

Talking about cancer with your kids is hard. **We get it.**

Bright Reads books are one way to start this difficult conversation.

This guide is intended to be used by parents and guardians, grandparents and loved ones, or any loving member of your community. You'll notice the questions are posed from the perspective of a parent with cancer—please change the language to fit your needs.

We've listed suggested ages for the discussion questions and activity ideas, but you know your child the best. These questions may not work for every child depending on language development, understanding of a parent's cancer, and all of the things that make our kids unique.

Here are some helpful questions and sentence starters to use with your child when you are reading together, when a moment of connection opens up, or anytime you need them.

- What did you think of this story? How did it make you feel?
- What is similar (or different) between this story and our family's story?
- What did you learn from this story?



It is helpful to keep sentences short and to the point when telling young children about your cancer diagnosis. Here are some sentences to consider and edit to your specific situation:

I have cancer.

Cancer is a (sickness, illness or disease depending on your family's preference).

You can't catch it. I didn't catch it or get it from you or anyone else.

I am going to the doctor to get better.

I am getting a medicine called chemotherapy / radiation.

The medicine may make me feel sick and tired.

You can hug and snuggle me all you want and you will never catch cancer.

Nothing you did or said caused me to get cancer.

You can always ask me questions about cancer or how I feel.

Please keep in mind that some children will not want to talk about their feelings. Some children will have a million questions. Other children might have huge emotions and big behaviors. It is ALL o.k. Let your children know that you love them no matter what and that they can come to you when they are ready (and over-and-over again).

A big thank-you to the following professionals who contributed to and reviewed these guides:

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My Dad and the Dragon

by Montserrat Coughlin Kim

Discussion Questions:

Suggested Age: Preschool

I have a team of helpers working to make me feel better! Let me tell you about them. *Share who is on your team—doctor, surgeon, nurse, social worker, therapist, etc. and what they each do to make you feel better.*

How do you feel when I can't play with you? Are there new ways we can play, even if I need to lie down? *Note: The book [Horizontal Parenting: How to Entertain Your Kids While Lying Down](#) by Michelle Woo and Dasha Tolstikova offers some clever activities.*

Suggested Age: School Age

The kids in the book think that people with cancer look sick. Do you think I look sick? What does “sick” look like to you?

How do you think doctors and my medical team are fighting my cancer dragon? What are ways WE can help fight the cancer dragon?

The kids in the book say they feel worried, scared and mad about their dad's cancer. Do you ever feel this way about my cancer?

How have I acted differently than before I got cancer? How does that feel for you?



Activity Ideas:

Suggested Age: Preschool–School Age

In this book, the kids imagine their dad's cancer being a dragon. What character can you imagine my cancer being? Draw, write or tell a story about it.

The kids in the book create a superhero to fight their dad's cancer. What do you imagine could fight my cancer? Draw, write or tell a story about it.

Sometimes people with cancer have a hard time eating. Invite your child to make you a simple snack you might enjoy. OR, have them imagine/use toys to make you a special treat that will help you feel better.