



**Your entire family is going through this diagnosis and treatment journey together. As a parent, it's understandable to feel overwhelmed and not to know how to support other children in your family. Here are some important things to know about supporting siblings.**

**It is normal for siblings to have any or all of these thoughts and feelings:**

- Think that the ill sibling is loved more
- Feel jealous of the attention that the ill sibling receives
- Feel lonely, depressed or insecure
- Have a lack of knowledge about the ill sibling's diagnosis and treatment
- Feel as if they can't share their true feelings with their parents
- Feel as if their life has become restricted due to their sibling's illness and begin to blame themselves, their sibling or their parents
- Feel that they have to be perfect, to not add stress to parents
- Feel guilty for being healthy

### Things You Can Do to Help

- Allow siblings to be expressive – involve them in support groups that promote emotional expression.
- Spend intentional time with them, doing something they love to do – the zoo, ice cream, reading, etc.
- Reassure siblings that they are still loved just as much as before their brother or sister became ill.
- Allow them to make choices regarding their activities – going to a friend's house versus visiting their sibling all the time in the hospital.
- Maintain normalcy. It is important for siblings' lives and schedules to remain as normal as possible throughout this tough time.
- Speak with the child life specialist about ways of explaining diagnosis, treatment and changes that may be experienced.
- Encourage them to speak with other family members, friends or professionals about their feelings if they are uncomfortable speaking with you.
- Get them involved in sibling programs, so they can meet other children who share their feelings to help them know that they are not alone.
- Be honest when they ask questions – if you are not, trust issues can develop in the parent-child relationship.
- Assure them that no one is to blame for the illness.

