Being a Super Mom or Dad with Cancer

Being super tired, super irritable, super forgetful and nauseous challenges even the most attentive of parents. But, with a few adjustments, you’ll be able to overcome even these challenges.

Sometimes, the best way thing for you and your kid is finding another loved one who can fill the gaps of the things you can’t do, right now. Can your partner arrange to come home a little earlier each day from work to have dinner with the kids? Can your mom or dad stay with you for a short time to help out?

Be honest with your self, look ahead and think about what you can realistically do to care for your kids throughout treatment. Make a Plan A, B and C for childcare.

And, if you child is old enough to understand, explain to them why you’ve had to make changes to their day-to-day.

With extra help with your child, you’ll be less tired and more patient. You’ll be able to act in that loving and caring way that makes your kid feel supported, stable and safe.

Even if physically unwell, you may be able to manage some quality time with your kids. You may even be able to introduce some new, fun activities:

- Reading Together – or “cozy corner” as we call it – is great togetherness time! Check out Light One Little Candle (lightonelittlecandle.org) to find out if free books are available at your hospital to take home, or sign up to a local library for a never-ending supply of books.

- Art projects – try anything from coloring, drawing and painting to cutting and pasting to making something new! Art can be unconnected to your cancer journey. Or, it may be tied-in.
Example 1: A “Worry” Jar

Make a “worry jar” with pebbles that represent your kid’s worries. Name and talk about them, place them in the jar in a special place and introduce the idea that the jar and pebbles, like your kid’s worries, can be named, "touched" aka explored and then put to the side for awhile. Your child may love the idea of having more control of scary worries in his or her mind! It can work with other difficult feelings like anxiety too.

Example 2: Charting Treatment

Make something that helps you chart treatment with your child. It can be calendar that marks off milestones with treats you can share together. It can be growing a plant, or making a terrarium, at the onset of treatment that you both can check on. Growth of something new is a fun way to illustrate how far you come – and it provides plenty of opportunity for analogies to your own journey to new and improved health.

If you’re not the creative type, a quick web search will give you plenty of ideas. Alternatively, you can ask your treatment center to speak to a supportive care professional for more ideas on things to do with your kids.