

Family Caregivers Living Beyond Cancer A-Z

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The Need

- Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas
- Wonders & Worries
- 25% of clients anticipate the death of a loved one
- One third of our families experience the death of a parent



16

years.

7,000

children & parents.

1

mission.



Wonders & Worries

Professional support for children
through a parent's illness.

We will, together.

What is a Child Life Specialist?

A Child Life Specialist is a professional who is specially trained to help children and their families understand and manage challenging life events and stressful healthcare experiences.

Child life specialists enhance the family's abilities to cope effectively during stressful health and medical situations.



Support is Necessary

A parent's illness can negatively impact their children:

- Children may **withdraw**, become anxious or depressed, and/or develop post-traumatic stress symptoms¹
- Young people who have a parent with cancer are 5-6 times more likely to be at risk for **mental health** issues²
- Children may **misperceive** their ill parent's behavior as them not being lovable or valued³
- **School performance** can be impacted⁴

Goals of Wonders & Worries

- Provide a support system for children who have a parent or loved-one with illness
- Provide developmentally appropriate information on illness, treatment & side effects
- Encourage the expression of feelings
- Offer new ways to cope and adjust to parent's illness and changes in the family
- Increase family communication

Explaining a Cancer Diagnosis

Focus on prevention- reaching families at time of diagnosis

Three Components of Six Session Curriculum

- Age appropriate information on illness, treatment and side effects
- Expression of feelings
- Positive coping skills

Most Difficult Times for Children

- When parent is first diagnosed
- Real or symbolic separations
- Seeing the parent sick or upset
- Bodily changes



Diagnosis

When parent diagnosed:

1. What will happen to mom?
2. How will my life change?
3. What will surgery/treatment be like?



Real or Symbolic Separations



- Hospitalization
- Fear of death
- Parent too tired to be a caregiver or play

Seeing Parents Sick or Upset

- Hospital visit parent hooked up to medical equipment
- Visibly sick, in pain, weak
- Parents crying, emotional, upset



Bodily Changes



- Loss of hair
- Scars from surgery/procedures
- Port-o-cath/Picc line
- Mobility devices

