Recommended Books for Families Facing Cancer

Books for Adults about Helping Children Through a Loved One’s Cancer Diagnosis


*Helping Your Children Cope with Your Cancer* by Peter VanDerNoot (Hatherleigh Press, 2006).

*How to Help Children Through a Parent's Serious Illness: Supportive, Practical Advice from a Leading Child Life Specialist* by Kathleen McCue (St. Martin's Griffin, 2011).


*Cancer in Young Adults: Through a Parent's Eyes* by Anne Grinyer (Open University Press, 2002).

Books for Teens about Having a Parent with Cancer


My Parent Has Cancer and it Really Sucks by Marc Silver (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2013).

When Your Parent Has Cancer (National Cancer Institute, 2005).


Love Sick by Harald Hermann (Recipe for Success, 2018).

Books for Children about Having a Parent with Cancer

Understanding Cancer

Cancer Party!: Explain Cancer, Chemo, and Radiation to Kids in a Totally Non-Scary Way by Sara Olsher (Independently Published, 2019)


Medikidz (line of comic books written by doctors about different cancers and treatments)

Our Family Has Cancer, Too by Christine Clifford (University of MN, 2002). Ages 9-12.


Stickers on Her Bald Head: Explaining Cancer and Chemo Hair Loss to Children in a Fun Way by Chelsey Gomez (Independently Published, 2021)

What Happens When Someone I Love Has Cancer? By Sara Olsher (Mighty + Bright, 2019). Ages 4-10.

Feelings and Cancer


Dads with Cancer

My Dad and the Dragon by Montserrat Coughlin Kim (When a Dragon Comes, 2022).

My Dad Has Cancer by Lauren Faye Uribe (Xilbris, 2013). Ages 4-8.

My Dad is a Cancer Fighting Hero by Chelsey Gomez (Independently Published, 2022). Ages 3-6.

Our Dad is Getting Better by Alex, Emily & Anna Rose Silver (American Cancer Society, 2007). Ages 4-8. *Also Our Mom is Getting Better version*

The Year My Dad Went Bald: A Tale of Cancer, Chemo, and Dealing with a Cold Head by Brian Kraft (Bang, 2011).

Moms with Cancer

BK’s Mommy Has Breast Cancer by Marquita Goodluck (Independently Published, 2018). Ages 2-12.

Butterfly Kisses and Wishes on Wings by Ellen McVicker (Ellen McVicker, 2006). Ages 4-8. *(Also in Spanish)*

Cancer Hates Kisses by Jessica Reid Sliwerski (Dial Books for Young Readers, 2017). Ages 3-5. *(Also in Spanish)*


Mama's Afro is a Soldier Too: Mom's Cancer Diagnosis Explained by N.M. Charles (Bowker, 2021). Ages 4-8.


Mom Has Cancer! (Let's Talk About It) by Jennifer Moore-Mallinos (Barron's Educational Series, 2008). Ages 4-8. (Also in Spanish)


Mommy is a Cancer Warrior by Alex Bount (Independently Published, 2021).

The Monster in Mummy: De-Monstify Cancer for Children by Donia Youssef (Tiny Angel Press Ltd, 2019).

My Mommy is a Cancer Warrior by Jina Giusto (Women Are Lit, 2021).

Nowhere Hair by Sue Glader (Thousand Words Press, 2013). Ages 4-8. (Also in Spanish)

Our Mom Has Cancer (American Cancer Society, 2001). Ages 4-8.


Punk Wig by Lori Ries (Boyds Mills Press, 2008). Ages 4-8.


You Are the Best Medicine by Julie Aigner Clark (Julie Aigner Clark, 2010). Ages 4-8.

Metastatic Cancer


When Mom's Cancer Doesn't Go Away: Helping Children Cope with Loss and Beyond by Maryann Makekau (Makekau, 2010). Ages 4-8.
Books for Children about Having a Parent with Cancer

El cáncer odia los besos (Cancer Hates Kisses) by Jessica Reid Sliwerski (Dial Books for Young Readers, 2017). Ages 3-5.

Hablando con mis amigos de la Casa del Árbol sobre el Cáncer (Talking with my Treehouse Friends about Cancer: An Activity Book for Children of Parents with Cancer) by Peter R. van Dernoot (Fulcrum, 2007). Ages 6-12.

Besos de Mariposa y Deseos con Alas-Cuando (Butterfly Kisses and Wishes on Wings) by Ellen Vicker (McVicker and Hersh, LLC, 2011)

¿Y el pelo? (NoWhere Hair) by Sue Glader (Thousand Words Press, 2011)


Activity Books for Children about Having a Parent with Cancer

Life Isn't Always A Day At the Beach: A Book for All Children Whose Lives Are Affected by Cancer by Pam Ganz (Pam Ganz and Tobi Scofield, 1996).


Books for Children to Help with Separation


Rabbityness by Jo Empson (Child's Play, 2012).
Books for Children to Help Strengthen Resilience


*I Can Handle It!* by Laurie Wright (Laurie Wright, 2017). Ages 5-8.

*Nothing Stays the Same, But That’s Okay* by Sara Olsher (Mighty + Bright, 2021). Ages 2-11.

*Ruby Finds a Worry* by Tom Percival (Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2021)


Books for Children to Foster Mindfulness

*A Handful of Quiet: Happiness in Four Pebbles* by Thich Nhat Hanh (Plum Blossom Books). Ages 5+


*Breathe Like a Bear: 30 Mindful Moments for Kids to Feel Calm and Focused Anytime, Anywhere* by Kira Willey (Rodale Kids, 2017). Ages 4-10.


*What Does it Mean to Be Present?* by Rana DiOrio (Little Pickle Press, 2010). Ages 4-8.

*Zen Shorts* by Jon Muth (Scholastic Press, 2005)

Books for Children to Help Understand and Express Emotion

*B is for Breathe: The ABC’s of Coping with Fussy and Frustrating Feelings* by Dr. Melissa Munro Boyd (Independently Published, 2019). Ages 5-8.


The Boy with Big, Big Feelings by Brittany Winn Lee (Beaming Books, 2019)


Let My Colors Go by Courney Filigenzi (Independently Published, 2022).


Activity Books for Children to Help Understand and Express Emotion

Drawing Together to Learn about Feelings by Marge Eaton Heegaard (Fairview Press, 2003).


Books for Children who Have Experienced Trauma


Books for Adults to Help Children/Teens Cope with Grief

*Guiding Your Child Through Grief* by James P. Emswiler (Bantam, 2000).


*Healing Children's Grief* by Grace Christ (Oxford University Press, 2000).


*How Do We Tell the Children? A Step-by-Step Guide for Helping Children Two to Teen Cope When Someone Dies* by Dan Schaefer & Christine Lyons (Newmarket Press, 2001).


Books for Teens about Grief


*You Are Not Alone: Teens Talk about Life after the Loss of a Parent* by Lynne Hughes (Scholastic, 2005).

*Weird is Normal When Teenagers Grieve* by Jenny Lee Wheeler (Quality of Life, 2010).

Books for Children about Death, Dying and Grief


Death is Stupid by Anastasia Higginbotham (Dottir Press, 2020). Ages 4-12.


Everett Anderson's Goodbye by Lucille Clifton (Square Fish, 1988). Ages 5-8.

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf by Leo Buscaglia (Slack, Inc., 1982). Ages 4 and up.


Where do they Go? By Julia Alvarez (Seven Stories Press, 2016) Ages 3-6


Grief Squad: Mom’s Sky by Susan Repa (Independently Published, 2021).


Lifetimes: A Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children by Bryan Mellonie (Bantam, 1983). Ages 5 and up.


Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing after Loss by Pat Schwiebert (Grief Watch, 2005). Ages 8 +


Zayaquann's Story: From Trauma to Triumph by Monica Boddie (Transformation Nation Press, 2020).

Activity Books for Children about Death, Dying and Grief


Our Story: A Memory Book for ___________ by Mel Erickson (Independently Published, 2021).

