

their children, often resulting in social isolation ([Coffey, 2006](#)). Mothers often have greater needs for social support and positive appraisal of the situation than fathers.

Fathers of children with disabilities struggle with issues that may be distinct from those of the mothers ([Swallow, Macfadyen, Santacroce, et al, 2012](#)). Fathers may think that their role as protector is challenged, because they do not know how to help and cannot protect their family from the seemingly overwhelming recurring problems. The extensive stresses in the family can leave fathers feeling depressed, weak, guilty, powerless, isolated, embarrassed, and angry. Fearful that they will lose control or be viewed as weak or ineffectual, however, fathers often hide their feelings and display an outward confidence that may lead others to believe that everything is fine. Fathers worry about what the future holds for their children, their ability to manage the increasing financial burden, and the daily disruptions of the entire family ([Davies, Gudmundsdottir, Worden, et al, 2004](#); [Swallow, Macfadyen, Santacroce, et al, 2012](#)).

### **Single-Parent Families**

Single-parent families are of special concern. As the only parent of a child who may require extensive, sophisticated, and lifelong care, the single parent may feel an enormous burden. Available financial and emotional resources may already be stretched to the limit. A special effort should be made to assist the single parent in finding financial and support services that can ease the burden of care. Nurses can also assist the single parent in identifying helping roles that may be acceptable to relatives and friends.

### **Siblings**

Results of studies are less clear regarding the ways that siblings are affected by having a brother or sister with a complex condition ([Anderson and Davis, 2011](#); [Barlow and Ellard, 2006](#); [Hartling, Milne, Tjosvold, et al, 2014](#); [O'Brien, Duffy, and Nicholl, 2009](#)). Most evidence shows a negative effect on siblings of children with chronic illnesses compared with siblings of healthy children ([Gold, Treadwell, Weissman, et al, 2011](#); [Hartling, Milne, Tjosvold, et al, 2014](#)). Siblings of children with chronic illnesses report psychosocial problems more often than their peers ([Gold, Treadwell, Weissman,](#)