

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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The Invisible String by Patrice Karst



Discussion Questions:

Suggested Age: Preschool

The twins are afraid of storms. What scares you? What makes you feel better when you are scared?

How do you know I love you? How does our family show our love?

Suggested Age: School Age

What does our family's imaginary string look like? What color is it? Does it have a glow? What does it feel like? Does it make a sound? Have you ever felt the string "tug"? What does that feel like?

Activity Ideas:

Suggested Age: Preschool–School Age

Find a large sheet of paper or cardboard. Draw out everyone in your life, including pets, or paste pictures on the paper/board. Consider including people/pets who have died. Connect them all with a drawn (or real) string.

Suggested Age: School Age

There is a [companion workbook](#) for this book by *Invisible String* author Patrice Karst!

Get a piece of yarn or string and make a family web—get everyone in a circle and take turns tossing a ball of yarn to each other. As you toss the string, keep a hold on a piece (so you are still holding on to the yarn) and say something you love about the person you are tossing the yarn to. When everyone is holding on to the yarn, talk about how you all stay connected, no matter what happens.