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## Patient Education and Counseling

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Educational model of health care

# The child's adaptation to parental medical illness: theory and clinical implications

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### Abstract

Few resource papers are available to health care providers that address in detail the issues faced by children in adapting to serious parental illness. The current paper offers a developmental approach to understanding the responses and problems of school-age and adolescent children coping with parental medical illness. Four developmental issues are considered: security and separation anxiety, interpersonal understanding, conceptualizations of illness and death and the role of fantasy. Based on these considerations, broad guidelines for clinical interaction are suggested for health professionals working with seriously ill parents and their children.



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## Keywords

Children; Serious parental illness; Adaptation; Developmental approach; Responses

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