

- Consider the child's development when talking about spiritual concerns.
- Contact the institution's chaplaincy department for patients and families who have symptoms of spiritual distress or ask for specific religious rituals.
- Become knowledgeable about the religious worldviews of cultural groups found in the patients you care for.
- Encourage visitation with family members, members of the patient's spiritual community, and spiritual leaders.
- Allow children and families to teach you about the specifics of their religious beliefs.
- Develop awareness of your own spiritual perspective.
- Listen for understanding rather than agreement or disagreement.

Adapted from Brooks B: Spirituality. In Kline N, editor: *Essentials of pediatric oncology nursing: a core curriculum*, ed 2, Glenview, IL, 2004, Association of Pediatric Oncology Nurses; Barnes LL, Plotnikoff GA, Fox K, et al: Spirituality, religion, and pediatrics: intersecting worlds of healing, *Pediatrics* 106(4 suppl):899-908, 2000.

Religious beliefs that relate to health care and that may be a source of conflict between a family and the health care team remind us of the power of ordinary, daily life experiences (e.g., childrearing and food preparation) to bring to life the concept of what is sacred (Mercer, 2006). Religion and spirituality influence how individuals view an illness, a treatment regimen, and the role and utility of the health care provider. They also influence actions of food preparation and dietary restrictions and rituals surrounding birth and death. A key role of nurses is to keep communication between the family and health care team open, convey an attitude of openness and concern, and ask about such influences (Yates, 2011). For example, such information is important to keep in mind during a physical exam or preparation for surgery.

In some instances, the rights of the family and the responsibility of the state may be in conflict. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusions for themselves and for their children.