



PRESENTED FOR

Coping with Cancer, COVID, and other illness

Erin M. Rafter, PhD, CCLS

AGENDA

- Challenges for children and families
- Developmental reactions to cancer & illness
- Impact on School & Behavior
- How can you help?

CHALLENGES

- So many changes this year
- Covid
- School
- Social challenges & isolation
- Uncertainty
- Loss
- Financial stressors on a family



STRESS POINTS FOR FAMILIES

- Diagnosis
- Treatment
 - Separation
 - Changes in appearance
 - Routine and mood changes
- End of Treatment
 - Due to remission/No Evidence of Disease
 - Due to progression of illness
- Death



DEVELOPMENTAL REACTIONS



Age and developmental stage aren't always the same

- Infants and toddlers (0-2)
 - not a concept of disease but can hear the words
 - very aware of separation and changes in routine
 - Needs: consistent reassurance, calm tones, play, who will take care of them
- Preschool (3-5)
 - Can have some understanding of the disease & treatment
 - Can display regression of learned skills
 - Lots of questions
 - Needs: assistance with expressing feelings, play, & what to expect

DEVELOPMENTAL REACTIONS (AGES 5-9)



Early Elementary

- Explain cancer in more clear way
- Anticipate changes and prepare the child
- More sensitive to physical changes in adult
- Lots of questions, but may not ask parent
- Still may have magical thinking, regression, acting out, or “being the parent”
- Needs:
 - Clear communication & expectations
 - Information
 - Expression of & normalizing feelings
 - Time & attention

DEVELOPMENTAL REACTIONS (AGES 10-13)

Late Elementary /Middle School

- Explain illness as clearly as possible
- Give them resources (they find their own)
- Keep routines and activities
- Increased anger & mood, withdrawal, physical symptoms, grades drop
- Needs:
 - People to talk to & listen to them
 - Clear communication about expectations
 - Reassurance
 - Normalizing feelings

DEVELOPMENTAL REACTIONS (AGES 14-17)

- High School Independence (can take on more responsibilities)
- Explain the illness clearly, talk about feelings & be honest
- The push-pull of independence
- Extreme changes in behavior, withdrawal, grade changes
- Needs:
 - Structure & appropriate limits
 - Other trusted adults to talk to
 - Healthy outlets of emotions & stress
 - Encourage & support involvement



HOW CAN I HELP

What is your role?

What does the family want/need?

What does the child want/need?

What is available?

What are your boundaries?





KIDSHOP

- Group for families dealing with adult cancer



BRIDGES

- Group for families dealing with loss of an adult due to cancer



CONNECTIONS

- Group for families coping with pediatric cancer

- **INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT**
ADULT GROUPS
INFORMATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS
EXERCISE
NUTRITION
DISTANT REIKI
CREATIVE ARTS
MEDITATION

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES





the
GATHERING
Place

FACING CANCER • EMBRACING LIFE



WAYS TO CONNECT

216-595-9546
touchedbycancer.org



TGP EAST

The Arnold & Sydell Miller Family Campus

23300 Commerce Park
Beachwood, Ohio 44122

TGP WEST

The Sandy Borrelli Center

25425 Center Ridge Road
Westlake, Ohio 44145