Helping Children Cope
When a Parent has a Serious Illness
Strategies and materials we can use
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Palliative Care
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We know why it matters

- One of every four adults dx’d with cancer is the parent of a child under 18yo
- The well parent’s functioning has a significant impact of the child’s well-being
- A child’s developmental stage and temperament play a key role in how the child is able to understand and cope with a parent’s illness
why it matters

- Honest and age appropriate communication is essential
- Children are already vulnerable to stressors, may need extra support to cope with this new challenge
What we know parents struggle with:

- How to talk to their child
- What words to use
- How will I know if they need help?
- Parents want to protect their children from difficult emotions
What We do to Help

- Normalize their worries
- Give them suggestions
- Meet with the children/teens
- Explore their fears
- Put into context
Quick suggestions
Parenting Strategies

- talk to your child
- refer to the medical name
- welcome questions
- respect your child’s wish not to talk
- maintain schedules
- maintain routines
- share family meals
- minimize disruptions during family time
talking about death

- developmental stage matters
- what are the child’s underlying worries
- balance uncertainty with reassurance
- when death is likely in coming weeks, make child aware
For starters: Brochure
Activities

Pillow Case
Thumb Print
Rocks
Notes
Journal
Memory Box
Little Box of Big Thoughts
giving kids something to do

- structure
- safety
- focus
- expectations
Activities

© Pillow Case
Thumb Prints

Thumb Print Art Kit
The Transitional Object

International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 34:89-97

D. W. Winnicott
comfort object, transitional object, or security blanket is an item used to provide psychological comfort, especially in unusual or unique situations, or at bedtime for small children.
July 8, 2016

To The YY Toy Company:

I would like to humbly request a donation of 30-50 Bonnie baby (or plush toys) to have for the children of seriously ill adult patients here at Duke University Hospital, served by our Palliative Care service.

As the clinical social worker for the Palliative Care service, I work with families of adults who are dealing with serious or life threatening illnesses. Often these patients have young children and we work to provide support and resources to them as they struggle with these difficult situations. For many patients, it is difficult for young children to come and visit in the hospital so we work hard to provide items that the children can bring to their parent – or the parent can give to their children while they are away from one another, in addition to sharing their love and security with one another.

Being able to give these children a Bonnie Baby to share with their parent, or for the parent to give to their child as an item of love and security would be extremely meaningful. Often parents cannot afford even a stuffed animal to provide for their children. We would be extremely grateful for the donation of any amount of Bonnie Babies (or other plush toys) that we would give to these loving parents to help their children cope with their serious or life threatening illness.

I would be happy to provide more information about our Palliative Care program to assist in your consideration of a donation to our program. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to present this request to you and hope you will be able to help us.

Sincerely yours,

Victoria Left, LICSW, ACTIP-SW
Duke University Hospital Palliative Care Clinical Social Worker
919-940-3853 (page)
Ty Toy Company

Just ask!!
Give to Nurses/ Docs

Stock nurses stations with easily reached material

- booklets, lists
- bag for thumb prints
Resources


http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.3322/canjclin.56.4.197/full


http://www.lianalowenstein.com/articlesTerminalIllnes.pdf

http://www.winstonswish.org

http://www.massgeneral.org/cancer/supportservices/PACT.aspx
everyday life

memories

cherish