

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:

Carissa Hodgson, LCSW, OSW-C | Sarah F. Pedonti, Ph.D. | Lauren Rabinovitz, MPH, MSW, LCSW-C | Sarah Keyes, MA, CCLS

In My Heart: A Book of Feelings by Jo Witek



Discussion Questions:

Suggested Age: Preschool–School Age

What are your big feelings? Small feelings?
Loud feelings? Quiet feelings?

For each of the feelings in the book, ask your child how THEY see/hear/feel the feeling (ex: in the book, when the child feels happy they feel shiny and bright; they want to twirl around the child feels like they want to take off into the sky! How do YOU feel when you are happy?)

Activity Ideas:

Suggested Age: Preschool

Create a heart map! Cut out or draw a heart on a piece of paper and decorate it. What are the different feelings in your heart? Do the feelings have a shape? Picture? Sound?

Play feelings charades! Take turns acting out feelings and having the other person guess the emotion.

Suggested Age: School Age

Older children may want to actually create a “map” in the heart for different places that represent memories or feelings (ex: caves that hold hidden or scary feelings/memories, pictures of hide-outs or favorite places where they go to relax, etc.)