

anxiety, withdrawal, apathy). Additionally, secondary losses (such as the ability to participate in extracurricular activities or social events) occur because of routines imposed by the affected child's chronic condition.

Trends in Care

Developmental Focus

Focusing on the child's **developmental level** rather than chronologic age or diagnosis emphasizes the child's abilities and strengths rather than disabilities. Attention is directed to normalizing experiences, adapting the environment, and promoting coping skills. Nurses often are in vital positions to redirect attention from the pathological model with its focus on weaknesses and problems to the developmental model to meet the unique needs of the child and family.

A developmental focus also considers family development. The life cycle of the family unit reflects changing ages and needs of family members, as well as changing external demands. A family member's serious illness can cause significant stress or crisis at any stage of the family life cycle. Just as with individual development, family development may be interrupted or even regress to an earlier level of functioning. Nurses can use the concept of family development to plan meaningful interventions and evaluate care (see [Developmental Theory, Chapter 3](#)).

Family-Centered Care

Children's physical and emotional health, as well as their cognitive and social functioning, is strongly influenced by how well their families function ([Dunst and Trivette, 2009](#); [Treyvaud, 2014](#); [Kuhlthau, Bloom, Van Cleave, et al, 2011](#)). The importance of family-centered care—a philosophy that considers the family as the constant in the child's life—is especially evident in the care of children with special needs (see also [Family-Centered Care, Chapter 2](#)). As parents learn about the child's health care needs, they often become experts in delivering care. Health care providers, including nurses, are adjuncts to the child's care and need to form partnerships with parents. Effective communication and negotiation between parents and nurses are essential to forming