

# Pointers For Parents

## Coping With The Stress Of A Child's Illness

(NAPSA)—Having a child with cancer is perhaps the most stressful ordeal that any parent could experience. Good coping skills are essential for improving your ability to handle the stress and keeping the cancer experience from ruling your life.

Fortunately, there is an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for children with cancer and their families—not only the financial hardships but also the emotional stress. The National Children's Cancer Society (N.C.C.S.) provides both emotional support and direct financial assistance to families of children with cancer.

N.C.C.S. offers these suggestions for dealing with your emotions:

- Give yourself permission to deal with positive and negative feelings. Recognize that these feelings are normal and healthy.

- Become a part of your child's treatment team. You know your child best and the team will need your input.

- Recognize which areas of your child's life can be controlled and which cannot.

- Know that some questions may not have answers.

- Learn to accept help and support from others.

- Connect with other parents through the Message Board on the N.C.C.S. Web site.

“When a child is diagnosed with cancer, families are faced with a host of stresses, from the stress of the diagnosis itself and its treatment to employment and financial stresses to emotional stress, all of



**In order to be effective caregivers, parents need to take care of themselves—and their stress.**

which compound the situation,” says Jessica Cook, MSW, program coordinator for the Pediatric Oncology Program at The National Children's Cancer Society. “Frequently, caregivers put aside their needs to ensure their child's well-being. In working with families, I have found that being the best caregiver to their child often means taking care of themselves first.”

To do this, parents and health care professionals recommend such stress-reducing tips as:

- Listening to music
- Finding a relaxing hobby, such as crocheting, knitting or woodwork
- Finding your sense of humor
- Making time for yourself—as an individual and as a couple
- Giving your loved ones permission to nurture you.

For more tips for parents on how to deal with their emotional stress during this challenging time, or to obtain a copy of “The Mountain You Have Climbed: A Parent's Guide to Childhood Cancer Survivorship,” visit the Web site at [www.nationalchildrenscancersociety.org](http://www.nationalchildrenscancersociety.org).