



Tips For Talking With Your Children About Your Illness

- A** Offer your children **AGE-APPROPRIATE** information about your illness. The younger they are, the more concrete their thinking.
- B** **BE** intentional with your children. Spend both quality and quantity time with them. It makes the conversation time more natural.
- C** Offer **CHOICES** about what they would like to know. Answer the questions they have, not the ones they didn't ask.
- D** **DON'T** allow them to use your illness as an excuse for inappropriate behavior.
- E** Children are, by nature, **EGOCENTRIC**. This means they are most concerned about how this will impact them. How will their lives be different? The same?
- F** When children ask tough questions, lead with a **FEELING** rather than a **FACT**. They may ask, "Are you going to die?" A first response can be, "You are really worried about that."
- G** **GIVE** affection and time as they sort things out. The circumstance will be very confusing to them.
- H** Answer **HONESTLY**. Children understand when it is worse than you are saying it is. We don't want to scare children, but we want to be honest.
- I** Be **INTENTIONAL** about your approach to communication with them. How you tell them is important.
- J** If you're not sure if you should tell your children about your illness, **JUST DO IT!** They need to know.
- K** **KEEP** your expectations of their basic responsibilities. Be open to talking about their feelings rather than allowing them to disregard their responsibilities.
- L** **LISTEN** to their **LANGUAGE** and use it back to them. For example, if they use the word "scared" then use that word as well, letting them know you hear and understand them.

- M** Explain **MEDICAL** stuff in terms they can understand.
- N** Because younger children don't know how to perceive the long-term future, limit your information with them to the **NEXT STEPS**.
- O** **OPEN** up discussions with your children. They may be afraid to start the conversation when they have questions.
- P** Younger children live in the **PRESENT MOMENT**. The younger they are, the less they will understand the concept of the future. So, talk to them about what is happening now.
- Q** Answer the **QUESTIONS** they are asking. Sometimes too much information actually confuses things.
- R** **RESPECT** their **REACTIONS**. They may not know how to respond to what you're saying. Telling them to be strong or to not cry may shut them down.
- S** Maintaining **STRUCTURE** at home is very helpful for children. To the best of your ability, keep their schedule consistent, even if you need help to do it.
- T** Set aside **TIME** to have family discussions. This is important stuff.
- U** **USE** resources like Living Hope or Cancer.net. These sites have some really helpful information to help families navigate the uncertainties you face.
InheritanceOfHope.org/LivingHope
- V** **VALUE** their input to the conversation. Children can have amazing insight and strength when given the chance to express themselves.
- W** **WAIT** to inform them of new situations until you have clear information. Lots of changing information is confusing.
- X** **X** marks the spot. If you have a child who withdraws when upset, give them some space, but then go find them (physically and emotionally). Dig a bit if you need to help them express themselves.
- Y** Share with them your favorite **YESTERDAYS**. Memories that are important to you will become important to them.
- Z** Express your love to them with **ZEAL**. They need to know you will always love them, no matter what.

