

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

Wherever You Are, My Love Will Find You

by Nancy Tillman

Discussion Questions:

Suggested Age: Preschool

How do you know I love you?

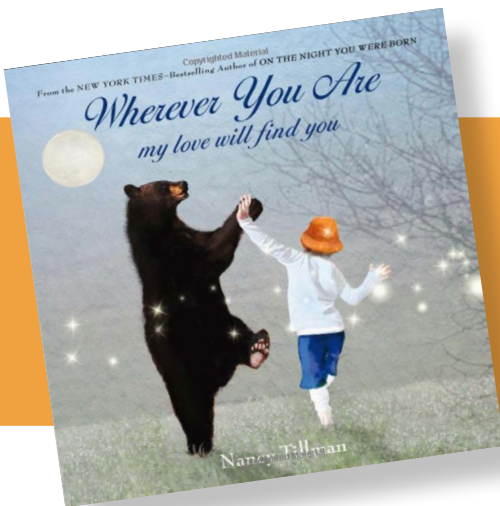
Who else loves you?

Suggested Age: School Age

If my love for you were an animal, what would it be? Do you ever think of it as following you around?

Have you ever had a hard time feeling my love? How do you know it is there? What does it feel like?

What is your favorite song about love? How might we use a line from the song as a mantra to remind us of our love when we are away from each other?



Activity Ideas:

Suggested Age: Preschool

Use play-doh/clay ([DIY recipe](#)) to make a sculpture of love. Play with it—show how it stretches and changes!

Draw/color a heart with your child on a piece of paper or cardboard. Cut it out. Take turns hiding it around the house for a game of hide and seek! Talk with your child about how the heart, or love, can be found no matter where it is hidden.

Create a dance that represents your love! Take turns showing each other dance moves of your love, or, make-up moves that you dance together. Choose some special songs that represent your love.

Suggested Age: School Age

Make collaborative maps with your child about where to find your love for each other! Each of you start with a piece of paper. Set a timer for 2-5 minutes while you each begin to draw a map of where your love can be found. You may want to think of a “treasure map”—are there obstacles or dangers? Special tools or tasks? Get creative—maybe there are fantasy elements, guardians, castles, etc. When the timer goes off, switch pieces of paper and set the timer again and continue drawing on the other’s map. Keep switching until you are ready to be done and share with each other.

Look up poems or songs about love. Get creative and write your own! It can be simple, silly, serious—whatever works for you and your kiddo.