Caring for Families after a Tragic Experience

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Objectives

* Understand the patient and family’s perspective during a tragic experience.
* Discuss ways to empathize and support a patient and their family during a tragic experience.
* Identify resources available to support staff and the family.
* Help infants, children, youth and families cope with the stress and uncertainty of acute and chronic illness, injury, trauma, disability, loss and bereavement.

* Provide evidence-based, developmentally and psychologically appropriate interventions including therapeutic play, preparation and support for procedures, pain management and coping, and education to reduce fear, anxiety, and pain.

* Advocate for family-centered care, collaborating with physicians, nurses, social workers, and other medical team members to meet the unique emotional, developmental and cultural needs of each child and family.

Association of Child Life & Mission, Values, Vision.
Impact of Hospitalization on Patient

- Separation from caregivers and peers
- Changes in routines
- Loss of control and decreased independence
- Physical restrictions
- Overstimulation
- Fear of pain, injury, illness or death
- Fear of the unknown/prognosis
- Unfamiliar people/environment
- Misconceptions regarding medical events or terminology
- Lack of privacy

Meeting Children’s Psychosocial Needs Across the Health Care Continuum
Impact of Hospitalization on a Parent

- May feel that their roles are threatened
- May have had a previous traumatic medical experience
- May be unfamiliar with tests, procedures, and terminology
- May not know how they can participate in their child’s care within the hospital setting
- May not know what questions to ask or how to advocate for their child
- Other life-stressors (finances, time away from work, other children, support network, etc.)
Impact of Hospitalization on a Sibling

* May feel guilty, anxious, or angry towards the patient or parents
* Change in routine
* Feeling of abandonment from parents
* Possible regression
* Reluctant to be away from parents
* Worry about patient’s outcome
* Fear of same thing happening to them
Showing Empathy

What **Not** to Say

* I can’t imagine what you must be going through.
* I don’t know what to say.
* It makes me sad that this has happened to you.
* I’m here for you. I would like to help you with: Laundry, dishes, cooking, cleaning etc.

What to Say

* I know how you feel.
* Everything happens for a reason.
* I thought you had the perfect family.
* What can I do?

**I LOVE YOU**
Supporting the Patient

* Encourage parental and peer involvement
* Provide opportunities for patient to make choices when appropriate
* Encourage opportunities for self expression or play
* Provide age appropriate information
* Clarify misconceptions
* Respect patient’s choices
* Include patient in their care
Supporting the Parent

- Provide reassurance
- Validate their roles, knowledge, and experience
- Provide clear information
- Clarify expectations and opportunities for involvement
- Allow opportunities for parents to provide information about their child
- Offer education on expected developmental responses of patient related to hospitalization
- Empower parents to be involved in child’s care

Meeting Children’s Psychosocial Needs Across the Health Care Continuum
Supporting the Sibling

* Include siblings in hospital experience of the patient
* Clear up misconceptions of illness or outcome
* Provide age appropriate preparation for visiting patient in hospital
* Encourage consistency in caregivers outside of the hospital
* Be honest in sharing information with sibling
“A therapeutic nurse-patient relationship is defined as a helping relationship that's based on mutual trust and respect, the nurturing of faith and hope, being sensitive to self and others, and assisting with the gratification of your patient's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs through your knowledge and skill”.

(Pullen & Mathias, 2010)
Impact of Hospitalization on Staff

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

Compassion Fatigue

Vicarious Trauma (VT)

(Krog, 2016)
Caring for Yourself

Don’t go beyond the limits you set

Keep in mind you have a purpose

Remember your victories

Nurture yourself by putting activities in your schedule that are sources of pleasure, joy, and diversion

Transform the negative impact of your work, challenge negativity, find meaning, find gratitude

Forgive and move on

Allow yourself to take mini escapes - these relieve the intensity of your work
Resources Available

- Behavioral Health Department
- Social Work
- Spiritual Care Team
- Child Life Specialist
- Addiction Support

DIAL 2-1-1
References


