



# **In Sickness and in Play: Children Coping with Chronic Illness (Series in Childhood Studies)**

*Cindy Dell Clark*

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For children who live with a chronic illness, each day is filled with endless treatments, painful symptoms, confusion, and embarrassment. How can an eight-year old girl understand diabetes let alone explain to her schoolmates why she has to leave class to have her blood tested? How can the father of a child with asthma ever sleep soundly through the night with the fear that his son may suffocate in the next room.

In *In Sickness and in Play*, Cindy Dell Clark tells the stories of children who suffer from two common illnesses that are often underestimated by those not directly touched by them—asthma and diabetes. She describes how play, humor, and other expressive methods, invented by the kids themselves, allow families to cope with the pain. Clark’s work is one of the few studies to focus on maladies that kids must learn to live with rather than die from. Her interviews with forty-six families give readers an understanding of how children comprehend their illnesses and how parents struggle daily to care for their kids while trying to give them a “normal” childhood. Chronically ill children are at a greater risk of developing mental health or social adjustment problems than their peers, and asthma has been gaining ground in both incidence and fatality in recent years. Clark’s eye-opening work emphasizes the importance of improving the lives of these kids by understanding their perspectives, both imagined and real.

*In Sickness and in Play* is part of the Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies edited by Myra Bluebond-Langer.

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