

Children's Health

Nurturing The Body And Spirit When Faced With Illness

(NAPSA)—Coping with illness is difficult no matter what the circumstances, yet when a child falls ill, it can be especially challenging for parents to focus on their child's recovery and maintain a happy, healthy home environment all at the same time.

“For parents of sick children, the emphasis on their child's physical recuperation often means that the emotional well-being of all involved is overlooked,” said Karri Morgan, manager of Target House, a home-away-from-home for families whose children are receiving life-saving treatment at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital® in Memphis, Tenn. “Many of the most uplifting stories from Target House include elements of bravery and optimism—basic concepts but ones that are often overlooked in the face of illness.”

Funded by Target, Target House provides 96 fully-furnished apartments at no cost to families of St. Jude patients requiring long-term treatment. Since 1999, Target House has served more than 510 families. Together with St. Jude, it offers these tips to help other families cope with illness:

- Be a role model. It is natural to become fearful and emotional when someone you love is sick but remember that children take their cues from you. Once they see that smiling and laughter are acceptable, they won't be afraid to indulge in a smile themselves and neither will other families you come into contact with.

- Maintain structure. It's natural to want to spoil a child to compensate for physical limitations, however, maintaining a routine such as a regular bedtime



Children and their families find laughter and joy while coping with illness.

and household rules can provide children with a much-needed sense of normalcy.

- Develop a support system. Facilities like Target House feature common areas that foster interaction between families. Sharing your story, fears and health updates with others caring for a sick child can be the best means of support.

- Become educated. Rather than ask “why,” educate yourself as to “how” your child's disease is affecting his or her body to better enable you to help during the healing process.

Most important, don't be afraid to ask for help. Many are overwhelmed by feelings of helplessness and relinquishing control. Acknowledge that asking for assistance is a sign of strength and recognize that your family will benefit from the nurturing of others.

For more information on how you can help your family cope with an illness or for more information about St. Jude, visit stjude.org. For more information about Target House, visit Target.com.