TALKING TO OUR KIDS ABOUT CANCER

A guide for caregivers and practitioners on how to appropriately communicate with children about a caregiver's cancer

DEVELOPED BY
ANNA SNEE, MS CANDIDATE
Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people that we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone.

- FRED ROGERS
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Goals of the Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Why Talk About Cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Early Childhood (Ages 1-6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>School-Aged (Ages 6-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Adolescents (Ages 12-18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>How School Can Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Additional Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>References</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.85 million children under 18 have a parent that is diagnosed with cancer.

18% of newly diagnosed adults with cancer are parents to minor children.

562,000 children are living with a parent in early stages of cancer treatment.
Families are increasingly reporting their needs as ‘unmet’ in terms of addressing children living with a parent/caregiver cancer diagnosis.

Parents commonly wait to give their child information about their diagnosis for 2 reasons:

- In an attempt to protect the child emotionally
- Because of their own adverse emotions about the illness

But when it comes to the kids:

- Children generally want precise knowledge of the parent’s illness
- Any misconceptions or guilt they felt regarding the cancer was due to their lack of information provided to them

The quality of the information shared with the child about cancer plays a key role in a child’s coping.

This guide provides developmentally appropriate, easy-to-read, and accessible information for both parents and practitioners, in order to facilitate effective communication with a child about cancer.
**GOALS OF THE GUIDE**

- To provide a tool for practitioners to help facilitate conversations surrounding a parent or caregiver's cancer diagnosis
- To normalize typical emotional and behavioral reactions of a child to a parent/caregiver's cancer diagnosis
- To help parents/caregivers develop strategies to facilitate conversations about cancer with their child

**TO THE USERS OF THE GUIDE**

**FOR THE PRACTITIONER:**
This guide is designed for the practitioner that is supporting an adult/parent with a cancer diagnosis, or the child of a caregiver that has cancer. These practitioners include, but are not limited to, teachers, social workers, nurses, child life specialists, and counselors. This usable guide provides information for which a practitioner can provide to a parent or use when talking to a child.

**FOR THE PARENT/CAREGIVER:**
This guide is designed for parents and caregivers living with a cancer diagnosis that are seeking guidance on how to appropriately facilitate conversations with their child about the cancer.
WHY SHOULD WE TALK TO KIDS ABOUT CANCER?

Research surrounding parent-to-child communication in regards to parental cancer tells us 2 truths:

- A child needs information about the cancer in order to properly cope.\(^7\)
- A parent needs guidance and support in order to overcome the challenge of facilitating these conversations with their child(ren).\(^8\)

Regarding cancer, sharing information and open communication with children is associated with: \(^9\)

- Better psychological outcomes
- Lower levels of depressive symptoms
- Lower levels of anxiety
TYPICAL DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

EARLY CHILDHOOD:
TODDLERS (AGES 1 - 3)

Limited attention span/concept of time

Animism: attributing lifelike qualities to inanimate objects

Negativism: declaration of being independent by using words such as "no"

Toddlers observe change through routine shifts and absence of caregivers

It's important as caregivers and practitioners to understand what the typical characteristics are of a child at each stage of development. A child's behaviors and reactions throughout a caregiver's cancer experience will relate to these typical characteristics.

For example, a toddler will require reiteration of what cancer is and that they can not catch it due to their limited attention span.
TYPICAL DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

EARLY CHILDHOOD:
PRESCHOOL (AGES 3 - 6)

Egocentric: belief that everyone sees the world as they do

Magical Thinking: use of imagination to learn about and interpret the environment

Interprets words for their literal meaning based on perceptions. Avoid words with ambiguous meanings.

Fears bodily harm

It's important as caregivers and practitioners to understand what the typical characteristics are of a child at each stage of development. A child's behaviors and reactions throughout a caregiver's cancer experience will relate to these typical characteristics.

For example, a preschool aged child may fear that they can catch cancer. If the cancer diagnosis is not properly communicated and explained, a child may use magical thinking make assumptions to explain what they do not understand. Delivering information in small amounts over time is helpful.
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION & INTERVENTION BY DEVELOPMENTAL AGE

EARLY CHILDHOOD: TODDLERS (AGES 1 - 3)

Use few words, with simple explanations

Describe situations with the senses

Give the child choice when choice is available

Prepare for routine changes and provide a visual schedule if needed
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION & INTERVENTION BY DEVELOPMENTAL AGE

EARLY CHILDHOOD:

PRESCHOOL (AGES 3 - 6)

Use concrete explanations in simple terms they will understand

Encourage the child to express thoughts and feelings in order to assess understanding and clear up misconceptions

Give them a chance to explore objects (i.e. medical equipment) and allow them to ask “why” questions

Use books, props, pictures to explain

Follow their lead—share only as much information as helpful

Label and validate their feelings
EARLY CHILDHOOD:
TALKING ABOUT DIAGNOSIS

TELL YOUR CHILD:
☑️ The name of the cancer
☑️ Where it is in the body
☑️ How it will be treated

REINFORCE AND REPEAT:
☑️ The child did not cause the cancer
☑️ They cannot catch it
☑️ They will be taken care of no matter the outcome.

SAY THIS:

"Grandpa is sick with an illness called cancer. Cancer happens in the body when good cells become bad cells. We have cells in every part of our body. The cancer happened on its own. No one did anything to cause cancer. Grandpa has special doctors to help get rid of the bad cells."
EARLY CHILDHOOD: EXPLAINING TREATMENTS

CHEMOTHERAPY:
"Chemotherapy is a medicine that helps kill the bad cancer cells. Chemotherapy is also called "chemo." Chemo sometimes kills the good cells, too. Because it kills good cells, it might make daddy look more sick while it does its job to get rid of the bad cells. When daddy gets sick from the chemo it is called a side effect."

RADIATION:
"Radiation is when a big machine uses strong x-rays on the spot where the cancer is to kill the bad cells or slow down the growth of the bad cells. Radiation sometimes makes the skin red where the x-rays hit. The red spot looks and feels like a sun burn. Radiation does not hurt."

SURGERY:
"Surgery is used when the doctor tries to take the bad cells out of the body. Sometimes surgery can remove all the bad cancer cells, but sometimes people need more medicine or treatments."

SIDE EFFECTS:
Explaining the side effects of the treatment that the child might see is important. Some side effects, such as hair loss, vomiting, and scars, can be frightening to see, so it's important to explain that even though it might look scary, the medicine is trying to get rid of the cancer.
Start by exploring what the child thinks is happening using play opportunities and social stories or books. (See resources for suggestions)

When a relapse occurs, diagnosis changes, or becomes terminal, it is important to orient children to these changes. Young children notice change through routine shifts, adult absences, and physical changes in appearance. Creating a routine and consistent caregiving can be helpful.

**IN THE MIND OF A CHILD**
- Will they get better?
- Will I be taken care of?
- Did I cause this?
- Can I catch this?
- Will this happen to you?

**TIPS AND TRICKS**
- If possible, prepare for the change before it happens
- Prepare through the senses: what will the child hear, see, smell, etc
- Let the child lead
- Be honest
- Use simple language
- Give them a role
- Label and name your and their emotions
"The medicine to make Mommy healthy is not working anymore. The cancer is making Mommy's body too sick to work like ours and it will stop working. When it stops working, Mommy will die. That means her body will not breathe, talk, eat, sleep, think or see anymore."
TYPICAL DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL AGED (AGES 6 - 12)

Interested in acquiring new knowledge

Logical thinking and cause and effect develops

Development of relationships with peers

Enjoys talking about likes/dislikes, hobbies

May feel shame about behavior or be afraid of losing control

At age 9 children can understand what happens to one person could happen to another

It's important as caregivers and practitioners to understand what the typical characteristics are of a child at each stage of development. A child's behaviors and reactions throughout a caregiver's cancer experience will relate to these typical characteristics.

For example, a school-aged child may feel guilty about being happy when their caregiver is feeling sick. Also, the child might have a lot of questions about the cancer as their logical thinking is developing at this stage.
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION & INTERVENTION
BY DEVELOPMENTAL AGE

SCHOOL AGED (AGES 6 - 12)

Be truthful

Avoid making promises

Use correct medical terms, but use “soft senses” (i.e. it feel “very warm” instead of “it’s burning”)

If possible, prepare them in advance for changes, allowing time for questions

Suggest coping strategies/ways to relax
SCHOOL-AGED CHILD: TALKING ABOUT DIAGNOSIS

TELL YOUR CHILD:

✓ The name of the cancer
✓ Where it is in the body
✓ How it will be treated

REINFORCE AND REPEAT:

✓ The child did not cause the cancer
✓ They cannot catch it
✓ They will be taken care of no matter the outcome.

SAY THIS:

“The human body is made up of cells—tiny building blocks. Healthy cells grow, do their jobs, and are replaced. Sometimes, after a cell is done with its job it sticks around, grows, and does not die as it should. The cells can form a lump. This is cancer. The cancer cells begin to crowd the healthy cells and this makes the person with cancer sick. You did not cause cancer, and you cannot catch cancer. We don’t always know why cancer happens. Oncologists are doctors who give medicine to destroy the cancer cells.”
SCHOOL-AGED CHILD: EXPLAINING TREATMENTS

CHEMOTHERAPY:
"Chemotherapy is a medicine that helps kill the bad cancer cells. Chemotherapy is also called "chemo." Chemo sometimes kills the good cells, too. Because it kills good cells, it might make daddy look more sick while it does its job to get rid of the bad cells. When daddy gets sick from the chemo it is called a side effect."

RADIATION:
"Radiation is when a big machine uses strong x-rays on the spot where the cancer is to kill the bad cells or slow down the growth of the bad cells. Radiation sometimes makes the skin red where the x-rays hit. The red spot looks and feels like a sun burn. Radiation does not hurt."

SURGERY:
"Surgery is used when a surgeon, who is a doctor, tries to take the bad cells out of the body. Sometimes surgery can remove all the bad cancer cells, but sometimes people need more medicine or treatments. We will let you know what Grandma needs."

SIDE EFFECTS:
Explaining the side effects of the treatment that the child might see is important. Some side effects, such as hair loss, vomiting, and scars, can be frightening to see, so it's important to explain that even though it might look scary, the medicine is trying to get rid of the cancer."
SCHOOL-AGED CHILD: DISCUSSING A TERMINAL DIAGNOSIS

WHEN CHANGE HAPPENS...

Start by exploring what the child thinks is happening using open ended questions

- How do you think grandpa is doing?
- Is anything different with him?

When a relapse occurs, diagnosis changes, or becomes terminal, it is important to discuss these changes with children. When children are prepared with developmentally appropriate information, they will cope with these challenging changes more effectively.

IN THE MIND OF A CHILD

- Will they be okay?
- How will my life change?
- Will I be taken care of?
- Did I cause this?
- Can I catch this?
- Will this happen to me/my friends/my family?

TIPS AND TRICKS

- If possible, explain the change before it happens
- Let the child lead and reflect back what they say
- Be honest
- Use simple language
- Give them a role
- Model emotional expression
SCHOOL-AGED CHILD: 
DISCUSSING A TERMINAL DIAGNOSIS

TALKING ABOUT DEATH...
Talking to children about death as a caregiver or practitioner can be difficult. It is important to use clear, concrete words when explaining what death means. It is important to give permission to still play and have fun.

CONCRETE PHRASES:
- Dead, died, death
- Heart stopped beating
- Lungs stopped breathing
- Body stopped working

WARNING WORDS!
- Passed/went away
- Lost
- Went to sleep
- Better Place

SAY THIS:
"The medicine to make mommy healthy is not working anymore. The cancer is making Mommy's body too sick to work like it is supposed to and it will stop working. When it stops working, Mommy will die." Explore what the child's understanding is to learn misconceptions. Keep conversation open.
TYPICAL DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

ADOLESCENTS (AGES 12-18)

- Increasingly capable of abstract thought and reason
- Body image concerns
- Concern for the present rather than the future
- Striving for independence
- Strong peer relationships/group identity
- Tests authority
- Return of egocentrism

It's important as caregivers and practitioners to understand what the typical characteristics are of a child at each stage of development. A child's behaviors and reactions throughout a caregiver's cancer experience will relate to these typical characteristics.

For example, an adolescent may want an active role in the caregiver's cancer experience, or seek peer support rather than support from family.
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION & INTERVENTION
BY DEVELOPMENTAL AGE

ADOLESCENTS (AGES 12 - 18)

Assess their understanding of illness through conversation and observation

Give clear reasons for events and changes

When possible, encourage their participation in decisions and allow for their choice. Do not allow choice if their decision is not possible.

Allow verbalization of feelings and redirect energies in positive outlets (creative expression, sports, hobbies etc.)

Encourage peer support

Be mindful of parentification. The child may take on responsibilities in the home, such as taking care of siblings, to help their caregiver.
ADOLESCENTS:
TALKING ABOUT DIAGNOSIS

TELL YOUR CHILD:

✓ The name of the cancer
✓ Where it is in the body
✓ How it will be treated

REINFORCE AND REPEAT:

✓ The child did not cause the cancer
✓ They cannot catch it
✓ They will be taken care of no matter the outcome.

SAY THIS:

"Uncle is sick with an illness called cancer. Cancer is a disease of the cells. Healthy cells grow, divide, and replace themselves with new cells. Unlike these healthy cells, cancer cells grow and divide out of control without listening to the body's message to stop. These cells can group together and form a tumor. Uncle's cancer is in his (location of the cancer). Doctors don't know why some people get cancer and others don't, but they do know that no one did anything to cause Uncle's cancer. Uncle will be treated by an Oncologist, who specializes in getting rid of cancer."
CHEMOTHERAPY:
"Chemotherapy, or 'chemo,' is a medicine that helps kill the cancer cells. Sometimes it's in a pill and other times the doctor puts the medicine in an IV. Chemo can kill good cells, too. Because it kills good cells, the medicine might make Dad look more sick while it does its job to get rid of the bad cells. When Dad gets sick from the chemo it is called a side effect."

RADIATION:
"Radiation is when a big machine uses strong x-rays on the spot where the cancer is to kill the bad cells or slow down the growth of the cancer cells. Radiation sometimes makes the skin red where the x-rays hit. The red spot looks and feels like a sun burn. Radiation does not hurt."

SURGERY:
"Surgery is used when a surgeon, who is a doctor, tries to take the cancer cells or tumor out of the body. Sometimes surgery can remove all the cancer, but sometimes people need more medicine or treatments. We will let you know what Grandma needs."

SIDE EFFECTS:
Explaining the side effects of the treatment to the adolescent is important. Some side effects, such as hair loss, vomiting, and scars, can be frightening to see, so it's important to explain that even though it might look scary, the medicine is trying to get rid of the cancer."
ADOLESCENTS: 
DISCUSSING A TERMINAL DIAGNOSIS

WHEN CHANGE HAPPENS...

Start by exploring what the child thinks is happening using open ended questions

- How do you think grandpa is doing?
- Is anything different with him?
- What are your concerns?

Adolescents have an adult understanding of illness. When a relapse occurs, diagnosis changes, or becomes terminal, it is important to discuss these changes with teens. When teens are prepared with developmentally appropriate information, they will cope with these challenging changes more effectively and develop trust with their caregiver.

IN THE MIND OF A CHILD

- Will they be okay?
- How will my life change?
- Will I be taken care of?
- Did I cause this?
- Can I catch this?
- Will this happen to me/my friends/ my family?

TIPS AND TRICKS

- If possible, explain the change before it happens
- Let the child lead and reflect back what they say
- Be honest
- Use simple language
- Give them a role
- Model emotional expression
ADOLESCENTS: DISCUSSING A TERMINAL DIAGNOSIS

TALKING ABOUT DEATH...

Talking to children about death as a caregiver or practitioner can be difficult. It is important to be open and honest with adolescents.

SUPPORTIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Open dialogue
- Active listening
- Reflect back
- Let the teen lead
- Balance reality and reassurance

WATCH OUT!

- Avoid assumptions
- Avoid "fix it" statements
- Use humor with caution
- Avoid "stay strong" or "be strong" statements

START HERE:

As a general rule, the older the child is, the more information they can handle. Sharing honest and relevant details with a teen when there is a death is beneficial to their ability to process the death. Encourage teens to draw on their natural strengths and support system. Stay present and patient with their needs.
Communication is key! When the child's school is informed, they can be a key resource for the child and family.

- Identify one staff at the school to share important updates.
- School staff can help develop a support plan for the child in the school setting.
- Family takes lead: check in, keep track of, and communicate changes with the child.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN IMPACTED BY AN ADULT’S CANCER DIAGNOSIS

A Mom of Many Hats
Fink, D & Hane L. (2011) - Suggested age: 6+
A Mom of Many Hats helps children affected by a parent battling cancer and undergoing chemotherapy with a healing literary experience, written for children of varied ages. Each family can then use this book as a tool to discuss the cancer journey.

A New Hat for Mommy
Perry, H (2005) – Suggested age 8+
This story is about a young girl who's mother has cancer. It asks questions along the way to encourage children to talk about their feelings in a relaxed manner.

Becky and the Worry Cup
A children’s book about a parent with cancer

Cancer (Just the Facts)
Provides an overview of cancer, describing what it is, what the various forms are that it takes, what it is like to live with this disease, and some of the available treatments.

Can I Catch Cancer?
Thomas, C (2007) – Suggested age 4+
Explains cancer in terms and illustrations a child can relate to. Gently and playfully guides the reader through the process of a cell to a tumor. Includes interactive pages so the child reading the book can understand and visualize by coloring and drawing the cute and clever characters created to help the child grasp what cancer is.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN IMPACTED BY AN ADULT’S CANCER DIAGNOSIS

Daddy Cat Gets a Brain Tumor
Take a journey with the Kat family as you are drawn through the emotions of losing a loved one to Cancer.

Grandma Kathy Has Cancer
Buckley, C (2007) – Suggested age 5+
Cancer is a very frightening and mysterious disease from which children are often sheltered because parents are uncertain as to how to deal with it. This book helps children better understand what happens when family members have cancer.

Hair For Mama
Eight-year-old Marcus comes up with a plan to find Mama some hair and make her better. Even though the plan doesn’t work in quite the way Marcus expects, he comes to understand that “hair is nice to have, but not as nice as me having Mama and Mama having me.”

Medikidz Explain Colorectal Cancer
Chilman-Blair, K – American Cancer Society (2013) – Suggested age 10+
Colorectal cancer is explained in graphic novel format in this informative story that makes the science behind cancer accessible to young readers. The Medikidz are superheroes each play a role in fighting the disease.

Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie
Sonnenblick, S. (2014)
When Jeffrey gets sick, Steven's world is turned upside down, and he is forced to deal with his brother's illness, his parents' attempts to keep the family in one piece, his homework, the band, girls, and Dangerous Pie.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN IMPACTED BY AN ADULT'S CANCER DIAGNOSIS

Medikidz Explain Prostate Cancer
Chilman-Blair, K. – American Cancer Society (2013) – Suggested age 10+

Medikidz Explain Breast Cancer

Medikidz Explain Lung Cancer
Chilman-Blair, K – American Cancer Society (2013) - Suggested age 10+

Medikidz Explain Melanoma
Chilman-Blair, K. – American Cancer Society (2012) – Suggested age 10+

My Book About Cancer: A workbook to help children deal with the diagnosis and treatment of a father with cancer
A workbook that gives children an effective emotional outlet as they cope with their parent's disease. By creating and discussing their own book of experiences with parents, grandparents, and other adult loved ones, children can share their emotions and concerns as the family progresses through the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

My Book About Cancer: A Workbook to help deal with the diagnosis and treatment of a mother with cancer
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN IMPACTED BY AN ADULT’S CANCER DIAGNOSIS

**Nana, What’s Cancer?**
Hyman Fead, Hamermesh, Bersani
American Cancer Society (2009) – suggested age 8-12
Tessa is a 10-year-old girl who wants to understand the confusing world of cancer and then to be able to explain it to other children. She embarks on her quest by asking questions of her Nana, whose answers are designed to both ease children’s fears and provide them with factual information.

**Once Upon A Hopeful Night**
Some patients with cancer face the difficult task of telling their children about their illness. This book helps patients talk to children about their disease and explain what is happening in a caring, sensitive manner that children can understand.

**Our Family Has Cancer Too**
When their mother is diagnosed with cancer, sixth grader Tim and his younger brother visit her in the hospital, learn about radiation and chemotherapy, and help with the chores at home.

**Princess Bella’s Special Summer: The summer Mommy had cancer**
Behaj & Behaj (2013) – Suggested age 4+
This book tells the story of a special princess, recalling a summer when her mother had cancer. This book does not explain cancer or treatment. Instead, this story focuses on the memorable moments shared between a family.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN IMPACTED BY AN ADULT'S CANCER DIAGNOSIS

When Your Parent Has Cancer: A guide for teens
In this booklet you will learn a little about cancer and how it's treated as well as how others have coped with a parent who has had cancer.

When Mommy Had a Mastectomy
Greenfield, N (2005) – Suggested age 4+
When Mommy Had a Mastectomy is a children's book that explains, in a simple and clear manner, why Mommy is sick and what she does after she feels better to return to normalcy. It tells the story of a mother and daughter discovering new ways to show they care despite the painful illness of breast cancer and subsequent breast reconstruction surgery.

When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness: Children can learn to cope with loss and change
Activity book. An excellent resource for helping children learn the basic concepts of illness and various age-appropriate ways of coping with it.

You Are Not Alone: Families Touched by Cancer
Helps families cope with their feelings about cancer, enlightens parents on how to communicate with their children, and creates special moments to cherish. You Are Not Alone introduces children from around the world to one another, as they all share the common bond of living with a family member with cancer.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN IMPACTED BY AN ADULT’S CANCER DIAGNOSIS

Someone I Love is Sick: Helping very young children cope with cancer in the family
McCue, K. (2009) – Suggested age 2-6
Someone I Love is Sick is a customizable tool to use when talking with children ages 2-6 years old about a parent or grandparent who has cancer. It addresses all stages of the cancer journey including diagnosis, treatment, hospitalization, recurrence and the end of life.

The Paper Chain
When Claire Blake was diagnosed with breast cancer, she searched in vain for books to help her young sons understand the difficult situation of serious parental illness being faced by the family. Unfortunately, she found nothing written for children trying to cope with the anxiety and upset such news brings. The Paper Chain, a powerful aid for children in coping with a serious illness in the family.

The Year My Mother Was Bald
It helps to know what to expect when a parent has cancer. Knowing the facts makes things seem less scary and out of control. The Year My Mother Was Bald is Clare's journal and scrapbook the year her mother is diagnosed with cancer and goes through treatment. Young readers will learn to understand the science of cancer and its treatments and will take comfort in knowing that they're not alone and that their feelings are normal.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN ABOUT GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT

And Still they Bloom
Rovere, A. – American Cancer Society – Suggested age 8+
Responding to the fact that coping with a parent’s death can be especially hard on young children, this beautifully written and illustrated book is a valuable resource for parents and counselors. Using nature as a backdrop for the cycles of life, this moving story emphasizes hope and healing and will connect with all readers who have lost a loved one.

Children Grieve, Too: Helping Children Cope With Grief
Gives needed information to those who work with grieving children. Basic, reader friendly, and talks about what you really need to know and how children respond to grief from infancy to teen.

Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins: A journal for teenagers experiencing loss
A Journal where teens can write letters, copy down meaningful lyrics, write songs and poems, tell the person who died what they want them to know, finish business and use their creativity to work through the grieving process.

Help Me Say Goodbye: Activities for helping kids cope when a special person dies
Silverman, J. (1999) – Suggested age 4+
An art therapy and activity book for children coping with death. Children are encouraged to express in pictures what they are often incapable of expressing in words.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN ABOUT GRIEF AND Bereavement

I Heard Your Mommy Died
Helps children cope with the death of a mother by examining the feelings they experience and the changes in their lives.

I Wish I Could Hold Your Hand: a child’s guide to grief and loss
This warm, comforting book gently helps grieving children identify their feelings and learn to accept and deal with them. Wonderful heart-warming illustrations and simple, direct writing help children discover that it is normal and natural to feel the pain of loss.

Lost and Found: Remembering a sister
"We lost Paige. That's what my Grandma said "lost". My Parents said she died. I wondered if I could find her again." So begins the story of one child's search for understanding after the death of her sister. If someone could be "lost" could they also be "found"?

Sad Isn’t Bad: A good grief guidebook for kids dealing with loss
Loaded with positive, life-affirming advice for coping with loss as a child, this guide tells children what they need to know after a loss--that the world is still safe; life is good; and hurting hearts do mend.

So Much to Think About: When someone you care about dies
Rodgers, F (2000) – Suggested age 4+
An activity workbook for children
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN ABOUT GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT

Someone I Love Died
It gently leads children through grief with age-appropriate words and solid biblical truth that understands a child's hurting heart. The added interactive resources ensure this book will become a treasured keepsake. Once complete, children create a memory book of the loved one's life.

What’s Heaven
This treasure of a book, for people of all faiths, is a starting point for parents who must talk about the difficult topic of death with their children.

When Something Terrible Happens: Children can learn to cope with grief
Creates ways for children to explore the fright, confusion, and insecurity caused by traumatic events in their lives.

35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child
The Dougy Center (2010)
This guidebook presents 35 simple and practical suggestions for supporting a grieving child. Drawn from stories, suggestions and insight shared by children and their family members at The Dougy Center, this book explores behaviors and reactions of children at different ages and maturity levels; outlets for children to safely express their thoughts and feelings; and ways to be supportive during difficult times, such as a memorial service, anniversary or holiday.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ONLINE RESOURCES

KidsHealth from Nemours
kidshealth.org/en/kids/center/cancer-center.html
This online resource, from Nemours Children's Health System, offers information for kids about cancer. Tools such as a "Words to Know," questions and answers, and a tour of the human body as told by "Chloe" and "Nurb," provide age-appropriate and interactive support for children learning about cancer.

Wonders and Worries
https://www.wondersandworries.org/
Wonders and worries provides resources and support for children and teens who have an adult in the family with a serious illness.

CLIMB: Children's Lives Include Moments of Bravery
https://www.childrenstreehousefdn.org
Intended for children ages 6-11, the aim is to build upon the child’s strengths and increase his/her ability to cope with stress associated with a parent or significant adult's cancer diagnosis. Refer to the website for program locations.

The Dougy Center
https://www.dougy.org/
The Dougy Center is the national center for grieving children and families. The website provides developmentally appropriate grief resources and the opportunity to locate grief support programs.
REFERENCES


