

assessed; this is a goal that requires flexibility in scheduling appointments. When working parents know that their input is valuable, they will often change their work schedule to meet with a health professional. Because siblings can be of any age, the use of appropriate communication strategies for assessment must be considered. Nonverbal techniques, such as those discussed in [Chapter 4](#) should be considered for these children.

Provide Support at the Time of Diagnosis

The diagnosis is a critical time for parents and can influence how they perceive their health care providers across the trajectory of care. Although they may not hear or remember all that is said to them, they frequently sense a certain attitude of acceptance, rejection, hope, or despair that may influence their ability to absorb the shock and begin adapting to the family's altered future.

Parents may be encouraged to be together when they are informed of their child's condition, thus avoiding the problem of one parent having to interpret complex information and deal with the initial emotional reaction of the other. The informing session should take place in a private, comfortable setting free of distractions and interruptions in an atmosphere in which the parents feel free to express their emotions ([Fig. 17-3](#)). Their emotional needs are acknowledged by showing acceptance of expressions, such as crying, sadness, anger, and disappointment. Emotional support is offered by having tissues available if a family member cries and demonstrating through facial and body language that indeed this is a difficult and painful period. Although touching is a powerful expression of empathy, it must be used wisely. For example, it can prematurely terminate free expression of feelings, especially when combined with statements, such as "Everything will be all right." Nurses should also be aware of cultural issues regarding touching (see [Chapter 4](#)).