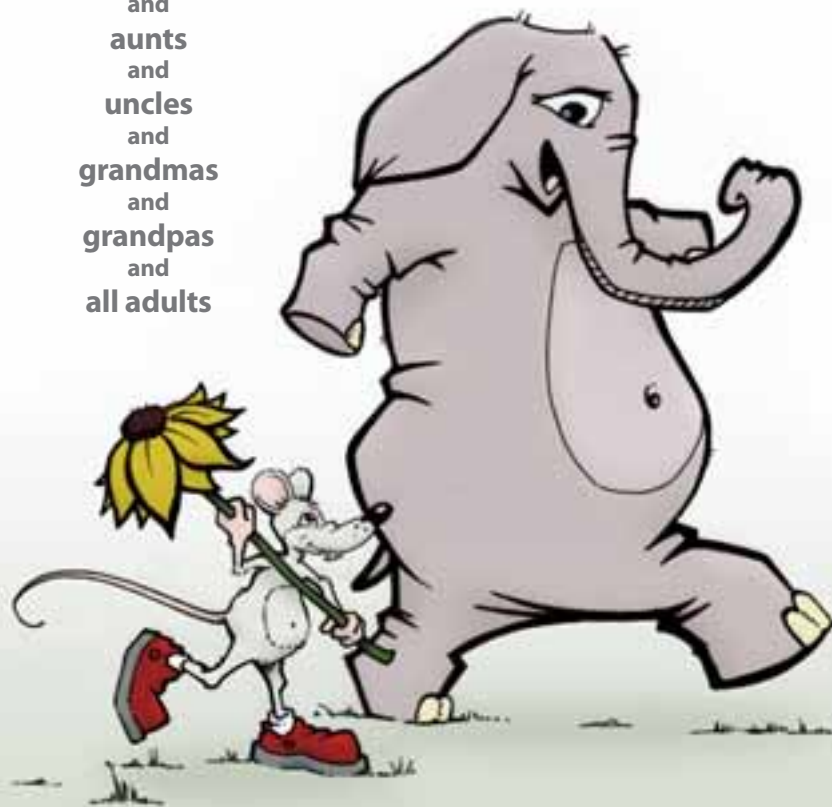


# Simple Talk for Tough Times

TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT CANCER

A how-to guide for  
moms  
and  
dads  
and  
aunts  
and  
uncles  
and  
grandmas  
and  
grandpas  
and  
all adults



## Introduction

“Sometimes the questions are complicated  
and the answers are simple.”

~ Dr. Seuss

A cancer diagnosis shakes up your life and the lives of your family in ways you might never expect. Nothing feels quite the same. It is hard enough to accept the news yourself, but how can you possibly tell your children? What should you say? When is the right time to tell them?

The diagnosis looms like the proverbial “elephant in the room” – an age-old expression used to describe something big that everyone is aware of but no one wants to talk about. So we try to ignore it, usually because we just do not know what to say or how to say it.



*Simple Talk for Tough Times* is designed to help you talk with the children in your life about the “elephant in the room” and help them learn to cope with the enormous changes that often accompany a cancer diagnosis. We hope, as your conversations grow and you cherish your times together, you and your children will blossom in ways you’ve never before imagined.

We have gathered and simplified information from many resources (most of which are referenced in the last section of this book), as well as our own experience with parents and their children.

In addition to general advice and suggestions, this book explores each phase of childhood development and offers specific ideas for what to say, what to do and what to observe when talking with your children about the “elephant in the room.” Understanding the

emotional milestones associated with each phase of development and how your children may be affected by the changes in your home, will help you prepare and manage the challenges that arise.

Children and adolescents alike tend to have concerns about their parent's health as well the changes that are happening in their homes. It would be of concern if they had no reaction to a significant event in the life of their family. But, most children doing well with school, friends, and at home prior to their parent's diagnosis of cancer continue to do well through treatment. Those children who were struggling in one or more of these areas prior to a parent's illness are likely to have extra difficulty weathering the disruptions and worries of their parent's illness.

Communication is important and it takes different forms in different families. Doing things together is a way of communicating, as is talking. This guide encourages a combination of both talking and doing – real together times that will help your family learn ways of communicating through these tough times.

Take from this book what is relevant to your family and the developmental behavior of the children in your life. Since all children mature in their own times, it is important that you meet your child where she is developmentally. Children may be more or less mature than their actual age, so you might like to read the pages of more than one age category for your child. Then choose the age that best corresponds to your child's maturity.



*Simple Talk for Tough Times* is organized into four sections. The first two sections provide general information for all ages, as well as talking points organized by childhood developmental age groups. The third section discusses special circumstances facing some families and children. The final section offers ideas and resources for more information, support and assistance.

This book can also serve as a companion guide for our support groups, allowing you to share concerns with other adults and children, and learn together. We encourage you to attend a support group to meet other parents, share experiences and talk about the information in this book.