

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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Stickers on Her Bald Head

by Chelsey Gomez

Discussion Questions:

Suggested Age: Preschool

Though you may feel sick and have symptoms like the flu/COVID/cold, remind your child that cancer is NOT contagious like these other illnesses. Emphasize that they cannot catch it. They can hug and snuggle you and not get sick.

What do you think about me losing my hair?
How does a bald head look to you?

Suggested Age: School Age

What kinds of stickers do you think would be fun to decorate with? Help your child select some from your favorite store or cancer charity and decide where to put them.

If cancer was a robot (or troll or monster), what would it look like? Draw a picture or tell a story.



Activity Ideas:

Suggested Age: Preschool–School Age

Use an ink pad, paint or markers to make 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 fun activities or silly make-believe 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 a story (or draw a picture) about concocting the yummiest medicine in the world that makes the person with cancer feel better.

If your head is bald, allow your child to decorate it with stickers or other appropriate items! Or, on a large piece of paper, draw a head and decorate it together.

On multiple pieces of paper, draw the outlines of heads. Have your child draw different hair designs on each one—the sillier the better! Cut them all out and hide them around the house for a silly hair scavenger hunt. Let your child have a chance to hide them so you can search for them too!