctor appointments. Parent can't attend events or drive because of illness or caring for the ill person.
- **Changes due to financial stress:** the family may experience a reduction in income because a parent cannot work due to illness or caring for the ill person. There is additional financial stress due to medical expenses.
- **Loss of sibling companionship:** The ill sibling may no longer be able to do the same activities used to do and may not come home from periods of time when hospitalization is required.
- **Redefined role in family:** child may need to take on new responsibilities (caretaking, household) or responsibilities that used to belong to the ill parent or sibling.
- **Favoritism of ill child:** real or perceived by family members and other adults.
- **Loss of privacy:** in-home nursing staff or therapies, hospice workers, in-home teachers, increased presence of other family or friends.
- **Pressure to "be good":** self-imposed or from others which often comes from the need to avoid upsetting a parent
- **Physical, cognitive or personality changes in family member:** due to illness, treatment or medications.

Common Emotions

- **Shock & denial:** that a family member has been diagnosed with a serious illness

- **Fear:**
 - that a serious ill family member may die.
 - of having caused or contributed to the illness of the family member – may range from magical thinking in young children who may “wished” a bad thing happen to a sibling/parent to a potential and real contribution (e.g. a child “giving” a sister with cystic fibrosis a cold).
 - of “catching” or inheriting the same illness.
 - of the unknown – anxiety over being left out of family discussions or not being told the truth.

- **Frustration & helplessness:** over not being able to change the situation and make it better.

- **Anger:**
 - at the ill sibling/parent for disrupting family life.
 - if they were not told the truth about an illness
 - at ill sibling for causing pain to parents
 - at an ill parent for behaviors/lifestyle which may have contributed to illness

- **Embarrassment:** about physical, cognitive, or personality changes in a family member resulting from an illness, treatments, or medications.

- **Guilt:** over negative emotions, being healthy, anger directed toward ill person, and past misbehavior or arguments.

- **Envy & Jealousy:** over attention, gifts, privileges that the ill family member receives.

- **Sad:** about the many losses, changes, and unknowns