

## Providing emotional support

When someone is diagnosed with cancer, intense emotions can surface. These emotions may range from anger to fear to sadness, sometimes quite suddenly. All of these feelings are normal and there is no “correct” response. Allowing the person to openly and honestly express their feelings is an important form of offering support.

How to provide emotional support:

- Spend time, offering flexibility and attentiveness. There does not need to be a reason to get together or a list of tasks to accomplish.
- Everyone copes with difficulty and stress in their own way. Support includes providing the emotional space for the woman with breast cancer to work through her feelings at her own pace and in her own way.
- Don't forget to ask directly, and be prepared to hear, what she wants and needs. It is also important to find out what she does not want. Practice good listening.
- Mood swings and rapidly changing approaches to her diagnosis, daily tasks, friends and family are not unusual. Try to roll with the punches. Avoid taking things personally.
- Offering support is not the same as trying to fix every problem or find an answer to every question. There are no easy answers to a cancer diagnosis, and sometimes people need to just know that they are being listened to.
- Be reassuring and open about offering continued support.
- Plan visits ahead of time and be on time. If you can't make an appointment, call immediately.
- Do what you can, and avoid promising too much. If you are unable to do what you have promised, don't let guilt get in the way of continuing to offer support and helping out in other ways. A common mistake is to fail to get back in touch because of personal embarrassment. An unexplained absence is worse than calling to say something won't work out.
- Give yourself a break: everyone is trying their best, and learning as they go. Caregivers are no exception.

(Revised January 2007, YSC - This information was originally developed and published by the National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations (NABCO) and made available by agreement with NABCO prior to its closing in June 2004.)



**Close to the Heart: A Family's Encounter with Breast Cancer**  
by Barry D. Teater (Marblehead Publishing, 1997, \$9.95)

This highly personal story is meant to inspire and console other young women with breast cancer. Written by one woman's brother about his sister's struggle with the disease, it describes her diagnosis, treatment, and family support over a seven-year period.

**The Fearless Caregiver: How to Get the Best Care for Your Loved One and Still Have a Life of Your Own**  
by Gary Barg (Capital Books, Inc., 2001, \$15.95)

This book aims to arm caregivers with tools to effectively care for their loved ones and help caregivers through the maze of financial and legal challenges of having a loved one with cancer.

Gilda's Club Worldwide  
322 Eighth Avenue, Suite 1402  
New York, NY 10001  
(888) GILDA-4-U  
(917) 305-1200  
[www.gildasclub.org](http://www.gildasclub.org)

Gilda's Club is a special place where the focus is on living with cancer and where men, women and children with any kind of cancer and their family members and friends can plan and build life-changing emotional and social support. There are a number of Gilda's Clubs around the country.

**Cancer Etiquette: What to Say, What to Do When Someone You Know or Love Has Cancer**  
by Rosanne Kalick (Lion Books, 2004, \$19.95)

Written by a two-time cancer survivor, this book offers suggestions for giving and acting on the most helpful, compassionate and appropriate responses and explains why they are.

**Cancer: Here's How You Can Help Me Cope & Survive**

by Joy Erlichman Miller and Monica Vest Wheeler with Diane Cullinan Oberhelman (BF Press, 2005, \$19.95)

Written in a light and practical manner, this book tackles one of the frequent "side effects" of cancer: the lack of communication between cancer patients/survivors and their family and friends.

**The Etiquette of Illness: What to Say When You Can't Find the Words**

by Susan P. Halpern (Bloomsbury, 2004, \$17.95)

This book is a guide to navigating the complex terrain of illness. A collection of anecdotes and insight will help those who feel awkward and unsure about responding to a friend who is going through illness.

**Lotsa Helping Hands**

365 Boston Post Road, Suite 157

Sudbury, MA 01776

[info@lotsahelpinghands.com](mailto:info@lotsahelpinghands.com)

[www.lotsahelpinghands.com](http://www.lotsahelpinghands.com)

Lotsa Helping Hands is an online organizing tool for friends, family, colleagues and neighbors to assist loved ones in need. It has a private group calendar, specifically designed for organizing helpers, where everyone can pitch in with meal deliveries, rides, and other tasks necessary for life to run smoothly during a crisis.

**The Well Iness Community**

919 18th Street, NW, Suite 54

Washington, DC 20006

(888) 793-WELL

[help@thewellnesscommunity.org](mailto:help@thewellnesscommunity.org)

[www.thewellnesscommunity.org](http://www.thewellnesscommunity.org)

The Wellness Community offers family support groups, family counseling, stress management sessions, education and nutritional workshops and social events at locations around the country.

**What's Happening to the Woman We Love? Families Coping with Breast Cancer**

(Susan G. Komen Foundation, 2001)

This booklet for families of a newly diagnosed woman offers suggestions of ways to be helpful and supportive. Also available in Spanish.

## Resources for partners

**Breast Cancer Husband: How To Help Your Wife (And Yourself) Through Diagnosis, Treatment And Beyond**  
by Marc Silver (Rodale Books, 2004, \$14.95)


This book speaks directly to husbands to help them better understand what their wives are going through so that they can assist during treatment. It can serve as a guide and offers practical tips and coping strategies to help men help the women that they love deal with breast cancer.

## Partners coping with breast cancer

A diagnosis of breast cancer can be an enormous and difficult challenge for any relationship. There are numerous resources for partners and families. For local sources of counsel and support, inquire at your physician's office, hospital departments of oncology and social services, churches, synagogues and other houses of worship, local American Cancer Society chapter, and school guidance counselors or social workers. Please also see our listing of Support Groups on page 141 for organizations in your community that may offer support group services for partners.

- **Make time.** Although you may be spending time together constantly throughout the day, it is easy to forget to make time to check in and communicate. It can be helpful to take time out to be with your loved one, when you can give your undivided attention.
- **Don't hide your emotions.** While it may seem intuitive to present a strong, courageous front, acknowledging your own fears and feelings may be more helpful for both you and your partner. Acting like a tower of strength can make it more difficult for your loved one to confide in you.
- **Listen to your loved one.** One common response is to act as the "super caregiver" who has all the answers and can fix everything. However, no one has all the answers in the face of cancer. Your loved one may just need to voice concerns to express herself and process what she is going through. Listen without judging or trying to focus the conversation on answers.
- **Remember that you are the same two people you were before the diagnosis.** Most importantly, tell your partner that you love them, and you are going to continue to love them. There is little you can promise that will provide as much reassurance and comfort as telling your partner that you are going to be there for them.
- **Approach physical intimacy with sensitivity and planning.** It is likely that your partner's feelings about sexual intimacy may change throughout the process of diagnosis, treatment and recovery. There are many reasons for this, ranging from treatment side effects, physical and emotional exhaustion, to changes in her body image. Although sexuality may become more complicated, your partner will most likely still desire physical closeness and affection.

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 **Confronting the Cow: A Young Family's Struggle with Breast Cancer, Loss and Rebuilding**  
by C. B. Donner (Moonlight Publishing, 2000, \$21.95)

Written by a husband who lost his wife to breast cancer at age 36, this book discusses the challenges and lessons learned by a father of four young children from the time of his wife's first diagnosis to her death.

**Couples Confronting Cancer: Keeping Your Relationship Strong**

by Joy L. Fincannon, RN, MS, Katherine V. Bruss, PsyD (American Cancer Society, 2002, \$18.95)

Maintaining a healthy, long-term marriage or relationship in today's society is challenging enough. When cancer enters the picture, it can become a source of further stress. It can cause people to reevaluate their lives and relationships. This book features information about how others experience cancer, the problems it often causes, and how to resolve—even prevent—those problems.

**Helping Your Mate Face Breast Cancer: Tips for Becoming an Effective Support Partner**

by Judy C. Kneece, RN, OCN (EduCare, Inc., 2003, \$14.95)

[www.educareinc.com](http://www.educareinc.com) or (843) 760-6064

This book is designed for partners of breast cancer patients to help them face the changes and challenges of meeting the vast support needs of the patient and themselves. The book provides guidance in dealing with the emotional pain of a partner's diagnosis, understanding how to help the patient cope, what to do the night before and after surgery, what to say about her scar and body image, protecting the sexual relationship and how to take care of your own needs.

 **It Takes a Worried Man: A Memoir**  
by Brendan Halpin (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2003, \$12.95)

A candid account of a husband's experience from the perspective of a man whose wife was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer at 32 years old.

Men Against Breast Cancer (MABC)  
PO Box 150  
Adamstown, MD 21710-0150  
(866) 547-MABC

[info@menagainstbreastcancer.org](mailto:info@menagainstbreastcancer.org)

[www.menagainstbreastcancer.org](http://www.menagainstbreastcancer.org)

The first national non-profit organization designed to provide targeted support services to educate and empower men to be effective caregivers when breast cancer strikes a female loved one, as well as mobilize men to be active participants in the fight to eradicate breast cancer as a life threatening illness. This website offers several guides and support materials for caregivers.

**What's Happening to the Woman I Love? Couples Coping With Breast Cancer**  
(Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, 2004)

[www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org) or (800) I'M-AWARE

This booklet aims to help partners to better understand how to cope, help emotionally and practically, and find support for the partner's own needs.

[www.YoungCancerSpouses.org](http://www.YoungCancerSpouses.org)

A website with a bulletin board that aims to bring together young spouses of people with cancer to share information, support, and experiences.

## Resources for single and dating women


 **Breastless in the City: A Young Woman's Story of Love, Loss, and Breast Cancer**  
by Cathy Bueti (Cleveland Clinic Press, 2006, \$24.95)

Seven years after losing her husband in a car crash at age 25, the author's diagnosis of breast cancer exacerbates the wrong choices she has made about men and her problems with self-esteem. In this honest account of her life, she gathers her strength and finds companionship and happiness with herself.

 **Fighting For Our Future: How Young Women Find Strength, Hope, and Courage While Taking Control of Breast Cancer**


by Beth Murphy (McGraw-Hill, 2003, \$14.95)

A comprehensive survival guide for young women diagnosed with breast cancer, doctors, and caregivers. Practical and personal, this book covers a range of concerns, from how to find a breast surgeon to the effects of breast cancer on relationships to surgical options.


 **I'm too Young to Have Breast Cancer! Regain Control of Your Life, Career, Family, Sexuality, and Faith**

by Beth Leibson-Hawkins (LifeLine Press, 2004, \$21.95)

This book considers how breast cancer affects young women's lives: their career goals, health insurance coverage, career changes, education, and shifting work and life priorities. Featuring experiences with diagnosis, treatment, and life after the disease from sixteen young women from all over the country, including some with a life partner, others single, some with children and some without. Contributors come from a wide range of ethnic and religious backgrounds and they represent a range of socioeconomic levels.

 My One-Night Stand with Cancer: A Memoir  
by Tania Katan (Alyson Books, 2005, \$15.95)

When the author was 21 years old, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Ten years later it happened again. By 31, she was a two-time breast cancer survivor with the scars to prove it and a sense of humor forged by her experience. The memoir of this lesbian breast cancer survivor, loaded with rage and humor, is woven through with stories of picking up women while bald, coping with her supportive but neurotic family and pledging to never date psychotic women again.

 UpFront: Sex and the Post-Mastectomy Woman  
by Linda Dachman (Penguin Books, 1991, \$7.95)

When she got the news that she had breast cancer, the author was 34 years old and single. In this account of her experience, Dackman explores the emotional aftermath of her mastectomy, including fears relating to dating and intimacy.

## Resources for children

### YSC Fact sheet: Talking with children about breast cancer

Written by Cynthia Moore, PhD Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center Parenting  
at a Challenging Time (PACT) Program

For many mothers, one of the first reactions to being diagnosed with breast cancer is, “What about my kids?” There is no one right way to help children cope with breast cancer, because each child and family is different. But, there are some general guidelines that can help different families meet the unique needs of their children.

#### Communication

Talking about what is happening is extremely important, but not always easy. It is normal to want to protect children from bad news, but children of all ages tend to be good at picking up on parents’ distress, even when parents think they are hiding it well. Having a clear explanation about what is happening helps children understand that they are not to blame for parents’ worries, and prevents them from creating explanations for changes that are just plain wrong, and sometimes much worse than reality.

Using the word “cancer” – Many parents wonder whether they should mention the word “cancer” to children and worry that this will make children more upset than just saying, “Mommy is sick.” A problem with using only general words like “sick” or “boo-boo on my breast” is that children hear these words applied to them when they have colds or scrapes. They can end up feeling confused when you don’t recover as quickly as they do, and worried that getting “sick” will be just as hard for them the next time.

Telling children about your diagnosis – The exact words you use to talk with your children will depend on their ages, but children of all ages can benefit from knowing the name of the illness (breast cancer), the type of treatment, and how cancer will affect their own day-to-day lives. Sometimes beginning a conversation with a description of what children may have noticed already can make it easier: “I think you know that I’ve had a few doctor’s appointments lately...we just figured out that I’m sick with something called breast cancer. My doctors are going to give me special medicine, called “chemotherapy” (or, “radiation”) to help me get better. I will be going to the doctor’s office at the hospital for my medicine every week, and on the days I go, Isabelle’s mom will take care of you until I get home.”

Common questions – Giving children the “headlines” then letting their questions guide the rest of the conversation can prevent children from feeling flooded with information and details, and can give you a sense of their concerns. Children may ask, or just secretly wonder:

***What IS cancer?***

Our bodies are made up of building blocks called “cells” that are always making more of themselves to keep our bodies healthy. Sometimes a group of cells makes far too many new cells, and all the extra cells form a lump called a tumor. I have a tumor in my breast, and the treatments are going to shrink the tumor and help make sure a new one doesn’t grow.

***How did you get cancer?***

No one knows exactly why some people get cancer and others don’t... do you have ideas about how I got it? Children’s answers can yield surprising information. Preschoolers and young school age children may believe that something they thought or did caused your cancer, for example, wishing something bad would happen to you during a tantrum, or hitting you so that you got a “lump.” Older children are sometimes aware of a connection between stress and illness, and may worry that they indirectly caused the cancer by adding stress to your life. Children can be reassured that absolutely nothing they did caused the cancer, but that there are things they can do to help you feel better, like telling you a joke, or drawing a picture.

***Can I catch cancer?***

No, cancer isn’t contagious—you can’t catch it from another person. It’s more like a broken leg than a cold.

**And school aged children and adolescents may ask the question that many parents dread most:**

***Are you going to die?***

It is tempting to promise, “No, never!” right away, but it may be almost as reassuring, and more honest, to convey lots of hope and optimism, but also not to make promises you can’t keep. You might talk about the positive aspects of the situation, the plan of action, and a reassurance that if the situation changes, the child will be informed: “Will I die? Well, it’s true that people sometimes die from the kind of cancer I have, but my doctors tell me they can cure my cancer. It was caught really early, and now I’m taking medicine so I can be extra sure it’s completely gone from my body. I’m planning to live a long, long time. If I hear anything different, I will talk to you about it.” Or, “I have a tough kind of cancer to cure, but my doctors think I will live a long time... I’m going to do everything I can to get better so we can get back to doing all the things we enjoy together.”

Keeping lines of communication open – Once you’ve told your children about your diagnosis and treatment plan, then what? Check in and keep talking over the next days and weeks. You may have needed to ask your doctors the same questions more than once before the information really sunk in, and your children may need to do the same. Their reactions will change as the news sinks in and your treatment begins, and routines at home begin to change. It helps to encourage children not to worry alone, and to talk about their concerns and feelings with a loving adult. Questions like, “Are you hearing too much or too little about my cancer?” and “Are there questions (or feelings) you have but don’t want to share with me? Who else could you talk with?” might help start children talking.

Parents seem to have a hard time asking about their children’s feelings, perhaps because it is so difficult to see our children feeling sad or scared. Some children believe that sharing their feelings will be too upsetting for their parents, and need to be reassured that talking with another trusted adult is ok, even if it’s not a parent. The things that upset your children may surprise you, so asking about their feelings can help your family figure out how to work together to lower children’s distress. For example, depending on their age, your children may feel frustrated that they can’t have friends over since you’re not feeling well, or feel like their house is not their own any more because so many visitors are stopping by to offer support, or feel overwhelmed by being asked to “step up to the plate” and help out with housework or caring for younger siblings.

A question like, “What bothers you the most about my having cancer?” sends the message that it’s ok for kids to share negative feelings. Your job then is to listen, accept the feelings (“Mmm, I can understand how you’d feel that way!”) and see if you can together come up with some solutions (“Would it help if I checked with Josh’s mom to see if you could go there once a week to play? Had my friends over mostly while you’re in school? Took another look with you at your list of chores?”) Even if there’s no easy solution, listening, letting your child know the situation won’t last forever, and even wishing with her that things were different, can help: “I’m glad you told me how sad and angry you are that we won’t be able to go on the vacation we’d planned this year...my treatments won’t last forever, so we will definitely plan another vacation, but I wish I could magically speed up time so my treatments would be done in time for us to go!”

## Family routines

Children thrive when life is mostly predictable, and part of what can be upsetting to them about a parent’s cancer is the changes in their day-to-day routine. Some changes are unavoidable, of course, but now is the time to think about asking for help—from family, friends, teachers, neighbors—in keeping your children’s routines as normal and predictable as possible. The kinds of routines that anchor preschool children’s days include those at preschool drop-off and pick-up, naptime, mealtimes, and bedtime, and for some children, routines around using the toilet. Giving clear, detailed instructions to new caregivers can help children feel more settled even when you aren’t there: “Jenny has milk in the sippy cup with dinosaurs around 10, and then a nap with her blue blankie right after that. She likes to hear the Raffi tape as she goes to sleep.”

School-aged children also enjoy regular mealtime and bedtime routines, and benefit from staying involved in their usual activities, such as music, sports and clubs. Children in grade school often have a tremendous amount to organize, but lack the skills to consistently plan ahead, which can be a problem if you aren’t feeling well enough to make last minute trips for supplies or forgotten books or homework. Letting a teacher know about your treatment, and that you’d appreciate early warning of any long-term projects, and being willing to ask the parent of a classmate to buy extra clay and pipe cleaners when they do their own child’s shopping can help. If informed about your cancer, your child’s teacher is in a good position to notice if your child is having any trouble with friends or schoolwork, and can then let you know before problems have a chance to grow.

Adolescents, though more independent and less often home, continue to need structure and support from parents. For example, family time that isn’t focused only on cancer, regular mealtimes, and parents’ continued interest in their lives are all helpful for teens. It is easy to assume that your teenagers will be able to do quite a bit around the house when you are not feeling well, but asking too much of them can make it difficult for them to stay involved in the friendships and activities that help them cope. It can help to let your adolescent know that you understand how important these things are to him or her, and to work together to negotiate some reasonable expectations.

## Family time

Along with maintaining normal routines, it will help if your children can still enjoy time with you in which cancer isn’t the main focus. It can be reassuring to everyone to feel that the good parts of life are going on, even in the face of illness. You may find that you have many visits and phone calls from friends and family wanting to “check in.” This can be hard on children. You may feel supported by these conversations, but they more likely will feel uncomfortable and tired of hearing about cancer. It can help to let friends know that while you are with your children, you’d prefer not to give updates, and to set aside some “cancer free” time at home, perhaps during meals and at your children’s bedtime, when you don’t answer the phone.

Some families feel comfortable choosing a close friend or family member to be in charge of giving updates to everyone else, either by phone or email. One person can also be chosen to organize people who are offering to help your family. Then, when someone asks how he or she can help, and you can't immediately think of anything, you can suggest they contact your "Captain of Kindness" so when you need something they can be asked.

### When to seek professional help for your children

Most often, children cope quite well with breast cancer, despite the many challenges it brings. They continue to function mostly as usual in school and activities, enjoy friendships, and are basically their usual selves at home. "Coping well" doesn't mean they don't react at all, however, because children often feel and act a bit differently when a parent is sick for a long period of time. Regression, or backsliding to an earlier developmental phase, is common for kids under stress, so depending on your child's age, you may notice things like your child needing pull-ups again at night, or being less able to talk through a conflict without name-calling, or being unable to finish difficult homework without lots of structure and help. Your child may seem less able to tolerate frustration; things that would normally "slide" create meltdowns. Or, your child may complain of headaches and stomachaches, difficulty falling asleep, or having a hard time concentrating in school. These changes generally don't last more than a couple of weeks.

However, if you notice that your child still isn't him or herself after 2-3 weeks, or that he or she is having difficulty in more than one area (school, peers, or at home), or with adolescents, if you suspect that there is an increase in alcohol or drug use or other risk-taking behavior, then it may be time to talk with your pediatrician, a school counselor, or another professional who is knowledgeable about children. It may also help to find out whether other adults, like teachers, coaches, or other parents, have noticed similar changes, so you have a clearer sense of the problem.

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### Resources for parents to use

Another Morning: Voices of Truth and Hope from Mothers with Cancer

by Linda Blachman (Seal Press, 2006, \$15.95)

This moving and inspirational book is a tapestry of voices from women coping with raising their children while living with breast cancer. Taken from the author's *Mothers' Living Stories Project*, the mothers' stories are interwoven with the authors own personal and professional reflections on her experience.

Camp Kesem National

PO Box 1113

Lafayette, CA 94549

(925) 550-5698

[www.campkesemnational.org](http://www.campkesemnational.org)

Creates summer camp programs for children across the nation who have or have had a parent with cancer.

Helping Children When a Family Member Has Cancer: Dealing with Diagnosis

(American Cancer Society, 2005)

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) or (800) ACS-2345

This online guide provides useful information regarding how to help children understand and deal with a parent's or a close family member's cancer experience. Also includes a listing of additional resources and books for children.

### Helping Children Cope with Cancer: A Guide for Parents and Families

by Peter Van Dornoot (Hatherleigh Press, 2006, \$15.95)

Over twenty parents explain how cancer has affected their families and how they have been able to provide the love and support that their children need.

### Helping Children Understand Cancer: How to Talk to Your Children About Your Cancer Diagnosis

[www.cancercare.org/pdf/fact\\_sheets/fs\\_children\\_en.pdf](http://www.cancercare.org/pdf/fact_sheets/fs_children_en.pdf) or (800) 813-HOPE

CancerCare's factsheet for talking with children about breast cancer. Includes ten tips for communicating with your children. Also available in Spanish.

### How to Help Children Through a Parent's Serious Illness

by Kathleen McCue, MA, CCLS with Ron Bonn (St. Martin's Press, 1996, \$13.95)

This practical guide explains the special needs of children experiencing the serious illness of a parent and tells parents, teachers, and other caregivers how to help them face the mental and emotional stresses and come out healthy.

### Hurricane Voices Family Reading List

[www.hurricanevoices.org/list/index.htm](http://www.hurricanevoices.org/list/index.htm) or (866) 667-3300

Hurricane Voices has compiled a list of high quality books and videos that will help mothers with breast cancer address the implication of the disease on family dynamics. The Reading List has become part of family support programs at major cancer centers across the nation.

### KidsCope

2045 Peachtree Road, Suite 150

Atlanta, GA 30309

(404) 892-1437

[www.kidscope.org](http://www.kidscope.org)

KIDSCOPE's mission is to help children and families understand the effects of cancer or chemotherapy on a loved one, to provide suggestions for coping, and to develop innovative programs and materials that communicate a message of hope to diverse families coping with this crisis.

### Kid's Konnected

27071 Cabot Road, Suite 102

Laguna Hills, CA 92653

(800) 899-2866

(949) 582-5443

[info@kidskonnected.org](mailto:info@kidskonnected.org)

[www.kidskonnected.org](http://www.kidskonnected.org)

Provides friendship, understanding, education, and support for the children who have a parent with cancer, or have lost a parent to cancer. This organization offers group meetings, summer camps, a 24-hour hotline, a newsletter and an online resource library.

### Raising an Emotionally Healthy Child when a Parent is Sick

by Paula K. Rauch, MD, and Anna C. Muriel, MD, MPH (McGraw-Hill, 2006, \$14.95)

This book prepares parents for the special parenting challenges that come with illness. Based on the PACT Program at Massachusetts General Hospital, this book provides tools to communicate with children about illness, understand each child's temperament, organize a family support system, prepare for hospital visits and answer tough questions about death and dying.

What We Have, We Share: Stories of Mothers and Daughters Bonding Through Breast Cancer

by S. Eva Singletary, MD, Alice F. Judkins, RN, MS, Holly L. Masturzo, PhD

(University of Texas Health Services Center at Houston Printing Services, 2002, \$14.95)

This book shares the stories of mothers diagnosed with breast cancer and how that diagnosis affected their daughters. These stories show that family relationships can strengthen through the adversity of such a diagnosis.

What's Happening to Mom? Talking to Your Children About Breast Cancer

(The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, 2004)

[www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org) or (800) I'M-AWARE

This 16-page informative booklet gives information to breast cancer survivors on different ways to inform children about breast cancer. It may be ordered from a local Komen affiliate, see listing beginning on page 26.

When a Parent has Cancer: A Guide to Caring for your Children

by Wendy S. Harpham, (HarperCollins, 2004, \$14.95)

This book is written by a physician and parent with cancer, and includes a children's book, *Becky and the Worry Cup*, that comes from her own children's experience. The author uses examples for dealing with specific issues during diagnosis and treatment and offers practical advice for helping children cope with grief, loss, uncertainty, and fear of death.

## Children's Books

Barklay and Eve: What Is Cancer Anyway? Explaining Cancer To Children of All Ages

by Karen L. Carney (Dragonfly Publishing Company, 2001, \$7.95)

This book provides basic information that is essential to understanding a cancer diagnosis. Barklay and Eve define cancer, explain radiation and chemotherapy and emphasize that everyone's cancer is different.

This is a hopeful story where the characters respond very well to treatment and promise to let their loved ones know if the cancer gets worse or comes back.

Because...Someone I Love Has Cancer: Kids' Activity Book

(American Cancer Society, 2000)

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) or (800) ACS-2345

Children's activity book aimed to provide opportunities for self-expression and offer support and encouragement. Geared towards children ages 6 to 12.

It Helps to Have Friends: When Mom or Dad Has Cancer

(American Cancer Society, 2001)

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) or (800) ACS-2345

This booklet, told from a child's perspective, deals with the questions children have about cancer and addresses the feelings and emotions that often come up.

Kemo Shark

by H. Elizabeth King, PhD (Kidscope, Inc., 1995)

[www.kidscope.org](http://www.kidscope.org)

Written by a child psychologist who is a breast cancer survivor, this children's book introduces us to Kemo Shark, a warrior who can find and kill cancer cells. This book explains to children the good and bad that comes along with dealing with cancer treatment.

Michael's Mommy has Breast Cancer

by Lisa Torrey (Hibiscus Press, 1999, \$10.95)

This book aims to help kids cope with guilt, anger, fear and helplessness when their mom has breast cancer. Geared towards children ages 5 to 10.

Our Family Has Cancer Too!

by Christine Clifford (University of Minnesota Press, 2002, \$6.95)

This book is told from the perspective of a sixth grade boy whose mom is diagnosed with cancer and addresses how a family's life changes after diagnosis. The book also contains helpful exercises that open up dialogue between parents and children.

Our Mom Has Cancer

by Abigail and Adrienne Ackerman (American Cancer Society, 2001, \$12.95)

Written by two sisters, ages 11 and 13, this book describes what it was like when their mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. It gives children an idea of what to expect when their mother goes through treatment.

Promises

by Elizabeth Mahony Winthrop (Clarion Books, 2000, \$16.00)

Written from the perspective of a fourth grade girl dealing with her mother's cancer. This book deals frankly with the range of emotions that children feel when a parent has cancer.

The Hope Tree: Kids Talk About Breast Cancer

by Laura Numeroff and Wendy S. Harpham, MD (Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2001, \$12.00)

A picture book written to help children cope with a mother's breast cancer. The authors have created ten "testimonials" by animal characters in an imaginary support group, allowing each of them to talk about issues they are facing. Geared towards children ages 4 to 8.

Tickles Tabitha's Cancer-Tankerous Mommy

by Amelia Frahm (Nutcracker Publishing, 2001, \$9.95)

This children's book told through young Tabitha's eyes, dispels stereotypes and acknowledges the moody truths faced by families living with cancer. Geared towards children ages 4 to 8.

When Eric's Mom Fought Cancer

by Judith Vigna (Albert Whitman & Company, 1993, \$14.95)

This story about a mother with breast cancer says that it is alright to be angry about illness and offers hope without false promises. Some realizations on a ski trip with his dad while his mother is going through treatment help Eric to cope with the frustration and anger he is feeling about the cancer in his family.

The Year My Mother Was Bald

by Ann Speltz (Magination, 2003, \$8.95)

A scrapbook filled with drawings, photos, medical clippings and resources, this book offers information about breast cancer, diagnosis and treatment while going through the journey that Clare took during the year her mother was bald. Geared towards children 8 to 13.

## Resources for parents of young women with breast cancer

Mothers Supporting Daughters with Breast Cancer

21710 Bayshore Road  
Chestertown, MD 21620-4401  
(410) 778-1982  
[msdbc@dmv.com](mailto:msdbc@dmv.com)

[www.mothersdaughters.org](http://www.mothersdaughters.org)

This non-profit organization aims to assist mothers to support daughters during the various phases of breast cancer.

Handbook for Mothers Supporting Daughters with Breast Cancer

(Mothers Supporting Daughters with Breast Cancer, 1999)

[www.mothersdaughters.org](http://www.mothersdaughters.org) or (410) 778-1982

This booklet is for mothers who have a daughter diagnosed with breast cancer. It provides a list of free resources for obtaining medical information about the disease itself, suggestions as to ways in which a mother can offer her daughter assistance physically and emotionally, and methods to help a mother personally cope so that her attention can be directed toward supporting her daughter at a time when a mother's support is greatly needed.

If You Are a Daughter With Breast Cancer

(Mothers Supporting Daughters with Breast Cancer, 1999)

[www.mothersdaughters.org](http://www.mothersdaughters.org) or (410) 778-1982

This is a booklet prepared for a daughter with breast cancer. It provides information about the difficulties a mother may be experiencing and how a daughter might help her mother by directing her into helpful and supportive behavior. It provides some suggestions on how to broach the subject, as well as how to open and maintain good communication with other family members.

## Resources for friends of young women with breast cancer

While there are not many resources written specifically for friends, they can be an important part of the support network for young women affected by breast cancer. The following books give a good overview of the breast cancer experience and how to provide support.

Cancer Etiquette: What to Say, What to Do When Someone You Know or Love Has Cancer

by Rosanne Kalick (Lion Books, 2004, \$19.95)

Written by a two-time cancer survivor, this book offers suggestions for saying and acting on the most helpful, compassionate and appropriate responses and explains why they are.

Cancer: Here's How You Can Help Me Cope & Survive

by Joy Erlichman Miller And Monica Vest Wheeler with Diane Cullinan Oberhelman (BF Press, 2005, \$19.95)

Written in a light and practical manner, this book tackles one of the frequent "side effects" of cancer: the lack of communication between cancer patients/survivors and their family and friends.

The Etiquette of Illness: What to Say When You Can't Find the Words

By Susan P. Halpern (Bloomsbury, 2004, \$17.95)

This book is a guide to navigating the complex terrain of illness. A collection of anecdotes and insight will help those who feel awkward and unsure about responding to a friend who is going through illness.



Fighting For Our Future: How Young Women Find Strength, Hope and Courage  
While Taking Control of Breast Cancer

by Beth Murphy (McGraw-Hill, 2003, \$14.95)

This book is a comprehensive survival guide for young women diagnosed with breast cancer, doctors, and caregivers. It focuses on how young women deal with issues such as dating and sexuality; fertility and pregnancy concerns.



I'm Too Young To Have Breast Cancer!  
Regain Control of Your Life, Career, Family, Sexuality, and Faith

by Beth Leibson-Hawkins (LifeLine Press, 2004, \$21.95)

Contains the stories of 16 young breast cancer survivors who deal with how cancer has changed their lives, including how it affected intimacy and dating.