

with other physical problems, it is often easy for parents to miss clues to its presence or to make defensive excuses regarding the diagnosis.

Plan situations that help parents become aware of the problem.

Encourage parents to discuss their observations of child but withhold diagnostic opinions.

Focus on what the child can do and appropriate interventions to promote progress (e.g., infant stimulation programs) to involve parents in their child's care while helping them gain an awareness of the child's condition.

## Physical Disability

If loss of motor or sensory ability occurs during childhood, the diagnosis is readily apparent. The challenge lies in helping the child and parents over the period of shock and grief and toward the phase of acceptance and reintegration.

Institute early rehabilitation (e.g., using a prosthetic limb, learning to read braille, learning to read lips).

Be aware that physical rehabilitation usually precedes psychological adjustment.

When the cause of the disability is accidental, avoid implying that parents or child was responsible for the injury but allow them the opportunity to discuss feelings of blame.

Encourage expression of feelings (see [Communication Techniques, Chapter 4](#)).

## Chronic Illness

Realization of the true impact may take months or years. Conflict over parents' versus child's concerns may result in serious problems. When condition is inherited, parents may blame themselves or child may blame the parents.