

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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Nowhere Hair

by Sue Glader

Discussion Questions:

Suggested Age: Preschool

What do you think of my bald head?

The girl in the story says she has been scared about her mom having cancer. Do you ever feel scared? What scares you?

Suggested Age: School Age

What has been different for you since I got cancer?

What does confidence mean? When do you feel confident?

How would you feel if someone made fun of me for being bald? What could you say to them?



Activity Ideas:

Suggested Age: Preschool

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!

Design a hat/cap/wrap/turban for a bald head that shows off its beauty. Draw (or print) an emotion chart with different faces/emojis and create hats for each of them.

Let your child play “beauty parlor” with your accessories (wigs, head coverings, wraps, and scarves) by trying them on or placing them on dolls or stuffies.

Suggested Age: School Age

Let your child attend a wig or hat-shopping excursion with you (or browse with you online) to help you choose head coverings if you choose to use them.

Ask your child to come up with a list of ideas or activities that you and they could do together to feel more confident (ex: get a pedicure together or give each other one, do yoga or exercise together, do a face mask together).