DEVELOPMENTAL REACTIONS TO HOSPITALIZATION AND ILLNESS

Coping strategies when working with children and their families
Working with the family system

- Gaining trust
- Cultural context
- Family dynamics
Gaining trust

- Build rapport
- Assess the environment
- Ask questions based on your assessment
“A relationship of trust and confidence between a care provider and child and family encourages them to share, feelings thoughts and questions about the healthcare experiences”.

“This open communication fosters caregivers ability to monitor the informational needs and emotional needs and offer further support. “

Psychosocial Care of Children in Hospitals (1990)
Factors to consider when assessing dynamics:

- Who is the authority figure?
- What is their parenting style?
- How many other stressors do they have?
- How receptive to outside individuals are they?
Cultural Context

Also influences the child’s ability to utilize such techniques.

Questions to consider when assessing context:

- What are the cultural norms for this child?
- How does the culture view pain, and how does this influence reaction to pain?
- Within the cultural context is it ok to let others in, or is that perceived as a threat to the caregiver’s role?
Developmental Reactions to hospitalization and illness

- Developmental Issues
- Hospital Stressors
- Coping Behaviors
- Interventions
- Non Pharmacological Pain Management Techniques

Originally prepared by the Child Life Department - Children’s Hospital Orange County  Elana TenHuisen, M.S., CCLS and Andrea Mangione Standish, B.S., CCLS
Temperament/coping style:

- A child’s temperament influences what kind of techniques work best for them and also influences the child’s ability to utilize coping techniques when under varying degrees of stress.

- Even a child with a consistent and predictable routine for medical procedures may need to adjust their routine from when under additional stress/at different developmental milestones.
Coping Techniques

How to Help Children During a Procedure

- Talk in a calm, quiet voice
- Praise your child
- Position yourself so your child can see or touch you
- Be honest
- Hold your child’s hand
- Rub your child’s arm, forehead or cheek

Helpful activities for your child:

**Infant**
- Holding
- Speaking in a soft voice
- Patting
- Music and singing
- Pacifier and rattle

**Toddler**
- Holding
- Music, singing and nursery rhymes
- Pop-up books and sound books
- Bubbles and pinwheels

**Preschool**
- Bubbles
- Pinwheels
- Pop-up books and sound books
- Music and singing
- Counting
- Talking about favorite things such as a pet or a favorite place

**School-age**
- Talking about a favorite place, TV show or cartoon character
- Music
- Squeezing a ball
- Magic Ward
- Breathing slow deep breaths

**Adolescent**
- Talking about or imagining a favorite place
- Music
- Hand held game
- Breathing slow deep breaths
- Music relaxation
- Squeezing a ball
Coping tools you can use on the go....

- Breathing techniques (blow out the candles, blow up imaginary balloons)
- Bubbles
- Glitter wand key chain
- I spy card
- Go on an imaginary trip
Case Scenarios

- Applying theory into practice
- Discussion questions:
  - What potential barriers/ challenges did you discuss?
  - What techniques could you apply to these scenarios?
Working with the family system and understanding developmental reactions to hospitalization and chronic illness provides a foundation for assessing coping behaviors, providing interventions and coping strategies to help children and families gain a sense of mastery and control over healthcare experiences.