

Talking with your children about breast cancer

Breast Cancer Care is the UK's leading provider of information, practical assistance and emotional support for anyone affected by breast cancer. Every year we respond to over two million requests for support and information about breast cancer or breast health concerns. All our services are free.

We are committed to campaigning for better treatment and support for people with breast cancer and their families.

For more information visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk or call the Breast Cancer Care helpline free on 0808 800 6000 (for Typetalk prefix 18001).



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A large print version of this booklet can be downloaded from our website, www.breastcancercare.org.uk. It is also available in Braille on request. Call 0845 092 0808 for more information.



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Introduction

Around a third of those diagnosed with breast cancer in the UK each year have school age children living at home. So when there is a diagnosis of breast cancer in the family many parents find themselves asking the question 'What are we going to tell the children?'

We know that children are less anxious if they know what's happening, and that it can be less frightening for them to know what is going on even if they don't fully understand. So, even though you may find it difficult, in most cases talking with your children about your breast cancer will help them and you.

This booklet explains what children can generally understand at different ages about a serious illness like cancer and how they may respond to the news that you have breast cancer. It doesn't tell you exactly what to say to your children because every family is different. But it will give you some ideas about how to tell them and what other parents' experiences have been.

In this booklet we don't cover talking with your children if you have secondary breast cancer. Some of the information may be useful, but there are other good resources available to help you in this situation. You can find out more about useful organisations and books in our booklet on **Secondary breast cancer**.

Although we mostly refer to 'mothers' throughout the text, the booklet is also intended for fathers and may be helpful for any adult who wants to talk with children about breast cancer.

Telling your children

Many mothers might want to put off telling their children they have breast cancer or even avoid it altogether because they are afraid of upsetting them or afraid of getting upset in front of them. They may also be worried about being asked difficult questions, such as 'are you going to die?' But children always know when something is upsetting or worrying a parent. Even if you try to hide it, it is likely to show in your face and your voice, the way you talk to them and behave with them, and the way that others treat you.

Children are very quick to pick up on secrets. If they feel left out they may think they have done something to upset you or they may make up their own story about what is happening, which may well be far worse than the truth. They may not tell you they are worried, they may not know what's going on inside themselves. But the fear and uncertainty could have a damaging effect on their behaviour, their schoolwork, and their friendships. They need to be able



'I told them I'd been diagnosed with breast cancer but that it was treatable and that I'd tell them more as and when I found out. I told them they would hear lots of cancer stories, some good, some bad, but they should take these with a pinch of salt as everyone is different. I said if they wanted to know anything they just had to ask and I'd always be honest with them and they didn't have to worry about me hiding things from them.'

Moira, mother of Vicki and Lisa, 16 and 14 at her diagnosis

'We told them on the day of diagnosis both times, we were both there and told them together. As we were both so shocked and upset they would have guessed and we have never had secrets from them.' Jayne, mother of Eleanor and Alfie, aged 7 and 2 at her first diagnosis and 9 and 5 at her second

'I actually didn't use the word cancer for a couple of months. I said that my boob was poorly and I had an operation to take all the insides out. They needed to give me medicine to flush any baddies away. It might make me sick and my hair might fall out.' Amanda, mother of Andrew, Calum and Emily, aged 9, 7 and 3 at her diagnosis

to trust you, and being honest with them helps them to do that. Keeping secrets may also be tiring for you, just at a time when you need all your energy to help you get better. There is also a risk that if you don't tell them, they will find out some other way.

Who might tell them

'Having been through it and looking back, we are glad we were so open about everything. My husband and I told the girls together. They were happy to speak with us about any aspect of breast cancer and never felt they couldn't approach us at any time.' Moria

In most cases information about your breast cancer will be best coming from you and your partner or another close relative. Children seem to be able to handle difficult news best if it is given by someone they love and trust. But if you're finding it difficult, or circumstances don't allow, it might help to get someone else you and your children know well to be with you.

'We were snuggled up on the sofa and I think I just said that the doctor at the hospital had said that I had a poorly boobah (his word for breasts) and needed to have an operation on it. I was deliberately matter of fact and he wasn't at all upset. It hadn't come of out the blue as he had been aware that I was having it checked. I was careful not to give him too much information at once. We kind of drip fed him information over time.' Emma, mother of Sam, aged 6 at her diagnosis



'Including his dad and his grandmother did make things easier. They spoke to him at length when I was not around. I'm not sure exactly what they said but I knew he would have them to turn to if he ever needed anything.' Sian, mother of Elliott, aged 12 at her diagnosis

When to tell them

Most women talk to their partner, close friends or relatives about the possibility of breast cancer when they first notice something wrong or go and see their GP (local doctor) or breast specialist. But they tend to wait until later to tell their children. Some tell them after tests have confirmed they have breast cancer and a few may wait until after surgery.

'I said that I had a bad bit inside my chest and it had to be cut out. I said that I was just the same and how much I loved her. Also that for a while I would need to cuddle her from my right side - no jumping on top of me!' Gillian, mother of Chloe, aged 7 at her diagnosis



'I told them while we were doing some simple craft activity together. I thought that it would be easier for me and them to do it in a matter of fact way. They asked me how long I might be in hospital and said "poor mummy". My youngest gave me a cuddle and we all carried on with our cutting out. I found this easier for all of us than a more formal "please sit down, I've got something to say".'

Mary, mum of Faye and Rosie, aged 9 and 6 at her diagnosis

'Elliott was aware I had found a lump. Deep down I knew something was potentially wrong so I made him aware of all the possibilities connected to my treatment including disruption to our lifestyle and income. When I was first diagnosed this was the most scary and unsure moment of my life, I just wanted it to go away. Elliott remained positive all through.' Sian

Clearly, there are no set rules and a lot will depend on the age of the children and how you usually talk to them about health and other problems in the family. But the longer you leave telling them something, the more likely your children are to realise that all is not well, and to start worrying and guessing what it might be.

Obviously, it's an emotional time. Your children are likely to see you upset from time to time over the next few weeks or months and this allows them to feel the same way. However, if you can be calm and confident when you tell them about your cancer, even if you don't feel it inside, it may help your children feel less upset or panicky.

Finding the right words

What you decide to tell your children will depend on a number of different things. You may be a family that talks very openly about everything, or you may come from a background or culture where intimate or serious things are not talked about, or are kept between adults. You may talk much more easily to one of your children than to another. And your children's ages and characters will make a difference to what they understand and how they react.

Many people find it helpful to discuss what they plan to say with their partner or a friend before talking with their children. Or you may want to involve your breast care nurse in this discussion. Practising the kind of wording you want to use beforehand also helps. The best approach is to keep things simple and see what questions your children ask. It's important not to make things up, as the children will remember what you say even though you may not.

One of the most difficult things for many adults is using the word cancer because it has so many negative associations. This is not necessarily true for children, who may simply accept that it is the name for what is wrong with you and may have overheard this word used in the family anyway.

If you can, it is best to use the word cancer from the beginning, and to explain it in language that your children understand. For example, the word cancer becomes less frightening for everyone if it is described as cells that have grown faster than other cells in the body.

'We mentioned breast cancer early on in our discussions and explained that this was what the doctors thought was wrong with mummy's sore bit. I'm not sure if she had heard of cancer before this.' Dawn, mother of Melissa, aged 7 at her diagnosis

'The eldest, Andrew, asked me when a cancer research advert was on the telly, would I die? I replied hopefully not as I had lots of medicine and as far as the doctors knew the cancer was cut out and the chemo blasted it away. I never made any promises but I did wish I could tell him it would all be OK.'

Amanda

If you have more than one child, even if they are different ages it may be a good idea to begin by telling them together so that they start with the same information. They will understand and take different things away and if they want to, they can come back to you, or to their brothers or sisters, to ask more. You can also make time to talk to them individually at a later date.

'I didn't use the word cancer. I was scared she would go to school, tell someone that I had cancer and then the child would say - "Oh my granny died of that". Gillian

How children may react

Children react differently depending on their age, temperament, stage of development and the relationship they have with you. So it's hard to predict what will happen when you tell your children about your breast cancer. You may find yourself faced with some difficult questions. Children will ask you about the future, whether you will be cured or whether you are going to die. It is important to be as honest and open as you can but it is fine to say that you don't know. Try to be realistic, yet hopeful, but be careful not to make promises you are not sure you can keep. Most of all, your children need to know that everyone's doing all they can to make you better, that you still love and care for them, and that there are things they can do to help.

Like adults, some children find it easier to express their emotions than others. Try to give them time and opportunities to talk about how they feel, but it's best not to push them if they would rather not talk, especially at first. Your children may prefer to talk things over with their friends rather than with you, especially if they are older. If this is the case, you may want to talk to friends' parents first, so that everyone is



'Eleanor would ask questions at bedtime to keep me in her room longer. I answered them without stressing her so she would sleep. Alfie is very talkative and told everyone (teachers, mates at school and friends) about his mum's illness but only got upset if we did.' Jayne

'She asked me if her grandad had taken medicine because he was bald, which I suppose was an indication that she was listening and thinking about it.' Dawn

saying the same thing and your children aren't frightened by half-truths or wrong information.

You may come across problems. Children may respond to the news in some of the same ways as adults. They may not feel like eating, their sleep may

be disturbed and they may have trouble concentrating at school or with homework. They may get angry or upset over what seem like relatively small problems and setbacks. Younger children particularly may revert to behaviour that they haven't shown for a long time, such as baby talk or bed-wetting. The important thing is to be sensitive to changes in their behaviour or mood.

Sudden unacceptable behaviour and poor school results may be a sign that your child is feeling worried or insecure. You won't want your breast cancer to become an excuse for this, but you'll want your child to know that you understand that

'They seemed reasonably matter of fact. Later, I asked if they wanted me to tell the parents of their friends. They reacted throughout my treatment as I expected they would. My eldest dealt with it at home but didn't think there was any need to mention it at school. She's always been of the opinion that playgroup/school is her space and time. She wanted one chunk of her life to carry on as normal. My youngest, on the other hand, would stand up in class news sessions and tell everyone what was going on.'

Mary

this is a difficult time for them too. Many parents find that bending the rules a little doesn't hurt, but that it isn't a good idea to ignore seriously poor behaviour. Children are likely to be more anxious and upset if the rules suddenly change and clear limits and boundaries can help them maintain a sense of normality and cope with their anxieties a little better.

At times children may appear to be thoughtless and unkind, but that's because they have other things aside from the cancer on their minds, such as school or friends, which is how it should be. But they can also be very supportive, and will sometimes surprise you by doing or saying something that shows they understand.

In some cases, children may have more serious or longer-term problems as a result of a parent's illness. If you are concerned about how a young child is coping, it might be helpful to consider that children can feel more comfortable opening up to others, particularly if they feel they have to stay strong within the family. Your GP or specialist team may be able to point you in the right direction to get some help from trained school counsellors, or professionals with specific training in working with children and their families.

It may also be useful to look at the section *When to seek help* if you feel you need further support.

'We tried to keep routine as normal as possible, e.g. school etc, although my daughter cried at school a lot but her teacher was marvellous. My son was not affected too much. He didn't like hospital though and would misbehave there.' Jayne

Under six



'The boys were very close and loving and my daughter was very clingy with me.' Amanda

What you say to very young children about your breast cancer will depend on the words you normally use for breasts and feeling ill. You won't want to frighten them or overload them with information but you may decide to tell them that your breast – or whatever word they use for it – is sick or sore and that you are going to hospital to make it better. As well as talking, you may want to show them what is happening on dolls or teddies or draw pictures. Storybooks can also help to explain things and prompt questions (see the list of books for children at the end of this

booklet). It is always a good idea to read through a book you want to use first, before sharing it with your children, to make sure it fits in with your circumstances.

Most young children don't like changes to their routine.

When you go into hospital they need to know that you will be back soon, and that they won't be left alone or with someone they don't know. They need to know details about who will be giving them their meals, taking them to nursery and putting them to bed. If you have to stay in hospital for a few days, they can visit once you feel well enough. It will be reassuring for them to see where you are and know that you want to see them.

With very young children, one of the most important things is to make it clear from the start that your illness is not their fault. Young children sometimes blame themselves for what

happens to their parents and they may link your breast cancer to something they've said or done, such as telling you that they hate you in the middle of a tantrum. This can make them feel guilty, so they need to be reassured, whether or not they tell you their fears. They may also think that your illness is catching, like chicken pox or a cold, so you may need to explain that this is not the case.

'I'm glad that we told them straightaway. I found that they could talk to my husband as well as me and Alfie liked talking to the doctor.' Jayne

7-12 years

School age children are more aware of how your illness affects them, and they may be very anxious or resentful. Routine is just as important for them as for younger children. They want to know that the detail of their daily lives will not change dramatically. Who will take them to school? Who will care for them after school? Who will cook their tea? They need to know that once you're feeling better you'll be doing these things again.

A good place to start with children of this age may be to tell them what has happened and what you and the doctors are going to do about it. It can help to try to find out how much they know about

'I felt it was important to walk my children into school every morning. If I did nothing else that day, then I had got up and dressed, got my make-up on and achieved something. It was hard too, especially when I started wearing scarves. That was like coming out; every mother at the school knew what was going on. Most were supportive, some were just noseey!' Mary



'I felt it was important to tell the school. I told Melissa's headteacher and class teacher. I was concerned she may hide her feelings at home so I asked them to keep any eye on her. People tell you children are very resilient but no two children are the same and it's important to check the feelings of your child at various stages during treatment. I have no regrets about how we handled things as a family.' Dawn

cancer so that you can correct any misunderstandings, for example that everyone who has cancer will die. Even if you are reluctant to use the word cancer your children or their friends will probably know the word anyway from other people or from the television or newspapers. They may understand more about it than you realise, know that there are different types of cancer and that people can recover from it.

Most children study the human body at primary school and will have some basic ideas about cells and the different parts of the body. You may want to look at some factual information with them or read a suitable story. If you can, try to talk to them about how you feel and encourage them to talk about their feelings too.

If you are going to have chemotherapy it is worth preparing your children for the fact that you might lose your hair. Equally, you

should also explain to them that it will eventually grow back.

Once you have a diagnosis, telling their teacher and possibly the school nurse will help prepare them for answering questions or giving your children extra support.

'On my arrival home from hospital my daughter had drawn a large picture which included "welcome home". It was on the living room wall. A couple of months later, in January, I suggested we take it down but she said "not yet". By the summer I said "help me to take the poster down" and she said no as I might have to go away again. I said of course not but I left the picture. It was in December when we were putting up Christmas decorations that she said it was OK to take it down. I know visitors to the house thought I should have taken it down before but I felt my daughter had to be OK with it. I think this showed how much it had affected her - she didn't say anything, but she was obviously worried that I was not going to be the same.' Gillian

'They liked being involved in the practical aspects of it all: using the controls to change the bed position when I was in hospital, admiring the teddy-shaped plaster that kept my line fixed in, decorating my arm bandage tubes with fabric pens so they looked smart and, trying on my wig, hats and scarves.' Mary

'We had previously told her about my sore breast and explained the doctors were going to make me better by taking it away. We told her the medicine (chemotherapy) would make my hair fall out but this was normal and she shouldn't worry. We explained the medicine might make me tired and a bit grumpy but that whatever I felt like, I still loved and her she was still my special girl.' Dawn

Teenagers

'He always kept going to school and never moaned. On the days I was feeling unwell, he would bring me tea and toast in bed and always asked me to do his hair. This seemed important to him. It was like we still had this connection which was normal.' Sian

Most teenagers will have heard of cancer and may know – or think they know – something about it. They or their friends may also know people who have died from cancer. So you will need to find out how much they know about breast cancer. For example, do they know that today's treatments are very effective and having breast cancer doesn't automatically mean you are going to die? Teenagers may want more detail

about breast cancer and your treatment but they may also prefer to find out about it on their own. You may want to point them towards reliable sources of information such as Breast Cancer Care's booklets or website – there are also other sources of support in the back of this booklet.

Some teenagers may appear unconcerned about the whole thing and, like some adults, try to pretend it's not happening. You might find this hurtful, but they may cope by ignoring your breast cancer and carrying on as if nothing has happened. Others may be more emotional. Although they may not want to talk to anyone about your cancer at first, you

'Being 13 going on 14 is a very awkward age. We felt sorry that our daughter was in this situation. We tried to give her all the love and support that we could, although sometimes you are overwhelmed yourself. It certainly made her grow up very quickly.'
Sue, mother of Hannah, aged 13 at her diagnosis

'Because of their ages they fully understood what was happening. They asked lots of questions about how I found the lump, the tests and treatments and also would it increase their chances of getting breast cancer. We were all upset and crying when I told them. I think it's OK to get upset in front of the children occasionally as this lets them see that it is OK to be scared. The whole "being strong for each other" can put added pressure on everyone as emotions and worries can be bottled up.' Moira

may want to brief someone else they are close to, such as a grandparent or family friend, to listen and answer questions if the need arises.

Teenage girls may be anxious that they will get breast cancer too, particularly if they have heard that it can run in families. In fact, more than 90% of breast cancers are not related to family history and you may want to talk to your daughter about this.

Boys going through puberty may find it embarrassing to talk about breast cancer. Having just discovered the importance of breasts in girls at school or models in magazines, teenage boys may be upset about what is happening, but be unable to talk to you about it. It may be easier for fathers to talk to their sons in this situation, or for another male relative or friend to talk to them.

One thing that all teenagers have in common is that they are easily embarrassed – especially by their parents. Appearances are very important to them and they may need reassurance that, fully dressed, you will look the same as before. If you are

going to have chemotherapy you may want to talk to them about the possibility of losing your hair and that it will grow back.

Your illness may come at a particularly difficult time for teenagers. It is normal for teenagers to be struggling with feelings of wanting independence and to break away from their parents and they may not know how to negotiate with a parent who needs to depend on them for a change. They may feel torn between wanting to be there for you and dealing with their own lives or problems, such as relationships, friends and exams.

Keep talking

Telling your children that you have breast cancer, answering their questions and dealing with their initial responses may be just the beginning. There will be ups and downs before your treatment is finished and you are feeling well again and throughout that time it's important to keep the lines of communication open.

From time to time there will be fresh news to give your children about your treatment and the results. And they will probably come up with new questions in response to the news. Often the questions may take you by surprise, perhaps when you're cooking or watching TV rather than when you're ready and prepared.

You may want to consider encouraging older children to talk to your doctors and nurses, perhaps when you go for a hospital appointment. This can help them to realise that a lot is being done to help you and that hospitals can be friendly and supportive places.

Children can be very accepting of physical changes and after surgery they may ask about your scar or



'As he has got older, he has asked questions from time to time and clearly has a better understanding now. However, he was too young to appreciate the significance of breast cancer at the time when I was diagnosed. Breast cancer isn't a hidden issue in our house and we talk about it quite openly. If he sees something on the telly about breast cancer he will come and find me as he knows I'll be interested. But I also try not to go on about it too much so we have some balance in our lives too.' **Emma**



‘We have always had an open door policy in the bathroom. My daughter can come in if she needs to. After my surgery we discussed if I should lock the door so that she couldn’t see my scars. We decided to keep it the same because if we changed things she would be even more worried. Initially I pointed out where the scar was and said that was all the bad bits gone and that my scar just needed to heal.’ **Gillian**

whether you look different. You might want to explain to them what the surgeons have done, but whether or not you show them will depend on you and them and what is normal in your family. The question may not arise if they are not used to seeing you undressed, but if they are, it may simply happen naturally. You may need some extra privacy for a while; you can explain that you’re not shutting them out; you just need a little time. Your children may wonder what you’re using to replace your missing breast if you’ve had a mastectomy; if you are wearing a prosthesis they may want to see it and feel it.

If you’re planning reconstructive surgery, you may decide to wait until it’s completed before asking your children how they feel about seeing what you look like. Again, if you explain why you’d rather wait, your children will feel less excluded and anxious.

If you are having radiotherapy or chemotherapy, you may want to warn your children that you might feel ill, grumpy or tired at times and you might need some extra help. Being able to help can make younger children feel important, so perhaps you can give them one or two small, regular jobs. Older children may be helpful and co-operative from time to time but it’s important not to expect them to take on too much responsibility.

‘When I had my double mastectomy (at my second diagnosis) I wish I hadn’t been so up front in showing the children. They wanted to see and I thought it might help, but later I found out that it had really upset my daughter and she had a couple of nightmares which really upset me.’ **Jayne**

‘Always from day one the word cancer was never taboo. I think he would have found it more strange not to have mentioned it. He doesn’t use the word loosely. He will say it but I have noticed he doesn’t use it in conversation but I know this is only to protect me not him.’ **Sian**

‘We spoke on many occasions about what was going on and I was always honest with them. I didn’t necessarily tell them my fears for the future as these were my personal feelings and worries which they didn’t need to hear. The girls were very secure in the knowledge that I was being honest with them, therefore they didn’t have the added worry that I might be hiding things from them.’ **Moira**

When to seek help



‘Janine was never an easy child before my diagnosis and it seemed to seriously unsettle her when she knew I was feeling ill and more tired. I just felt so worried when she had more and more angry outbursts. I spoke to the school and my GP and they suggested that it might help Janine to talk to someone. She wasn’t very keen on the idea but she did agree to go along to the hospital to talk to someone from the child and adolescent mental health team. It seems to have helped as she does seem calmer these days and I’m able to talk to her about her feelings. Things are still tense from time to time, but are overall much better.’

Carla, mother to Janine, aged 8 at her diagnosis

If there are long standing concerns with your child’s behaviour or their emotional wellbeing these may be more noticeable at a time of anxiety (like your diagnosis of breast cancer or during your treatment) and this may make their behaviour more difficult to deal with – especially when you need to be able to concentrate on your own health and wellbeing.

Try to see if you can understand the meaning of the behaviour rather than react to it. If you notice your child having long periods where they are feeling low, withdrawn or not being interested in what is going on around them talk to your GP, treatment team or school counsellor. If necessary they can refer you to your local child and adolescent mental health service. They should be able to offer you and your child advice or guidance if needed.

When treatment is over



When your treatment is finished, it’s understandable that your children want you ‘back to normal’ as soon as possible. They not only want reassurance that you’re better and won’t be ill again, they also want their own lives to return to normal. This may not always be straightforward for the whole family, particularly in the early weeks and months. Children may find this hard to grasp, especially if they feel they have been thoughtful and considerate during treatment. You may need to explain that getting better can take quite a long time, weeks or even months.

They may also have lingering doubts about your recovery. Your regular checkups will be a worry for them as well as you. Also, if someone they know is later diagnosed with cancer, or someone’s mum has died, it can bring some of the worries back. You need to continue to be as honest as you can, without making promises you may not be able to keep. It is probably best to say that you and your doctors hope that you won’t be ill again and reassure your children that, whatever happens, they will always be looked after and cared for.

‘A few years later Hannah went to speak to a younger girl at school whose mum had breast cancer (we knew the mum and it was something she had asked Hannah to do). It would have been very reassuring to know that Hannah had someone to talk to (when she needed it) who knew what it felt like to be in her position.’ **Sue**

'We were watching the news and there was an item about someone who had died of breast cancer. Her sister was being interviewed. My daughter said to me, "That's what you've got, isn't it mummy?". I said, "Yes, but mummy is better now". I didn't want her to think that I was about to die too.' Gillian

Once again, talking to them about how you and they feel is probably the best way to deal with any concerns. If you have been able to establish an open and trusting relationship during your cancer, you will hopefully be able to continue to talk about your feelings and acknowledge any worries that arise.

Each stage of your treatment and recovery will bring different feelings, different anxieties and different highs and lows. But if you are able to talk honestly and openly with your family at each step, you will hopefully find that families can be a great source of love and support.

'Sam said something once that made me stop and think. It was during a typical row between a parent and a grumpy child going on teenager about his messy bedroom. This was several years after my treatment had finished. He complained that he'd had a terrible childhood because he had to cope with a mum who had breast cancer. I was naturally quite upset about this as I thought he had coped really well. So when things had calmed down (and his bedroom was tidy) I asked him whether it was really true. He said it wasn't and that he'd just been trying to make me feel guilty so he wouldn't have to tidy up. Kids huh!' Emma

Finding out more

Further reading

Books for parents

Talking to Children About Cancer

Cancerbackup, 2005
ISBN 1 905384 25 4

A booklet outlining steps parents can take to help their children understand what is happening.

Talking To Children When An Adult Has Cancer

Macmillan Cancer Support, 2004
ISBN 0 9536785 71

A practical approach to involving children of all ages.

Julie Stokes and Di Stubbs

As Big As It Gets

Winston's Wish, September 2007
ISBN 978 0 9539123 9 1

This booklet aims to help parents and children cope with a serious illness in the family.

Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

How To Talk So Your Kids Will Listen & Listen So Your Kids Will Talk

Piccadilly Press, April 2001

ISBN 1 85340 705 4

A guide to practical and effective communication with children. American. There is also a version aimed specifically at teenagers.

Books for children

Julie A Stokes

The Secret C – Straight Talking About Cancer

Winston's Wish, 2000

ISBN 0 9539123 0

A book to help adults and children talk openly about the issues and feelings involved when someone has cancer. For ages 7-10.

Sherry Kohlenberg

Sammy's Mommy Has Cancer

Magination Press, New York, 1993

ISBN 0 945354 55 X

A sensitive, straightforward, illustrated American storybook for children aged 3-8.

Sophie LeBlanc

A Dragon In Your Heart

Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1999

ISBN 1 85302 701 7

A simple story, written by a mother with breast cancer to explain things to her five year old daughter. Canadian.

Useful addresses

Cancerbackup

3 Bath Place

Rivington Street

London EC2A 3JR

Office: 020 7696 9003

Freephone helpline: 0808 800 1234

Email: info@cancerbackup.org

Website: www.cancerbackup.org.uk

Cancerbackup is the leading national information and support charity for people affected by cancer. Services include a helpline, staffed by specialist cancer information nurses, a website, cancer information booklets and local information centres. All Cancerbackup services are free to people affected by cancer.

Macmillan Cancer Support

89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7UQ

Telephone: 020 7840 7840

Macmillan CancerLine: 0808 808 2020

Macmillan YouthLine: 0808 808 0800

Textphone: 0808 808 0121

Email: cancerline@macmillan.org.uk

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support is helping people who are living with cancer through the provision of immediate practical and emotional support. Specialist services include Macmillan nurses and doctors, cancer centres, a range of cancer information and direct financial help. The Macmillan CancerLine provides information and emotional support. Macmillan also have a specific phone line for people aged between 12 and 21 who have been affected by cancer. Textphone available.

Riprap

www.riprap.org.uk

A website offering support and advice for 12-16 year olds who have a parent with cancer. Includes real-life stories, discussion forums, information and tips.

Central Office

Breast Cancer Care

5-13 Great Suffolk Street

London SE1 0NS

Telephone 0845 092 0800

Fax 0845 092 0820

Email info@breastcancercare.org.uk

Centres

Breast Cancer Care Scotland

Telephone 0845 077 1892

Email sco@breastcancercare.org.uk

Breast Cancer Care Cymru/Wales

Telephone 0845 077 1894

Email cym@breastcancercare.org.uk

Breast Cancer Care North & Midlands

Telephone 0845 077 1893

Email nrc@breastcancercare.org.uk

Breast Cancer Care London & South

Telephone 0845 077 1895

Email src@breastcancercare.org.uk

For all breast cancer or breast health concerns, call our free, national helpline on 0808 800 6000 (for Typetalk prefix 18001) or visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk.

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The Lavender Trust at Breast Cancer Care raises money specifically to fund information and support for younger women with breast cancer. It is the only fund in the UK dedicated to addressing the particular needs of this age group. If you would like further information about how you can help, please call 0845 092 0800 or see www.lavendertrust.org.uk.