

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 child's developmental level).

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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The Cancer That Wouldn't Go Away: A story for Kids About Metastatic Cancer

by Hadassa Field

**Check out the great discussion and activities in the back of the book. Here are a few more, if you are interested:*

Discussion Questions:

Suggested Age: Preschool

Max says he is sad that he will not have a baby brother. What makes you sad? It's okay to feel sad or feel any other feeling. What makes you mad? Scared? Happy?

Who are other people who love you?

Suggested Age: School Age

Max says he is really disappointed that he will not have a baby brother. Are there things you feel disappointed or sad about? What about cancer makes you angry? What do you do to feel better when you have big feelings?

What is patience? Is it easy or hard for you to be patient? What are some ways you can practice patience?

Who are people you can talk to about your worries and big feelings? *Identify other caring adults your child can talk to. If they can't think of anyone, work at finding at least one trusted adult outside of your family they can access when needed (teacher, coach, therapist, school counselor).*

How do you feel about surprises? What have been some hard surprises since cancer? What have been some good surprises since cancer?



Activity Ideas:

Suggested Age: Preschool–School Age

Having chronic, metastatic or advanced cancer means living with uncertainty. This is a big concept for children. Consider having discussions about what this means, and how your family can deal with uncertainty. Mindfulness practices are one way people cope with uncertainty. As a family, consider practicing an element of mindfulness together—yoga, meditation, guided imagery, sharing gratitude at dinner.

Create worry stones or dolls out of paper, clay, or recyclable materials with your child. Talk about how they can use these physical items to talk about their worries and then “put them somewhere” so they don't have to carry them. If/When they are ready to do something with their worries (like make a plan), they know where to find them.