



Resources for Families When a Parent is Ill

When a parent is diagnosed with a cancer, it is important that children be helped to understand what is happening in the family. Meeting their children's needs can be a particular challenge for parents, at a time when they are under stress from the illness. We have compiled a listing of resources including local support services, books and organizations that can be accessed via the internet which we hope will be of help to parents as they face this challenge. We welcome feedback and would appreciate your suggestions for other resources.

Local Psychosocial Support

Cancer can affect the entire family -- both adults and children -- in many ways. Psychosocial support includes mental health counseling, education, group support, and many other such services. These services are usually provided by different types of mental health professionals. Psychosocial support services can be found for individuals or for families as they adjust to a life changing medical diagnosis.

Breast and GYN Health Project (BGHP).

Website: www.bghp.org

At the Breast and GYN Health Project, we now offer a support group for our younger clients who are diagnosed with breast or gynecological cancer. This group is intended for clients who are 45 or younger at the time of diagnosis. Over half of the women in this group currently have children who are under 18 and living at home. This group meets twice a month. During the summer months, the group meets at the Arcata Farmers Market the second Saturday of the month. Children are welcome to come play at this family gathering. Please contact Brenda at BGHP for details on the dates and time the group meets. (707) 825-8345.

North Coast Association of Mental Health Professionals (NCAMHP).

Website: <http://www.ncamhp.org/directory.asp>

The NCAMHP can be accessed online and includes a Directory of Mental Health Providers in our area. You can specify your search by location, funding (insurance accepted), population (i.e. children, adults, family), treatment approach and language. You may also contact NCAMHP by phone at (707) 441-3832.



Hospice of Humboldt.

Website: <http://www.hospiceofhumboldt.org/>

Hospice of Humboldt offers a support group for children called “*KidzTime and TeenTime.*” This group is for children and teens that have experienced the death of someone they love. Groups typically meet from 6 to 8 weeks. Additionally, Hospice of Humboldt has a wonderful list of books for Children, Teens, Parents and Caregivers available on their website.

<http://www.hospiceofhumboldt.org/books.shtml> For information on other resources available via Hospice of Humboldt, please contact them directly at (707) 445-8443.

Audiovisuals

Please note that some of these videos may be available at HCBHP. Please call to confirm.

Kids Tell Kids What It’s Like When Their Mother or Father Has Cancer. Cancervive.

Children talk about their hopes, fears and the adult burden placed on them when cancer strikes a parent. This award-winning 15-minute DVD documentary is for and by children, who have a parent with cancer, and encourages communication between family members. Can be ordered from Cancervive at 800-486-2873 or www.cancervive.org

Parenting Through Cancer: How to Talk with Your Kids When You Have Cancer. This 60 minute DVD provides the basis for opening up healthy lines of communication, addressing family needs and providing tools for the family to become strengthened by the experience. A DVD companion booklet is also included which provides bulleted information for children from under five years of age through the teenage years. Available through the Angel Foundation, www.mnangel.org

We Can Cope: When A Parent Has Cancer. A set of three videos, including a manual for parents. Parent video features 7 parents talking about how their families coped. Teen video features a group of teenagers discussing their parent’s cancer and how they coped. Child video features 3 young children expressing their feelings. Can be ordered from Inflexion Inc., Newton, MA at 800-848-3895 or www.wecancope.com

Online Support Resources

Below are online resources to help connect you with other parents or connect your children with other children who have a parent with cancer. As a parent you will find it important to investigate any online resources for your child, especially regarding online rules and procedures, privacy policy and whether or not it is moderated. You will



also need to give your permission for your child's participation.

American Cancer Society

800-227-2345

www.cancer.org

Offers a variety of literature and online discussion groups to explain cancer to children when a parent or family member is ill. Type "Helping Children" in search engine box.

CancerCare

800-813-4673

www.cancercares.org

Offers "CancerCare for Kids" - a program to help children and teens when a parent has cancer, literature and telephone education workshops, and online support groups for children and teens facing cancer in their family.

CancerCare for Kids

800-813-4673

<http://www.cancercares.org/tagged/children>

Online support program is offered for teens with a parent, sibling, or other family member who has cancer. The toll-free number is also for anyone who has cancer or who has a loved one with cancer.

Cancer Really Sucks

www.cancerreallysucks.org

An internet-only resource designed for teens by teens who have loved ones facing cancer.

Kids Connected

800-899-2866 (If you get voicemail, leave message to get a call back.)

<http://kidsconnected.org/>

Kids Connected was developed on the premise that when a parent gets cancer, the entire family is affected and the needs of the children must be addressed. The mission of Kids Connected is to provide friendship, understanding, education and support for kids and teens who have a parent with cancer or have lost a parent with cancer. Offers support services for children aged 3 through teens, who have a parent with cancer. Services include monthly support group meetings for parents and children, summer camps, moderated chat room for



ages 7-18, a quarterly newsletter, a Teddy Bear Outreach program for younger children and a variety of books and resources for parents, children and teens.

Kidscope

404-892-1437

<http://www.kidscope.org/>

Has special online materials, a comic book for children about chemotherapy (Kemo Shark) and a video for kids about a mom with breast cancer

National Cancer Institute

800-422-6237 www.cancer.gov/cancertopics

Offers a variety of literature for parents and children when a parent is ill. Click "Support and Resources." To learn more about cancer, or to get special information for teens; you can call to order a special booklet for teens whose parents have cancer or read it online at:

www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/when-your-parent-has-cancer-guide-for-teens

The Dougy Center

866-775-5683

<http://www.dougy.org/>

Information on grieving children, teens, and adults. Referrals to programs across the country and internationally that serve grieving children, teens, and their families.

Books for Children

Butterfly Kisses and Wishes on Wings: When someone you love has cancer...a hopeful, helpful book for kids. By E McVicker & N Hersh. This is a listen-to or read-aloud book for children. It is a resource that can be used to educate and support any child who is facing the cancer of a loved one. The story, as told through the eyes of a child, lends itself to a simple and clear understanding of cancer. It also teaches children to realize the power they have to be an active and integral part of a loved one's cancer journey.

Cancer. Gillie, Oliver. Appropriate for a child who wants "Just the facts." *Cancer* is thorough and understandable, with down-to-earth explanations of surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. (Grades 5 – 8).



Henry and the White Wolf. Karu, Tyler. It's not easy being a hero. For one courageous little hedgehog it means facing his darkest fears, such as the White Wolf. Or the uncertainty of change, like when all his quills fall out. In this inspiring tale about the journey back to health, a hedgehog named Henry clings to his good-luck stone, and, using all of his inner strength finds his way out of illness. Included for all little heros is a stone of their very own, a reminder of the strength that is always within them. An illustrated storybook – and poignant allegory – to help kids who are sick, or kids with friends who are sick, or kids whose parents or siblings or teachers are sick. (Ages 4 & up)

Hope the Bear. Lynnette Wilhardt, LCSW and Barbara Granoff, ACSW. This book will take you and your child through the cancer experience and explain the medical and emotional aspects of cancer and its treatment. Kids Connected, Laguna Hills, CA. To purchase contact Kids Connected at 800-899-2866 or www.kidsconnected.org

The Hope Tree: Kids Talk about Breast Cancer. By Laura Joffe Numeroff and Wendy Schlessel Harpham, M.D. The serious illness of a parent is challenging to children and families. Based on real situations, the authors have created a fictional support group. The group members are animals of different ages who talk about many universal issues that include: 'finding out', family meetings, and looking for the good amidst the bad. Beautiful illustrations bring these themes to life and support children to blend disappointment with hope. The vignettes offer tools and practical tips that will help children deal with frightening emotions and give them something positive to do to support their mother and the family as a whole. (Ages 5 – 10)

Life isn't Always a Day at the Beach. By Ganz High Five Publishing. A cartoon illustrated workbook for kids to color themselves to help kids learn and understand their feelings about their parent's cancer. Appropriate for ages 4 to 13. <http://kidsconnected.org/resources/>

The Kids in Mrs. Hildebrand's Class. Linda Dallman. A class of first graders learns that their teacher is diagnosed with cancer. They find ways to support her through her surgery and treatment. During the school year the children learn what helping, humor and hugs can do to help in the healing process. A good book to help jump start a difficult conversation with children. Trafford Publishing, Victoria, Canada. 2006. (For ages 9-12.)

****The Lemonade Club.*** Patricia Polacco. Everyone loves Miss Wichelman's fifth-grade class—especially best friends Traci and Marilyn. That's where they learn that when life hands you lemons, make lemonade! They are having a great year until Traci begins to notice some changes

in Marilyn. She's losing weight, and seems tired all the time. She has leukemia—and a tough road of chemotherapy ahead. It is not only Traci and Miss Wichelman who stand up for her, but in a surprising and unexpected turn, the whole fifth-grade class, who figures out a way to say we're with you. In true Polacco fashion, this book turns lemons into lemonade and celebrates amazing life itself. (Ages 6 & up.)

The Little Pink Books Maryann Makekau. Through unpretentious story lines and stick-art characters, this series radiates hope and courage during times of loss and uncertainty, while providing a pathway for communication and healing. Page by page, families, teachers and loved ones gain the insight and fortitude necessary to fight the fight together. The series includes: "When Your Mom Has Cancer;" "When Your Teacher Has Cancer"; "When Moms' Cancer Doesn't go Away." <http://www.foreverskimthemag.com/thelittlepinkbooks/index.php>

****Mommy's Cancer.*** By Ellen Meyer; Illustrated by Emelia BensonMeyer. Ellen has an extraordinary ability to capture the messages for children about the process of this illness and its treatment. She does this important task using a voice that (respectfully) represents how children actually experience their world -- having important serious matters interspersed with moments of curiosity and wonder as they naturally continue to grow, learn, and play. Ellen R. Meyer was diagnosed with stage IV colon cancer in 2007, when her daughter was two and a half years old and her son was four months old. Ellen wrote this true story to help her children understand and talk about what it was like to be "a kid whose mommy has cancer."

Moxie. Lynnette Wilhardt, Barbara Granoff, Harald Herrmann and Sarah Nance. Moxie, a blue raccoon, lives up to her name in this story about facing difficulty with spirit and courage. Moxie is an uplifting story for children. (Ages 3-11) Available through <http://kidskonnected.org/resources/>

****Nana, What's Cancer?*** By Beverlye Hayman Fead & Tessa Mae Hamermesh. "Nana, What's Cancer?" is a child-oriented answer to tough questions about the disease of cancer written by a grandmother-granddaughter team of experienced cancer survivors' family. Explains the basic answers to questions about cancer including who, what, when, where, why, and how. Framed in chapters as an ongoing dialogue between Nana and her granddaughter, "Nana, What's Cancer?" presents helpful, accurate answers and information that children can accept and understand. The love that permeates this jointly written book is a glowing testament to the courage of cancer survivors and their loved ones everywhere. A helpful glossary at the end



gives further definition to special medical or other terms. Helpful to children ages 6 and up and their parents and caretakers.

***NoWhere Hair.** By Sue Glader. The little girl in NOWHERE HAIR knows two things: Her mom's hair is not on her head anymore, so therefore it must be somewhere around the house. After searching the obvious places, the story reveals that her mother, although going through cancer treatment, is still silly, attentive, happy and yes, sometimes very tired and cranky. She learns that she didn't cause the cancer, can't catch it, and that Mommy still is very much up for the job of mothering. The book, written in rhyme, explains hats, scarves, wigs, going bald in public, and the idea of being nice to people who may look a little different than you. It ends with the idea that what is inside of us is far more important than how we look on the outside. For any parent or grandparent, NOWHERE HAIR offers a comfortable platform to explain something that is inherently very difficult. (Ages 3 – 8.)

Once Upon a Hopeful Night. By Risa S. Yaffe. "Once Upon a Hopeful Night" is a unique story that helps parents with cancer talk to their young children about their disease and treatment. It touches on many of the issues facing young children who have a parent with cancer, such as anger, sadness, fear and hope, and encourages parents and children to talk about these issues. "Once Upon a Hopeful Night" helps prepare children for what to expect, and offers reassurance they will be loved and cared for despite the parent's illness. The story is written in verse, a format that is familiar to children and comfortable for parents. Beautiful illustrations accompany the text and enhance the story. Appropriate for ages 3 to 10.

***Our Family Has Cancer Too!** Clifford, Christine. Providing comfort through the knowledge that "you are not alone," *Our Family Has Cancer, Too!* is an ideal gift for children whose families have been touched by cancer. A special "Questions to Ask" section invites kids to write down their questions for parents, doctors, teachers, and others. Additional worksheets inspire family members to draw and record their feelings for later discussion. Powerful "Stop and Discuss" suggestions throughout the book encourage dialogue between parents and children. The book also contains a glossary of the most common words kids might hear when someone in their family has cancer. (Appropriate for ages 7-12.)

***Our Mom Has Cancer.** Abigail and Adrienne Ackermann. Very simple book, written by two girls, ages 9 and 11, who share their thoughts and feelings concerning their mother's diagnosis with cancer. Follows the family's experiences throughout the various treatments. American Cancer Society, Atlanta, GA 2001. To order contact ACS at 800-227-2345.



(For children ages 5-12.)

Our Mom is Getting Better. Silver A., Silver E., Silver AR. Written for children whose parents are cancer survivors, this thoughtful and engaging book address important survivorship issues to help families move on after treatment ends. Containing a message of hope and healing, the topics include the possibility of recurrence, continued fatigue, pain, and other symptoms, exercise and diet, proper rest and sleep, and returning to work and social life. (Ages 4 & up)

****The Paper Chain.*** Claire Blake, Eliza Blanchard, Kathy Parkinson. The *Paper Chain* is a sensitive portrayal of how a parent’s diagnosis of cancer can affect a child. The fears and feelings of a child are communicated in a way that children can truly understand, and can help them cope during this difficult time. This book can help reassure not only children – but their parents as well.

****Punk Wig.*** Lori Ries. Narrated by a little boy whose mother has cancer, or what he calls “alien blobs inside her,” Punk Wig features a family who gets through a tough time with flying colors. The color in this case is bright orange, the color of Mom’s, which has spikes on top that look like candle flames. Ries tells the story with a light touch, leavening a scary subject with comic relief (mother and son trying on funny hairpieces before they decide upon Punk Wig). The appealing watercolors, set mostly against white backdrops, zero in on the people in the story, allowing children to see both a little bit of the mother’s struggle and the happiness and love the mother and child share. Grades K-3.

The Rainbow Feelings of Cancer A Book for Children Who Have a Loved One with Cancer. By Carrie Martin & Chia Martin. When Chia Martin was diagnosed with cancer, she found her daughter Carrie's artwork a catalyst to their communication. This beautiful, heart-warming book features Carrie's art and writing about the emotions evoked by her mother's illness. Describing her own fears, difficulties and hopes, Carrie doesn't tell her readers what to feel; rather, she gently invites them into her world, offering them an opportunity to speak, draw, or consider their own feelings. Children need to share their feelings and ask questions, especially in stressful times -- and this book subtly and warmly encourages conversation between children and those who love them. (Ages 4 & up.)

Sammy’s Mommy Has Cancer. Sherry Kohlenberg and Lauri Crow (Illustrator). For children ages 3-8 to help the child understand the side effects of cancer treatment and to ease the



child's fears about cancer. Provides a list of activities to involve the child in the parent's illness. Winner of the Rose Kushner Award of the AMA. Magination Press, Washington, DC. 1993.

Someone I Really Love has Cancer By Dana Cohn & L.E. Murray. A cartoon illustrated book for kids to color themselves that describes a boy named Charlie and his friends who help him to understand his feelings about his Mommy's cancer. Appropriate for ages 3 to 10. Available through kidskonnected: <http://kidskonnected.org/resources/>

****Tickles Tabitha's Cancer-Tankerous Mommy.*** Amelia Frahm. Tabitha's mom has cancer and she worries that she is not the same and will no longer play tickle Tabitha with her anymore. This book helps young children understand some of the changes a parent goes through with a cancer diagnosis including mood changes which can be difficult for children to understand. It is a realistic story of a family going through a serious illness without being scary and the illustrations help even the youngest children relate. Winner of the Benjamin Franklin Award. Nutcracker Publishing, Hutchinson, MN. 2001. (For children ages 4-8.)

What is Cancer Anyway? Explaining Cancer to Children of All Ages. Karen Carney. Written by a RN and clinical social worker, this Book 5 in the Barklay and Eve series, provides basic information about cancer, radiation and chemotherapy to children in a calm and reassuring manner. The story is told through the eyes of the family's two dogs, Barklay and Eve. Dragonfly Publications, Weathersfield, CT. 1998. (For children ages 4-8.)

****When Mommy Had a Mastectomy.*** Nancy Reuben Greenfield. How does a mother tell a daughter she has breast cancer? How can a child understand what a mastectomy and reconstruction are all about? 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. Pairing enchanting illustrations and an engaging story, "When Mommy Had a Mastectomy" is sure to be a treasured book that will help children and their parents through a difficult time and will provide a fond memory for families to reflect on and share after tragedy.

When Mommy Loses Her Hair: It Means the Medicine is Working. Cristine Cervellini-Calfo. Cancer can be devastating for a family. The big words that surround this disease and its treatment can be even more overwhelming for the young children affected. When Mommy Loses Her Hair is a story about Little Tony, a 4 year old boy who overhears his parents talking



about his Mommy's cancer, and what is involved in her treatment. Through patient conversation, Daddy helps Little Tony understand cancer, and how it will impact their family. By cleverly relating the steps involved in cancer treatment to a popular children's activity, Cervellini-Calfo simplifies complex vocabulary, and delicately suggests how a child can get involved with a family member's care. Infused with hope and faith, *When Mommy Loses Her Hair* is an effective approach to understanding cancer for the entire family. Cervellini-Calfo has created a fundamental tool to help children and grown-ups alike for years to come.

When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness. By Marge Heegaard. A cartoon illustrated workbook for kids to color themselves to help kids understand their feelings when their parent is ill.

****The Year My Mother Was Bald.*** Ann Speltz and Kate Sternberg (Illustrator). The tale of a fictional family's journey, as seen through the daughter's eyes. Written in the form of a journal by a girl, whose mother is undergoing treatment for cancer. Contains drawings, photos and useful information. Offers reassurance to other children of the same age, who are going through a similar circumstance. Magination Press, Washington, DC. 2002.
(For children ages 8-13.)

Booklets & Pamphlets

Because Someone I Love Has Cancer: Kid's Activity Book. American Cancer Society. A spiral bound book offering creative activities for children ages 6-12 to encourage the expression of feelings and coping skills as they deal with uncertainty and change. Removable Parent Guide. ACS, Atlanta, GA. 2002. To order contact ACS at 800-227-2345 or www.cancer.org

It Helps to Have Friends: When Mom or Dad Has Cancer. American Cancer Society. A booklet for grammar school-age children that addresses common fears and the social and emotional aspects children face when a parent has cancer. American Cancer Society. To order contact ACS at 800-227-2345.

Kemo Shark. H. Elizabeth King. A 16-page illustrated pamphlet that uses a shark character to help explain a parent's chemotherapy to children ages 4-10. Available in English and Spanish. Kidscope, Inc., Atlanta, GA. 1996. To request a free copy call 404-892-1437 or visit www.kidscope.org Electronic version can be downloaded at web site.

When Kids Ask. A pamphlet that offers assurance to children of all ages that they are not



responsible for their parent's illness. Cancer Family Care, Cincinnati, OH. Individual copies at no charge. To order contact Cancer Family Care at 513-731-3346 or www.cancerfamilycare.org

Books and Other Publications for Parents

Please note that the titles followed by an asterisk (*) are books that are available for check-out in our library at HCBHP. Others may be available for rental online through "Bookswim" www.bookswim.com, or for purchase at www.amazon.com. Please note that we are also working with local libraries bookstores to carry more of the titles listed here.

* **When kids ask 10 tips for parents coping with cancer in the family**
<http://www.cancerfamilycare.org> (Look under Publications)

A Tiny Boat at Sea: How to Help Children Who Have a Parent Diagnosed with Cancer.

By Izetta Smith.

This insightful book teaches us how to help children who have had a parent or family member who has been diagnosed with cancer. When a parent is diagnosed with cancer, the illness and treatment can be stressful for the whole family. Parents almost always express the concern for the well-being of their children. This booklet is easy to use and touches on how to support children without burying the information in pages of explanations.

Can I Still Kiss You? Answering Your Children's Questions about Cancer. Neil

Russell. Tells the story of a father with two sons ages 11 and 13. Chronicles the life changing impact on the father and his family. Offers a section that is an interactive journal to facilitate conversations between parents and their children. Contains a chapter by chapter series of questions and answers addressing diagnosis, symptoms and treatment that is understandable to children. Health Communications, Inc., Deerfield Beach, FL. 2001.

Cancer in the Family: Helping Children Cope with a Parent's Illness. Sue Heiney, Joan Hermann, Katherine Bruss and Joy Fincannon. A practical guide for helping children cope when a parent is ill. The authors bring expertise from the fields of psychology, social work and nursing to provide information on children's developmental stages from infancy through teenage years, and offer suggestions for helping children cope and



understand in all stages of development. Includes help for addressing the needs of singleparent households, non-traditional families and households with special problems. Useful Resource Guide and removable workbook section for kids. American Cancer Society, Atlanta, GA. 2001.

* ***Helping Your Children Cope with Your Cancer: A Guide for Parents and Families (2nd Edition)***. Peter van Dernoot (Ed). Contains 28 essays written by professionals, parents and children, offering support, encouragement and useful suggestions, including information children's support groups. W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., Long Island City, NY. 2006.

* ***How to Help Children through a Parent's Serious Illness***. Kathleen McCue. A comprehensive book offering practical advice to assist families in helping children at different developmental levels cope through a parent's illness. St. Martin's Press, New York, NY. 1996.

* ***Mom's Don't Get Sick***. By Pat & Ben Brack. This slim volume tells the story of a mother's fight against breast cancer from both her point of view and that of her (then) 10-year-old son. In alternating narratives, Pat and son Ben discuss their feelings about her mortality, her struggle through surgery, and all the times in between. Their ups and downs, their reaching out and withdrawal, and their happiness and despair are all described. This is a valuable book because it can help the reader see the real-life struggle to survive from a family perspective.

Raising an Emotionally Healthy Child When a Parent is Sick. Paula Rauch, MD and Anna Muriel, MD. Two Harvard psychiatrists offer advice on how to provide for children's emotional security when a parent is seriously ill. McGraw-Hill, Columbus, OH. 2005.

When a Parent Has Cancer: A Guide to Caring for Your Children/Becky and the Worry Cup. Wendy S. Harpham. A 2-book package, written by a physician who is also a parent and cancer survivor. Outlines approaches for preventing and responding to common problems, and offers advice on how to help children deal with anxiety. Important points for parents in bold for easy reading. Includes a chapter on teens. ***Becky and the Worry Cup*** is an accompanying story book for children ages 8-12. Harper Collins, New York, NY. 2004.