

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.

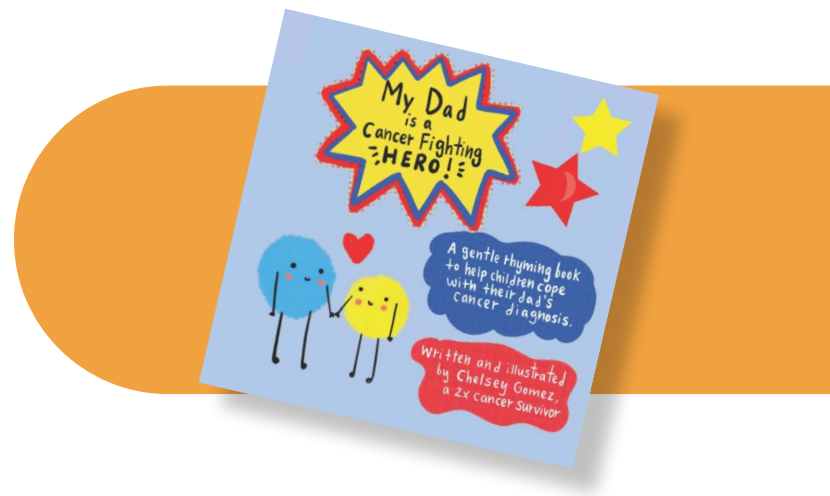
Please keep in mind that some children will not want to talk about their feelings. Some children will have a million questions. Other children might have huge emotions and big behaviors. It is ALL o.k. Let your children know that you love them no matter what and that they can come to you when they are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

by Chelsey Gomez



Discussion Questions:

Suggested Age: Preschool

What are some activities we can do when I feel tired from treatment? *Note: The book [Horizontal Parenting: How to Entertain Your Kids While Lying Down](#) by Michelle Woo and Dasha Tolstikova offers some clever activities.*

How do you know I love you? How can we show each other every day how much we love each other?

Suggested Age: School Age

What has changed since I got cancer? Are there things you miss?

How am I a hero? How are YOU a hero?

Activity Ideas:

Suggested Age: Preschool–School Age

Use ink, paint or markers to make superhero pictures with your and your child's fingerprints! Have fun putting colorful fingerprints all over a sheet of paper. Let the ink/marker/paint dry. Use pens/pencils/markers to create people, animals and objects out of the fingerprints that are engaging in heroic, brave, fun or silly adventures.

You can also create a page of feeling faces out of the fingerprints, or a page of silly hair 'dos or hats/wraps on each fingerprint.

Tell or act out stories about a superhero and cancer. Allow your child to take the story in any direction they'd like, and use stuffed animals, dolls, figurines, or toys they have. Remember kids are not literal in how they play, and may want to explore different scenarios (including cancer winning). Try not to direct or judge their story, just follow their lead.