

The background of the slide features a large, faint, circular watermark of the Rutgers University seal. The seal contains the text "RUTGERS UNIVERSITY" and "1823" around a central emblem.

RUTGERS

Cancer Institute
of New Jersey

How to Talk to Children about Cancer



▲ Comprehensive Cancer
Center Designated by the
National Cancer Institute

What is Cancer?

- Cancer is a scary word to many people.
- Cancer is a group of many related diseases that all have to do with cells.
- Cancer happens when abnormal cells grow and spread very fast.
- Tumors are abnormal cell growths.
- Cancer affects many body parts.
- Cancer is something important to talk about.

Image: Nemours. Cancer center. *KidsHealth*. Retrieved from http://kidshealth.org/kid/cancer_center/cancer_center.html#cat20677
Caywood, E.M. What is cancer?. *KidsHealth*. Retrieved from http://kidshealth.org/kid/cancer_center/cancer_basics/cancer.html#cat20678
Nemours. Words to know. *KidsHealth*. Retrieved from http://kidshealth.org/kid/cancer_center/words_to_know/cancer_glossary.html#cat20685



How to Talk to Children about Cancer

- Be honest
 - Give children accurate, age-appropriate information.
- Be conversational
 - Answer each others' questions
 - Encourage children to talk about emotions
- Use credible sources for health information
 - From healthcare professionals
 - From reliable online and print resources
 - Feel free to use one of the suggested resources in the following slides to start the conversation.



Cancercare for Kids. Helping children understand cancer: How to talk to your children about your cancer diagnosis. Flyer. For more information, visit www.cancercare.org

Image: Nettenaverro. Personal, social, and moral development. *Glogster*. Retrieved from <http://www.glogster.com/nettenavarro/personal-social-and-moral-development/g-6mq15vgp0bcb5gor4teo4a0>

Understand Cancer through Children's Literature

There are many helpful children's books that address the topic of cancer.

Facing Cancer Together. (n.d.). Books that help kids understand cancer. Retrieved from <http://www.facingcancertogether.witf.org/caregivers-and-family/books-that-help-kids-understand-cancer-52411>

Facing Cancer Together. (2011 May 23). Kids books: Understanding Cancer. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhlSjXAaPbQ>

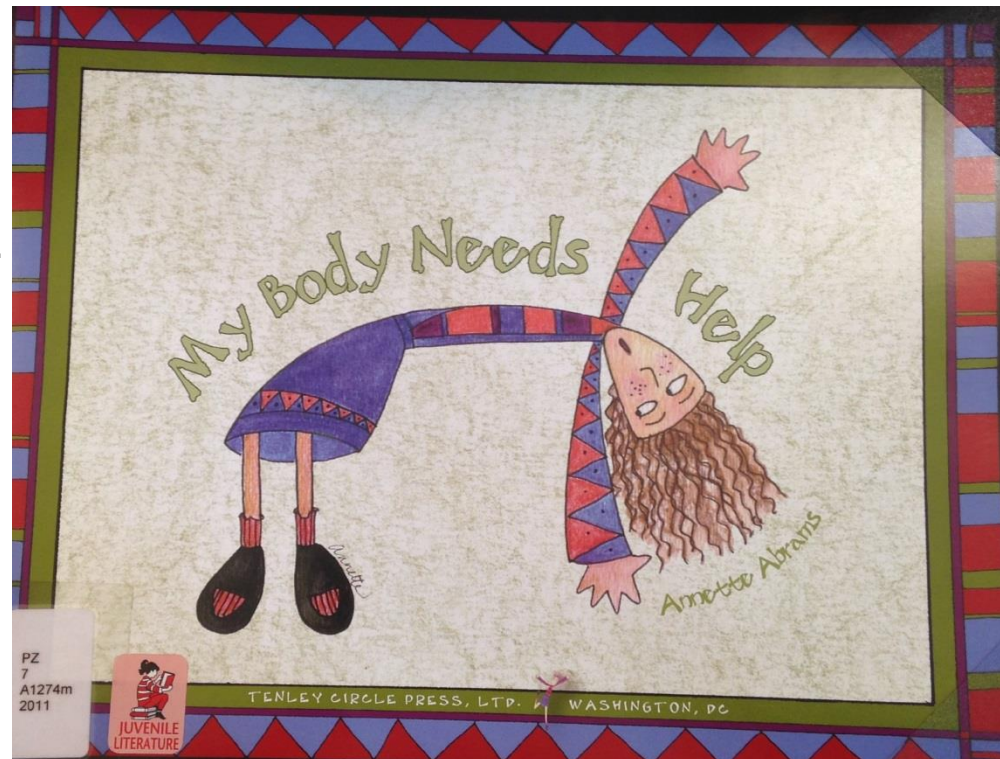
Books about Children with Cancer

- Abrams, A. (2011). My Body Needs Help. Washington, DC: Tenley Circle Press, Ltd.
- Allen, J.M. (2007). I can survive. Atlanta, Georgia: American Cancer Society.
- DeLand, M.M. (2010). The great Katie Kate tackles questions about cancer. Austin, TX: Greenleaf Book Group Press.

This is a short list that the Resource and Learning Center is highlighting in this presentation. Feel free to browse through the online library catalog or visit us in person to check out the children's section.

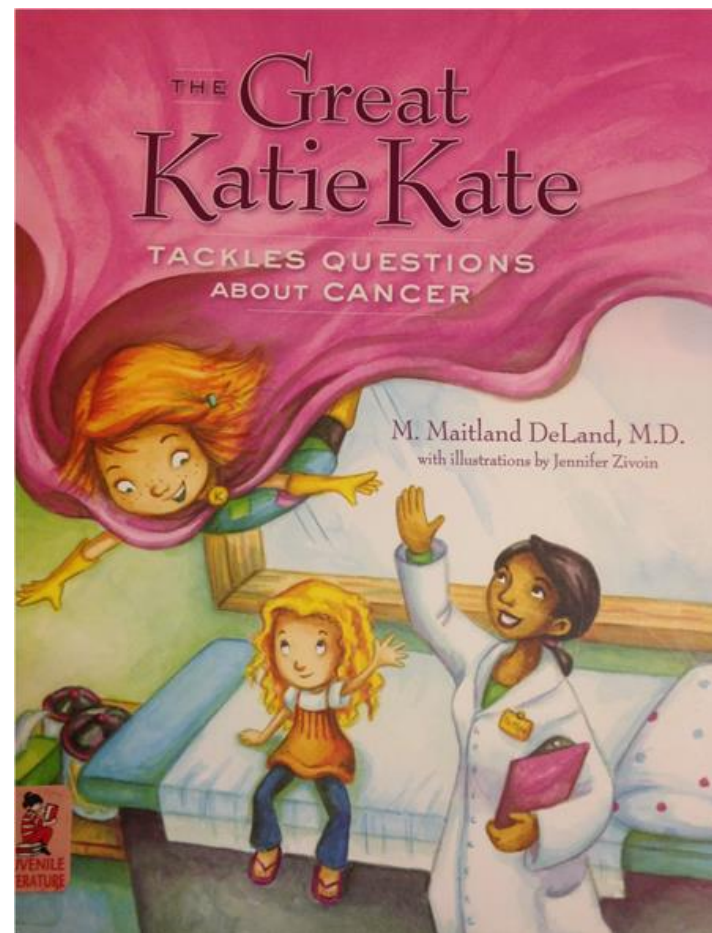
My Body Needs Help

“My Body Needs Help”, written by Annette Abrams, an adult cancer survivor, is about a female child with cancer. She narrates the story in the form of rhyming poetry. She informs the reader about how she feels about cancer emotionally and physically. The emotions, symptoms, side effects, and treatments are important for a child to know. This book could be used to help a child deal with their own battle with cancer as well as help a child understand why people with cancer may appear upset, tired, frustrated, sick, etc. This book is illustrated with brightly-colored child-like illustrations. The various cancer symptoms and side effects are depicted as monsters. The various treatments of cancer are depicted as superheros and guardian angels. At the end, the real heros are the friends and family of the child with cancer.



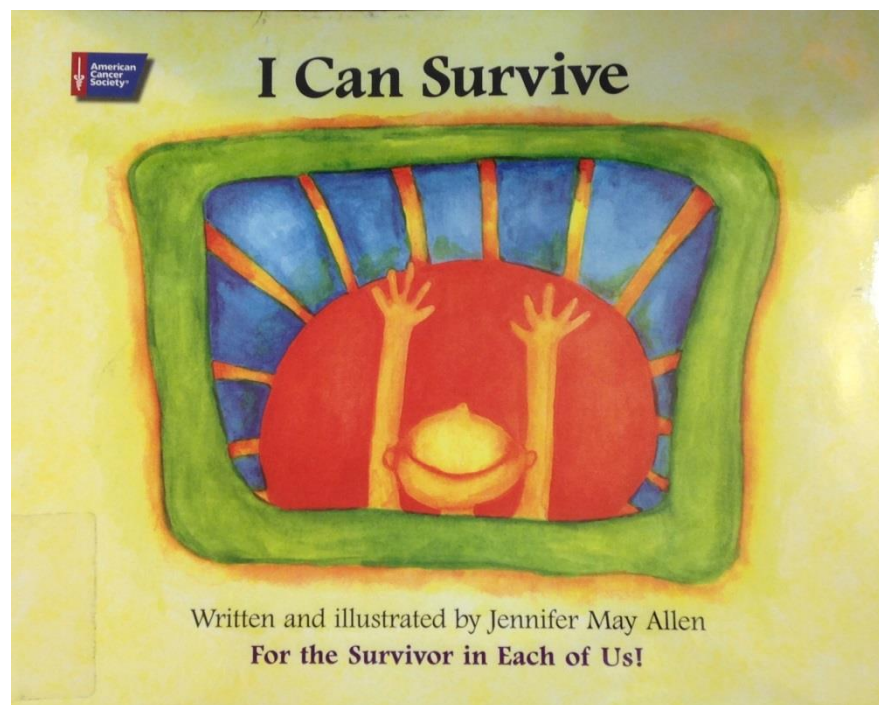
The Great Katie Kate

“The Great Katie Kate Tackles Questions about Cancer” was written by a medical doctor who specializes in treating cancer in women and children. Dr. DeLand wrote this book to cover the most common worries and questions that parents and children have about cancer. Dr. DeLand understands that talking about cancer is difficult for adults and youth. In this book, a superheroine, a friend of the doctor, gives a newly-diagnosed child a tour of the hospital and answers questions about the various tests and treatments to make the child’s worries disappear. The illustrations are brightly-colored and takes up a page or two. The hospital equipment is drawn well. During each part of the tour, the worry or question is addressed in a positive way. For example, when children with cancer lose their hair, they can have fun trying on different wigs.



I Can Survive

The American Cancer Society, the nation's top cancer non-profit organization, published "I Can Survive". The American Cancer Society publishes books, brochures, flyers, and booklets for an audience that includes patients, survivors, family members, friends, and volunteers. "I Can Survive" has bright colors, beautiful artwork, and encouraging I-statements. This book can be used by children and adults.



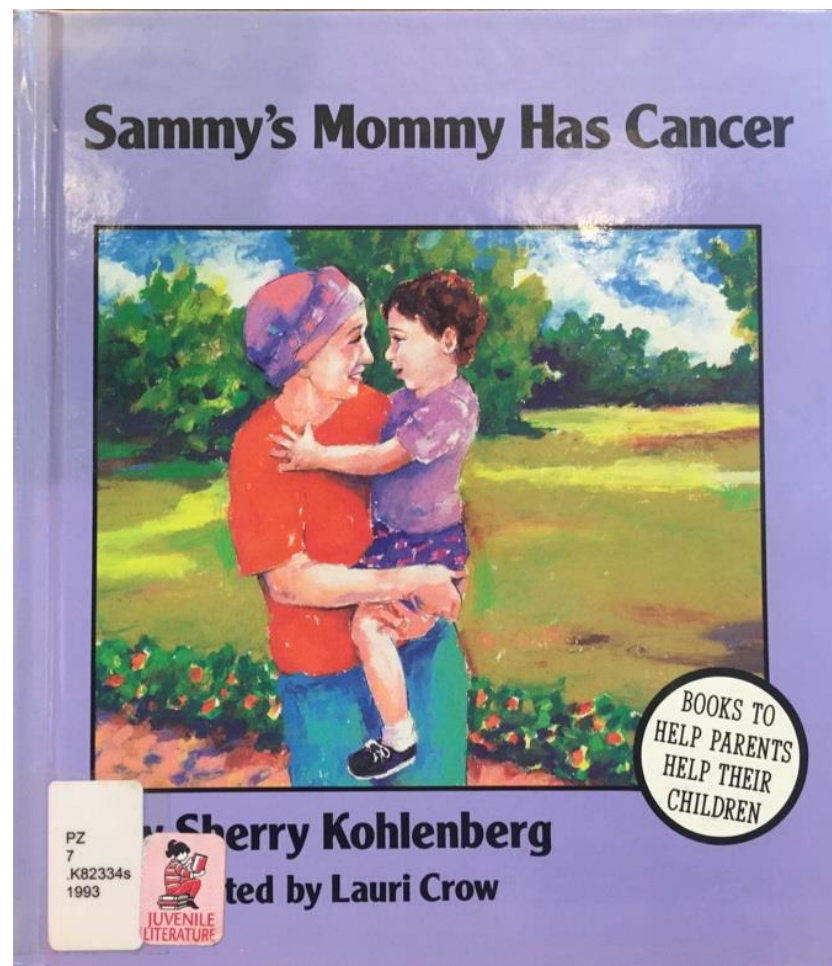
Books about Loved Ones with Cancer

- Clifford, C. (1998). Our family has cancer, too!. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kohlenberg, S. (1993). Sammy's mommy has cancer. New York: Magination Press.
- McCue, K. (2009). Someone I love is sick: Helping very young children cope with cancer in the family. Beachwood, Ohio: The Gathering Place Press.

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Sammy's Mommy Has Cancer

"Sammy's Mommy Has Cancer" was written by a cancer survivor who believes in open communication. Kohlenberg wrote this book to read to her son, Sammy to explain what was going on. The story shows how each family member was before the author's diagnosis, during treatment, and after treatment. The book displays how the author's cancer affects her body and the entire family. Kohlenberg wrote this book in 1993, when many books that depicted cancer in the family dealt with the loss of a parent. Kohlenberg specifically wanted to include daily life of the low and high moments of family interactions. For example, after chemotherapy, she falls asleep, because she is tired. This book's illustrations are brightly-colored paintings. There is a glossary that defines medical terminology in child-friendly language.



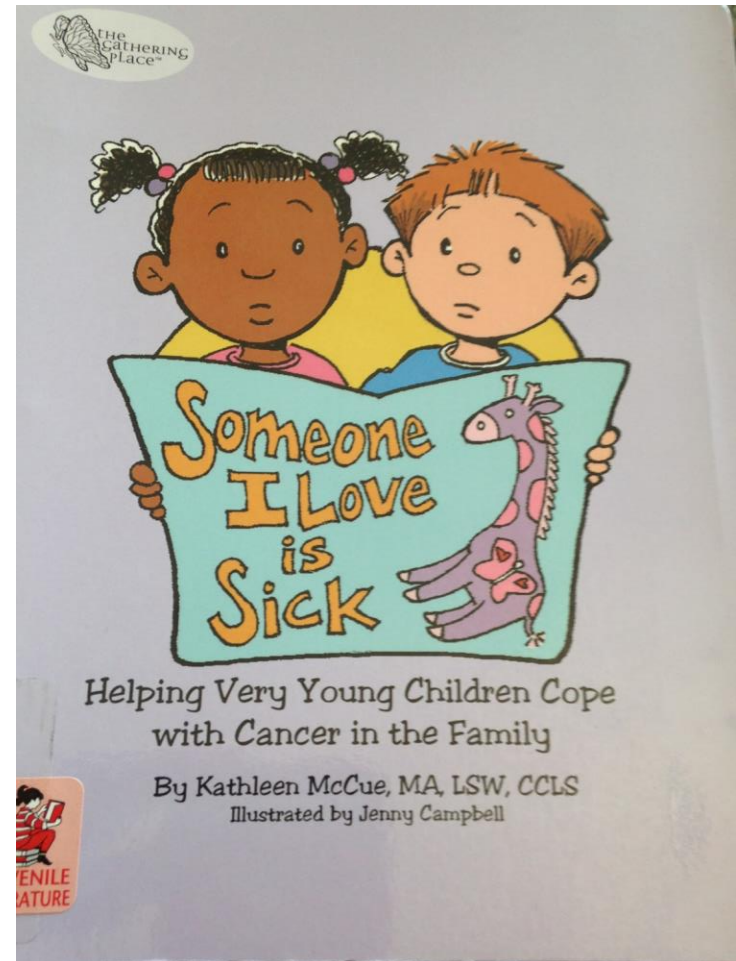
Our Family Has Cancer, Too!

The author, Christine Clifford is a cancer survivor. Her mother is also a cancer survivor who was diagnosed when the author was 15 years old. Clifford wrote this book to help other families to have conversations about how cancer impacts family, schedules, chores, etc. This book is meant to be read as a family. One side of the spread is all-text. It's a story about a middle schooler's family and includes questions for the readers to discuss with their loved ones. The other side of the spread are black and white comic book-style images that illustrates the written story. This story highlights the good and bad things about cancer. The children in the story complain about their mother receiving so many flowers at the hospital that there was barely any room for them in the car. Also, the family has what the children call "crying parties" when the whole family expresses sadness together.



Someone I Love is Sick

Kathleen McCue is a child life specialist whose focus area is mental health of children. This book can be personalized. The binder comes with a folder to store the extra pages. Parents can decide which pages they want to share with their children as well as determine the total pages of the book to display. For instance, if the child has a father with cancer, any of pictures depicting mothers with cancer can be placed in the folder in the back of the binder. The same text is used on the “mom” and “dad” pages, so children will not miss out on content. There are pages that discuss emotions, cancer, death, and grief, so the book should be customized to the family’s situation. Each page has one sentence with a big colorful illustration and plenty of white space.



Understand Death Through Children's Literature

There are children's books that focus on the topic of death. This is a challenging topic for many adults to discuss, but it is important for children and adults to understand the emotions surrounding death as well as death in the life cycle.

Facing Cancer Together. (2011 May 23). Kids books: Understanding death. Retrieved from
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHnQu7k2WM8>

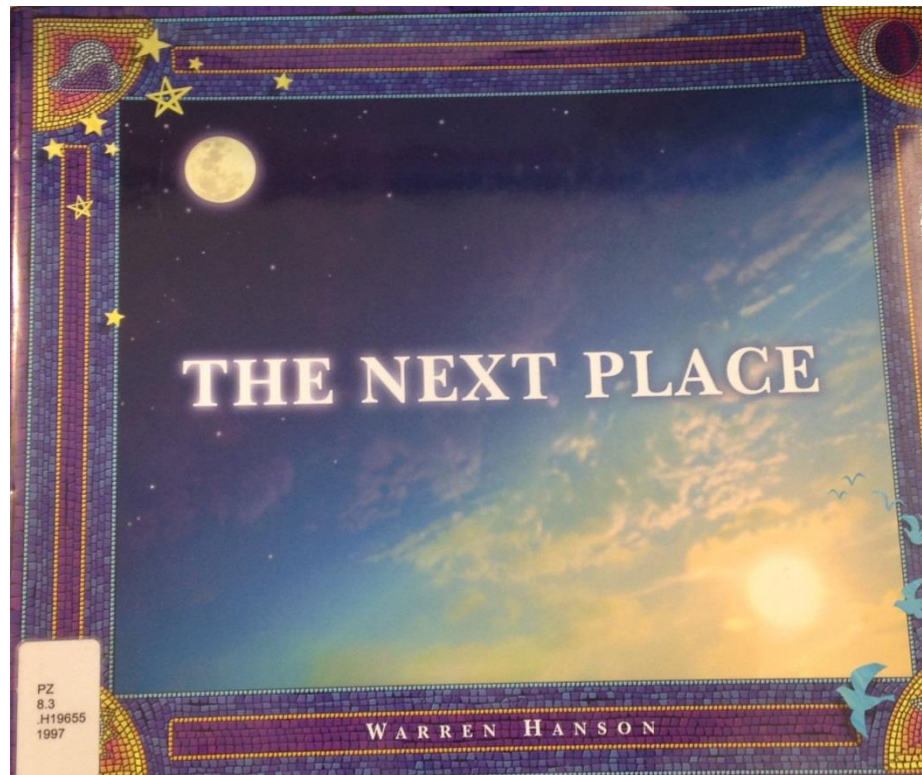
Resources about Death and Grief

- Warren, H. (1997). The next place. Golden Valley, Minnesota: Waldman House Press.
- Sesame Street: “When Families Grieve” Kit
 - Honig, R. (2010). Something small: a story about remembering. Sesame Street.
 - Sesame Street. (2010). When families grieve: sharing and talking, finding comfort together, moving forward, plus caring cards.
 - Sesame Street. (2010). When families grieve. DVD.
 - Sesame Street. Grief. Retrieved from www.sesamestreet.org/grief

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The Next Place

“The Next Place” is a beautifully-illustrated book that discusses the narrator-character’s peaceful transition to the afterlife. This book can be used by adults and children.



“When Families Grieve” Kit

- Available in English and Spanish
- Kit includes
 - A guide how to conversation about grief
 - A story about a child who lost a family member
 - A DVD containing an episode, informative video, and a music video
 - A website to supplement the readings
- Sesame Street characters role-model positive ways to cope with the death of a loved one.



Online Health Resources for Children, Parents, and Educators

- Nemours. KidsHealth. Retrieved from <http://kidshealth.org>
- Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Cancer sites for kids. Retrieved from <http://cinj.org/education/cancer-sites-kids>
- Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Cancer sites for teens. Retrieved from <http://cinj.org/education/cancer-sites-teens>
- Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Talking to children about cancer. Retrieved from <http://cinj.org/education/talking-children-about-cancer>

Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey Resource and Learning Center also has lists of recommended websites for particular types of cancer too.

References

- Abrams, A. (2011). My Body Needs Help. Washington, DC: Tenley Circle Press, Ltd.
- Allen, J.M. (2007). I can survive. Atlanta, Georgia: American Cancer Society.
- Cancercare for Kids. Helping children understand cancer: How to talk to your children about your cancer diagnosis. Flyer. For more information, visit www.cancercare.org
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- Facing Cancer Together. (2011 May 23). Kids books: Understanding death. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHnQu7k2WM8>
- Honig, R. (2010). Something small: a story about remembering. Sesame Street.
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- Nemours. Words to know. *KidsHealth*. Retrieved from http://kidshealth.org/kid/cancer_center/words_to_know/cancer_glossary.html#cat20685
- Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Cancer sites for kids. Retrieved from <http://cinj.org/education/cancer-sites-kids>
- Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Cancer sites for teens. Retrieved from <http://cinj.org/education/cancer-sites-teens>
- Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Talking to children about cancer. Retrieved from <http://cinj.org/education/talking-children-about-cancer>
- Sesame Street. Grief. Retrieved from www.sesamestreet.org/grief
- Sesame Street. (2010). When families grieve: sharing and talking, finding comfort together, moving forward, plus caring cards.
- Sesame Street. (2010). When families grieve. DVD.
- Nettenaverro. (n.d). Personal, social, and moral development. *Glogster*. Retrieved from <http://www.glogster.com/nettenavarro/personal-social-and-moral-development/g-6mq15vgp0bcb5gor4teo4a0>

Questions? Comments?



Contact the Resource and Learning Center for more information.

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