



Wonders & Worries

Professional support for children
through a parent's illness.

We will, together.

Recommended Books

Books About a Parent's Illness

Adults

- [How to Help Children Through a Parent's Serious Illness](#) by Kathleen McCue, M.A., C.C.L.S. & Ron Bonn 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.
This book is for parents, caregivers, and professionals helping children in their adjustments to the cancer diagnosis of an adult family member.
- [Cancer in Our Family](#) by Sue Heiney Ph.D., RN & Joan Hermann, MSW, LSW (2013)
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 S. Harpham, M.D. (2004) This book for families offers clear, direct, and sympathetic advice to parents trying to raise healthy children while fighting a potentially life-threatening illness.
- [What Do I Tell The Kids?](#) by Cancer Support Community
A free PDF guide overviewing children's understanding through different age groups, how to talk about cancer and tips for answering common questions.
- [Kids Worry Too](#) by The Nebraska Medical Center
A free PDF guide for adults to help children understand a hospitalization. Interventions to increase coping and examples of feelings and behaviors that may be expressed during a hospitalization.

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.
- [Let My Colors Out](#) by Courtney Filigenzi
Helps children identify their feelings and form a rainbow of hope through a parents diagnosis. This book helps children realize they are not alone and can help open up channels of communication between parents and their children.

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. Can be used with children as young as 4.
- **[When Mommy Had a Mastectomy](#)** by Nancy Reuben Greenfield
A children's book that explains in a simple and clear manner what a mastectomy and reconstruction are all about. 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.
- **[The Hope Tree](#)** by Laura Numeroff & Wendy Harpham, M.D.
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.
- **[Why Does Mommy Hurt?](#)** by Elizabeth Christy
A young boy shares his journey learning about Mom's illness. This story puts the power into the hands of children learning about coping and understanding an illness. This book works for a wide variety of illnesses associated with chronic pain such as fibromyalgia and autoimmune disease.
- **[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.
- **[Someone You Know Has MS](#)** by Martha King
A free PDF book about Michael and his Mother who has MS. An in depth explanation of Multiple Sclerosis, coping, and adapting to changes after a diagnosis.
- **[When Pete's Dad Got Sick](#)** by Kathleen Long Bostrom
A story about a dad who has an illness that impacts his energy level and the use of his legs. He uses a cane and a wheelchair. The illness is never named and the book could apply to a variety of chronic conditions including multiple sclerosis, chronic fatigue etc. The story does have a Christian focus and references prayer, God and the Bible but the pages with Christian references could be skipped.

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 H. Fead & Tessa M. Hamermesh
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.
- [My Parent Has Cancer and It Really Sucks](#) by Maya Silver
Written by 15 year-old Maya whose Mother was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2011. Provides practical guidance including how to talk about the diagnosis, outlets for stress, friends, school and therapy.

Books About Stress and Coping

School-age Children: 5-10 Years Old

- [**Don't Pop Your Cork on Mondays!**](#) by Adolf J. Moser
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
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
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.
- [**Moody Cow Meditates**](#) by Kerry Lee MacLean
Introduces children to a fun playful way of meditation and learning how to let go of frustrations.

Books About End of Life

Adults

- [Dying to Know: Straight Talk About Death and Dying](#) by Tani Bahti
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.
- [What Will I Tell The Children](#) by The Nebraska Medical Center
Free PDF pamphlet about helping a child cope with a death. Goes through different age stages and their understanding of death with interventions to help increase processing and understanding.

Preschool Children: 2-6 Years Old

- [Wherever You Are, My Love Will Find You](#) by Nancy Tillman
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
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.
- [The Invisible String](#) by Patrice Karst
A story that teaches of the tie that really binds. The Invisible String reaches from heart to heart helping overcome loneliness or separation.

School-age Children: 5-10 Years Old

- [Gentle Willow: A Story for Children About Dying](#) by Joyce C. Mills
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.

Teens: 13 Years and Older

- [A Teen's Guide to Coping: When a Loved One is Sick and Preparing to Die by Fairview Hospice](#)
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.

Books About Loss and Bereavement

Adults

- [Men Don't Cry... Women Do: Transcending Gender Stereotypes of Grief](#) by Kenneth J. Doka & Terry L. Martin

Emphasizes many ways to cope with grief and offers readers a refreshing change from the popular gender stereotypes of grief. Looks at grief patterns and theories of grief, patterns of coping that may influence grief and interventions on how to be effective with different types of grievers.

Preschool Children: 2-6 Years Old

- [I Miss You: A First Look at Death](#) by Pat Thomas
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.

School Age Children: 5-13 Years Old

- [How I Feel: A Coloring Book for Grieving Children](#) by Alan D. Wolfelt Ph.D.
Wolfelt's coloring book for children explores many of the feelings grieving children often experience and the simple text accompanying the drawings provides grieving children with words to describe their new, sometimes scary feelings.
- [Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children](#) by Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen
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
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
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
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
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.

Teens: 13 Years and Older

- [Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins: A Journal for Teenagers Experiencing a Loss](#) by Enid Traisman
This journal allows teens to creatively write letters, pen 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
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.

Books About Parenting

- [**The Explosive Child**](#) by Ross W. Greene, Ph.D.
Explosive kids are lacking some crucial skills in the domains of flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem solving, and they require a different approach to parenting. Throughout this compassionate, insightful, and practical book, Dr. Greene provides a new conceptual framework for understanding their difficulties, based on research in the neurosciences.
- [**Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child**](#) by John Gottman, Ph.D.
This book is a guide to teaching children to understand and regulate their emotional world.
- [**Parenting from the Inside Out**](#) by Dan Siegel & Mary Hartzell
In *Parenting from the Inside Out*, child psychiatrist Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., and early childhood expert Mary Hartzell, M.Ed., explore the extent to which our childhood experiences shape the way we parent.
- [**The 5 Love Languages of Children**](#) by Gary Chapman & Ross Campbell
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.
- [**The 5 Love Languages of Teenagers**](#) by Gary Chapman
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.
- [**Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain**](#) by Daniel J. Siegel
Dr. Siegel shows parents how to turn one of the most challenging developmental periods in their children's lives into one of the most rewarding.