



Wonders & Worries

Professional support for children
through a parent's illness.

We will, together.

Recommended Books by Topic and Age Appropriateness

Books for Parents

- [How to Help Children Through a Parent's Serious Illness](#) by Kathleen McCue
McCue offers a broader view of parenting children through any parental illness and provides guidance for parents on supporting their children and helping them cope with the many challenges and changes illness brings.
- [A Tiny Boat at Sea](#) by Izetta Smith, M.A., CGT
This book is for parents, caregivers, and professionals helping children in their adjustments to the cancer diagnosis of an adult family member.
- [Cancer in the Family](#) by Sue Heiney, Joan Hermann, Katherine Bruss, & Joy Fincannon
A comprehensive book published through the American Cancer Society, this publication offers information and activities for parents to help children cope.
- [When a Parent has Cancer: A Guide to Caring for Your Children](#) by Wendy Schlessel Harpham, M.D.
This book for families offers clear, direct, and sympathetic advice to parents trying to raise healthy children while fighting a potentially life-threatening illness.

Books About Illness in the Family

Preschool Children: 2-6 Years Old

- [Sammy's Mom Has Cancer](#) by Sherry Kohlenberg
Sherry Kohlenberg was a mother of an 18-month old son when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. This story helps young children understand and accept the changes in their lives when a parent is diagnosed with cancer.

School-age Children: 5-10 Years Old

- [Butterfly Kisses and Wishes on Wings](#) by Ellen McVicker
Ellen McVicker shares the story of a young boy who learns about his mother's cancer and finds hope and strength.
- [The Hope Tree](#) by Laura Numeroff & Wendy Harpham
This book is a compilation of stories from children whose mothers have breast cancer. The children describe life in their family from the time of diagnosis through treatment.
- [The Rainbow Feelings of Cancer](#) by Carrie Martin & Chia Martin
This book invites children to share their thoughts, feelings, and questions when a life-threatening illness has touched a parent or someone they love. Written and illustrated by a mother and daughter, it is appropriate for preschool to elementary-age children.

School-age Children: 5-10 Years Old Continued:

- [Our Mom Has Cancer](#) by Abigail & Adrienne Ackermann
Sisters Abigail and Adrienne Ackermann, ages 11 and 13, describe what it was like for them when their mother was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent surgery and chemotherapy.
- [When Eric's Mom Fought Cancer](#) by Judith Vigna
Judith Vigna shares the story of a young boy's ski trip when he feels angry and afraid about his mother's diagnosis with breast cancer.
- [Nowhere Hair](#) by Sue Glader
This story focuses on hair loss in a fun, non-threatening way. Using rhyme and colorful illustrations, it provides honest information about cancer and hair loss.

Pre-Teens and Young Teens: 10-13 Years Old

- [Can I Still Kiss You?](#) by Neil Russell
In a question-and-answer format, Neil Russell deals with questions frequently asked by children and adolescents about cancer. It is both an informative narrative and an interactive journal.
- [The Year My Mother Was Bald](#) by Ann Speltz
Written as a diary from a 13-year-old girl's perspective during the year her mother went through cancer treatment, this book provides a helpful teaching tool for discussing cancer cells, surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. It includes separate teaching pages appropriate for pre-teens and teens.
- [Nana, What's Cancer?](#) by Beverlye Hyman Fead
This tale captures the questions of a young teen girl as she asks her grandmother about her cancer. The book provides honest answers to her questions and addresses questions related to recurrent cancer.

Teens: 13 Years and Older

- [Both Sides Now](#) by Ruth Pennebaker
As the control of Liza's once predictable high school life unravels, she sees her mother's courage facing recurring breast cancer in a whole new light.

Books about Stress and Coping

These books introduce children and teens to the concept of stress and the mind, body and spirit connections. They lead children and teens, along with adults, through a variety of coping strategies including belly breathing, positive self-talk, positive imagery, aromatherapy and acupuncture.

- [Don't Pop Your Cork on Monday](#) by Adolf J. Moser
Ages 4 - 10 years
Explores the causes and effects of stress and offers children practical approaches and techniques for dealing with stress in daily life.
- [A Terrible Thing Happened](#) by Margaret M. Holmes & Sasha J. Mudlaff
Ages 4 – 8 years
This book follows Sherman after he sees something terrible happen. He becomes anxious and angry, but when a caring adult helps him talk about these emotions, he feels better.
- [Be the Boss of Your Stress](#) by Timothy Culbert & Rebecca Kajander
Ages 5 years+
Speaks to when your body, mind, and spirit are balanced – or working together – they can help you stay healthy and positive, even when you are dealing with stress.

Books about End of Life

- [Wherever You Are, My Love Will Find You](#) by Nancy Tillman
Ages 2 - 10 years
This is a beautiful story about how love is something that we can carry with us always, no matter how near, far, young or old we are. Tillman focuses on a parent's unending love for their child.
- [The Kissing Hand for Chester Raccoon](#) by Audrey Penn & Barbara Leonard Gibson
Ages 2 - 10 years
This book tells the story of a baby raccoon who does not want to leave his mother for the first day of school. His mother shares the secret of the Kissing Hand with him so he can find comfort every day.
- [Gentle Willow: A Story for Children About Dying](#) by Joyce C. Mills
Ages 4 - 10 years
This is a comforting story about a tender-spirited tree who is dying, and her relationship with her friends in the forest. A healing metaphor, it addresses feelings of sadness, love, disbelief and anger, and provides children with a transformational way of viewing death and dying. This is a helpful book for beginning conversations with children about a loved one who is facing the end of their life.
- [A Teen's Guide to Coping: When a Loved One is Sick and Preparing to Die](#) by Fairview Hospice
Ages 13 - 18 years
Fairview Hospice's booklet is for teenagers who have a loved one who is very sick and facing the end of their life. It provides answers to common questions facing teens, focuses on positive ways to cope, and provides information about what to expect in terms of feelings and grief. The booklet also provides space for teens to write and draw to express their emotions and capture memories.
- [Dying to Know: Straight Talk About Death and Dying](#) by Tani Bahti
Adults
This book is for adults who are facing the end of their life – and for their caregivers. Easy to read in short bursts, the book is filled with valuable information about end-of-life care. A nurse who has worked in hospice care for many years, Bahti honestly and gently answers important questions about the dying process and teaches us how to gently let life go. Readers have found comfort and peace in this practical book.

Books about Bereavement

- [I Miss You: A First Look at Death](#) by Pat Thomas & Leslie Harker
Ages 3 - 6 years
This book helps young children understand that death is a natural complement to life, and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have following a loved one's death.
- [Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children](#) by Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen
Ages 3 - 10 years
This sensitive book is a useful tool in explaining to children that death (including the loss of pets) is a part of life and that, eventually, all living things reach the end of their own special lifetimes.
- [When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death](#) by Laurie Brown & Marc Brown
Ages 5 - 10 years
This guide explains what it means to be alive and what it means to die. Appropriate for preschool- and elementary-age children, Laurie and Marc Brown also cover the importance of the funeral and other aspects of loss, including feelings that young children may experience at these times.
- [What's Heaven?](#) by Maria Shriver & Sandra Speidel
Ages 5 - 13 years
Through a grandmother's death, Maria Shriver and Sandra Speidel discuss how parents can start talking to their children about death.
- [Badger's Parting Gifts](#) by Susan Varley
Ages 5 - 13 years
In this book, animals share memories of their friend Badger, after he dies. The special things the animals learned from Badger continue to live on through them.
- [The Brightest Star](#) by Kathleen Hemery & Ron Boldt
Ages 5 - 13 years
Tells the story of a little girl grieving the death of her mother. She finds comfort in looking for the brightest star in the sky to remind her of her mother's love.
- [Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins](#) by Enid Samuel-Traisman
Ages 13 - 18 years
This journal allows teens to creatively write letters, note lyrics, create songs and finish conversations with the loved one who died.
- [Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss](#) by Pat Schwiebert & Chuck DeKlyen
Ages 13 +
In this book, heroine Grand has suffered a big loss in her life and is cooking up her own unique batch of Tear Soup for her grief process.