

What about Me?



...for children when a parent has cancer

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A NOTE TO PARENTS

This booklet is for your children, either for them to read alone or with you.

Read through this book yourself first to make sure you are comfortable with the language and descriptions used throughout the book. You may then want to read it together with your child/children so you can answer any questions straight away.

The book provides basic information and explores the possible feelings, fears and concerns your children may have.

Children are often more resilient than we think. Open and honest and direct communication is essential for all children to support a strong understanding of what is going on and help with the changes that are coming. Each family is unique and not everything you read here will be relevant to your situation.

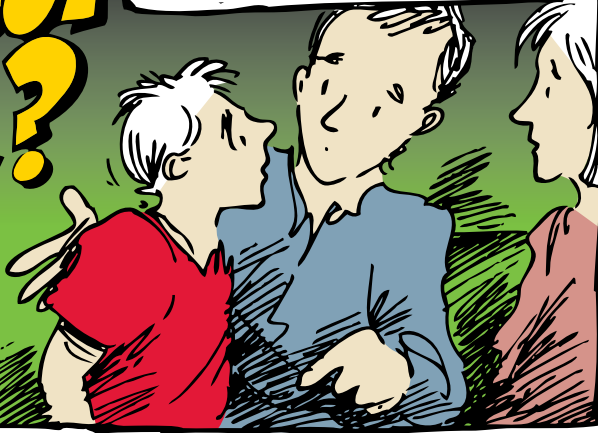
You may want to use this booklet as a starting point to explore issues with your child(ren) and to start answering some questions. You may also find it useful to refer to the Cancer Council resource Talking to Kids about Cancer to get some tips on how to discuss cancer with your children.

This book is aimed at children aged 8-12.

Drawings by: Simon Kneebone

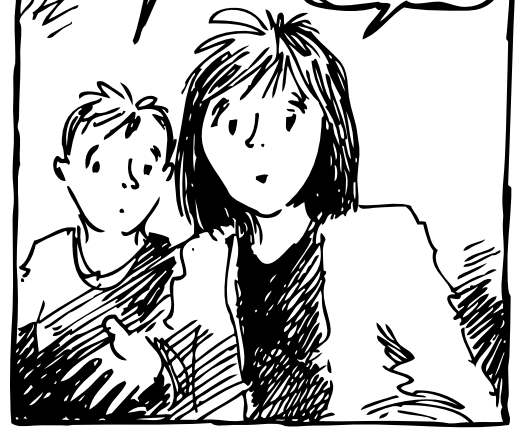
What about Me?

When you first heard that your parent had cancer, it probably sounded scary and terrible...



...like the end of the world!

- but it isn't!



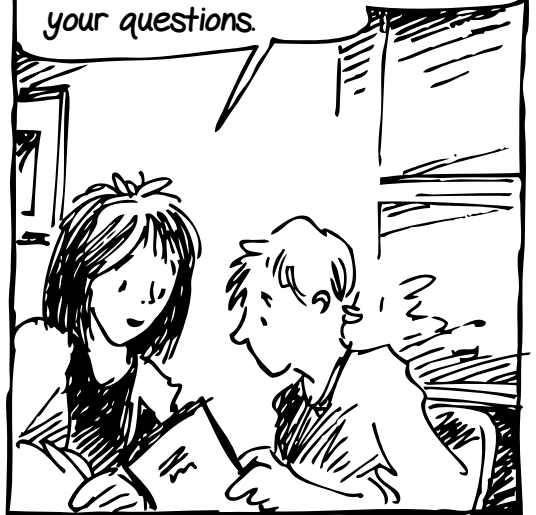
You will probably have a lot of feelings that aren't easy to express...



sometimes the best way to cope or learn to live with anything new or difficult is to find out everything that you can about it.



This booklet is for you - it will help to answer some of your questions.

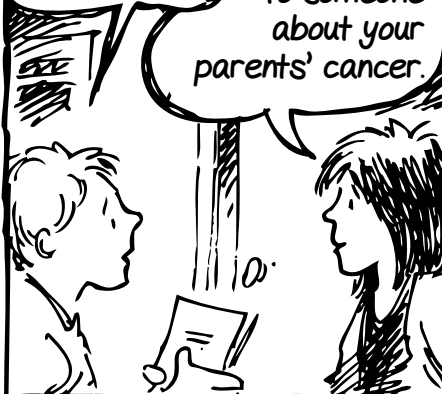


This booklet can be a great help and support to start conversations with your family about cancer. One way to use it is if there is something you find difficult to talk about you can mark the section and give it to one of your parents



- or you can say "I read this book and it said..."

The important thing is that you can talk to someone about your parents' cancer.



We hope this booklet will help you get started.



What is Cancer?

Cells are the building blocks of the body...

in a healthy body they are always dying and being replaced by new cells in a regular and orderly fashion.

Sometimes something happens to change the cells in a part of the body...

...they start to grow in an unusual way - too fast - and they stop doing the jobs they are supposed to do...

this abnormal growth of cells is called cancer.

Eventually these cancer cells can start to crowd out the healthy cells - and interfere with the way your body works.

This can cause problems, called symptoms such as...

a lump...
feeling tired...
a pain...

BUT - lumps and pains are very common symptoms of lots of diseases, not just cancer...

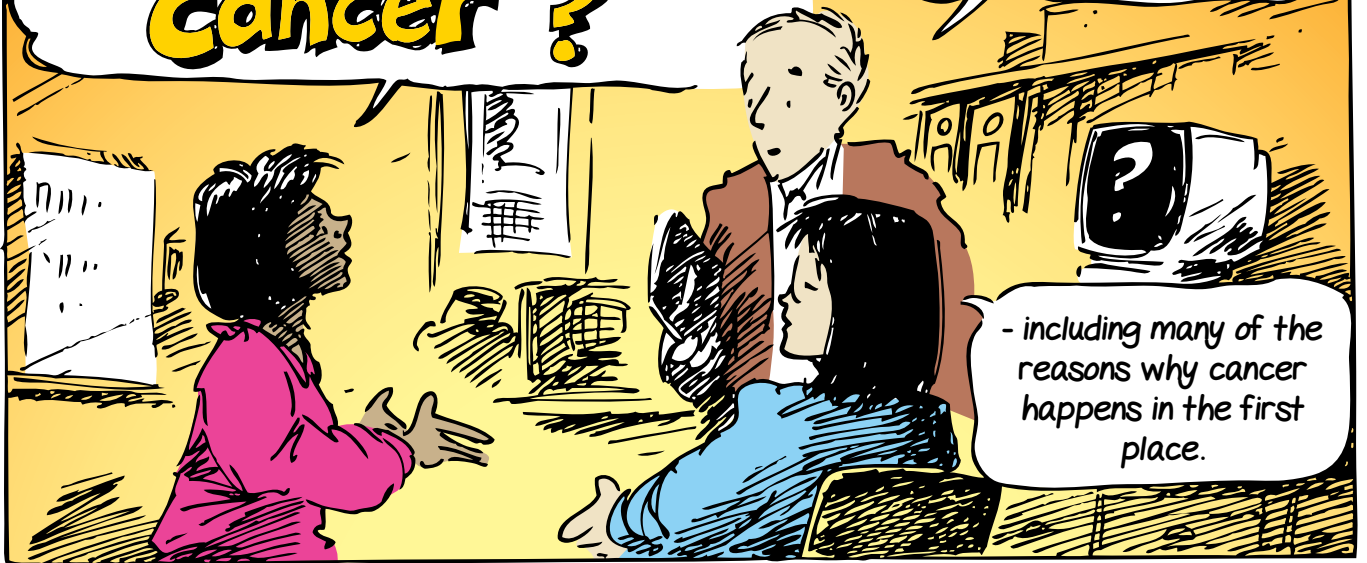
this is why the doctor has to carry out a lot of tests to find out what is wrong.

The sneaky thing about the cancer cells is that they can spread and grow in other parts of the body. This process is called **Metastasis**. When these cells start to grow in new places they can cause more damage to the body.

So... What causes cancer?

There is a lot that we don't know about cancer -

- including many of the reasons why cancer happens in the first place.



Some of the things we know that increase the risk of some cancers

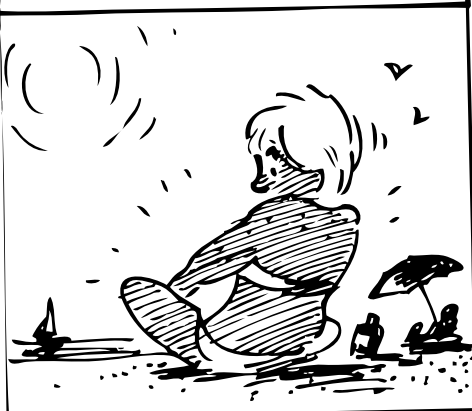
are -



Smoking - which can increase the risk of lung cancer.



Being in the sun without protection like sunscreen or protective clothing can increase the risk of skin cancer.

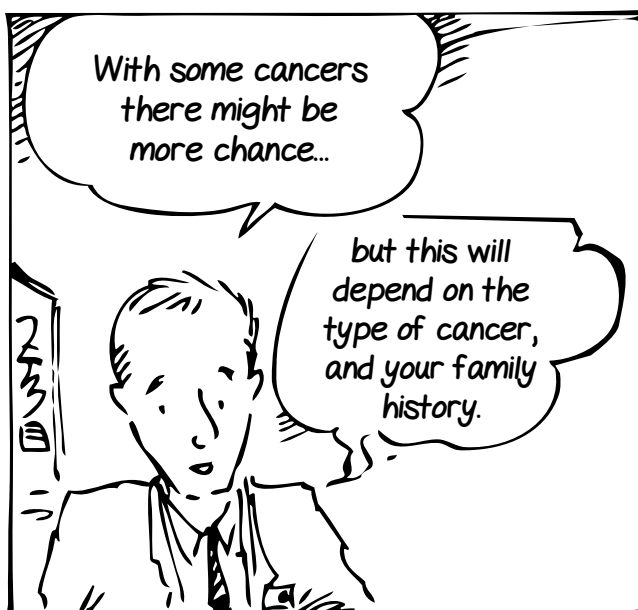
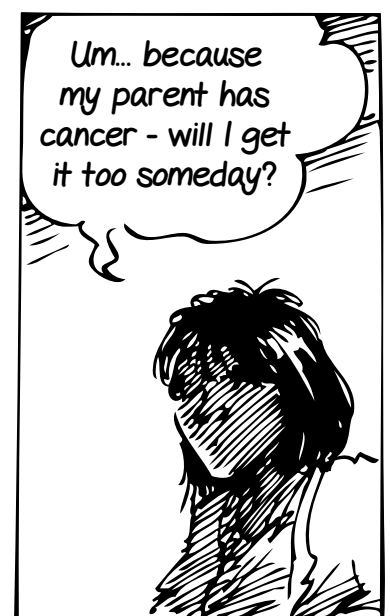
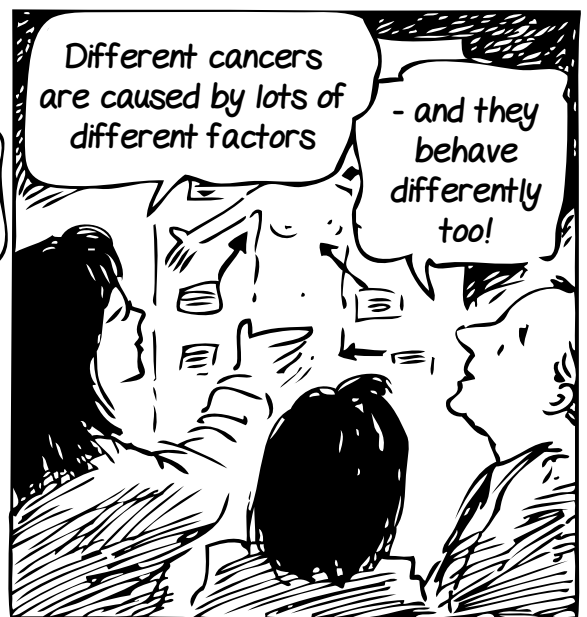


To give yourself the best chance to not get some cancers - don't smoke, protect yourself from the sun, eat a healthy diet including fruits and vegetables.



...I'm looking up **DIAL-A-BALANCED-DIET**...



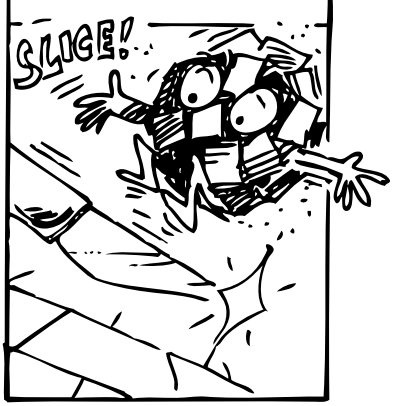


Cancer treatment is strong medicine.

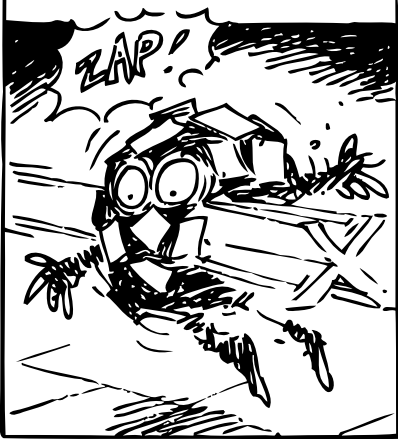
There are many different cancer treatments use to get rid of the cancer cells

Some cancer treatments use very strong medicines

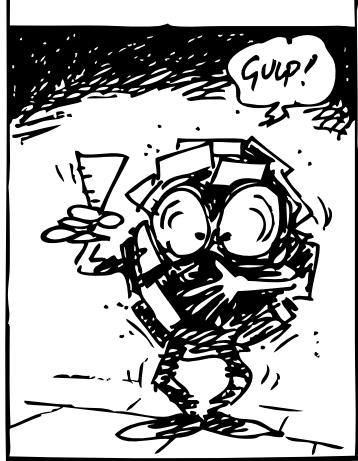
* A surgeon might cut out the affected part of the body to remove all the cancer cells.



* For some cancers high energy x-rays are used to destroy the cancer cells.



* Chemotherapy is the use of medicines which get rid of cancer cells.



Depending on the type of cancer, all or some of these treatments are used.

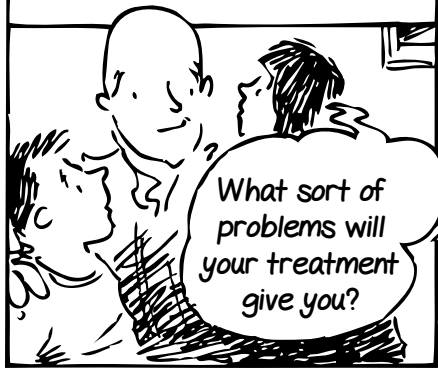


They might vomit. Or feel sick. Or be very tired. Or lose their hair. This can be really scary to see.

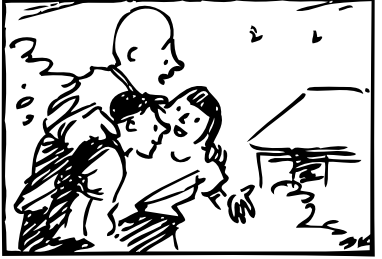
Sometimes one method works for a while and then stops working, and then another treatment will be used. Treatment must be as strong as possible to get rid of the cancer cells - but the doctors have to be careful not to damage the healthy cells as well.



Unfortunately, some of the treatments have some nasty side effects and your parent might not feel very well during treatment.



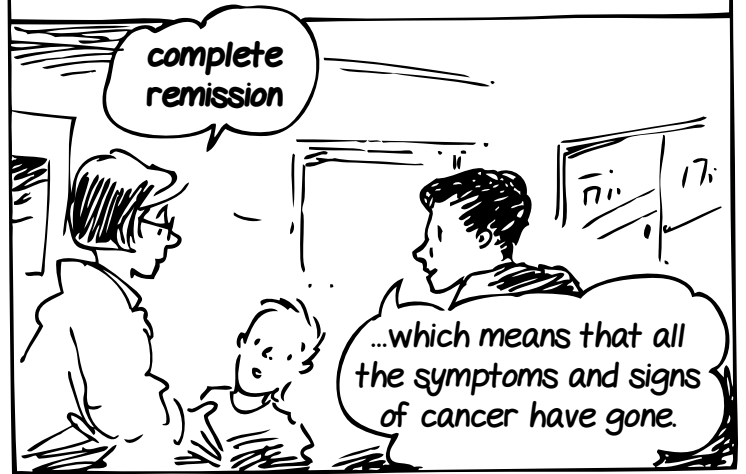
It is important to remember that these treatments, however uncomfortable might be the best way to give your parent a chance at getting well again.



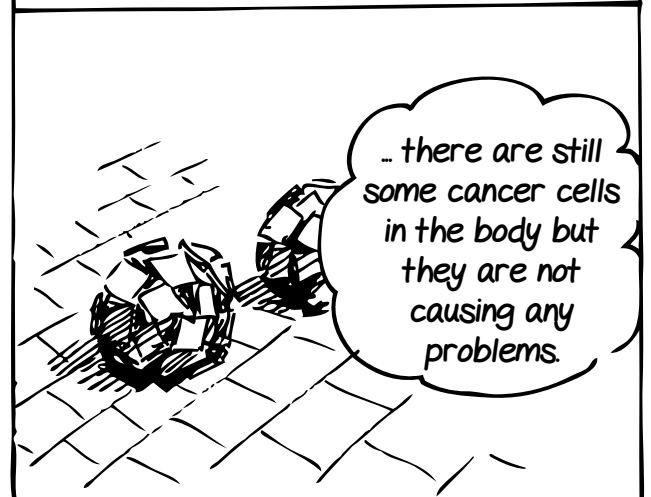
Will my parent get better?



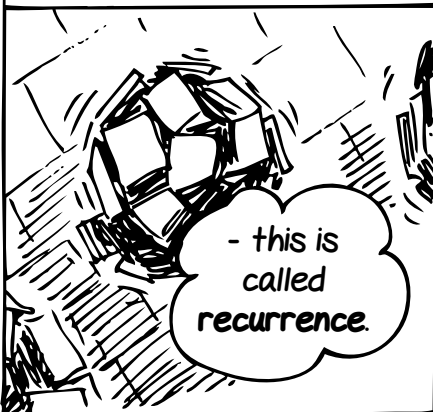
Sometimes cancer cells can be completely destroyed. Doctors call this...



But sometimes the remission is partial..



If cancer cells are left in the body they might start to grow again...




If this happens, the doctors will probably use different medicines or treatments to try and get the cancer under control again.



Sometimes the cancer will keep growing...




The Feelings




Cancer is frustrating and scary.




It can also change people and families...




Maybe your parents can't work anymore, or are too tired to do all the things with you like they used to.




In a lot of cases how people feel on the inside can change as well.



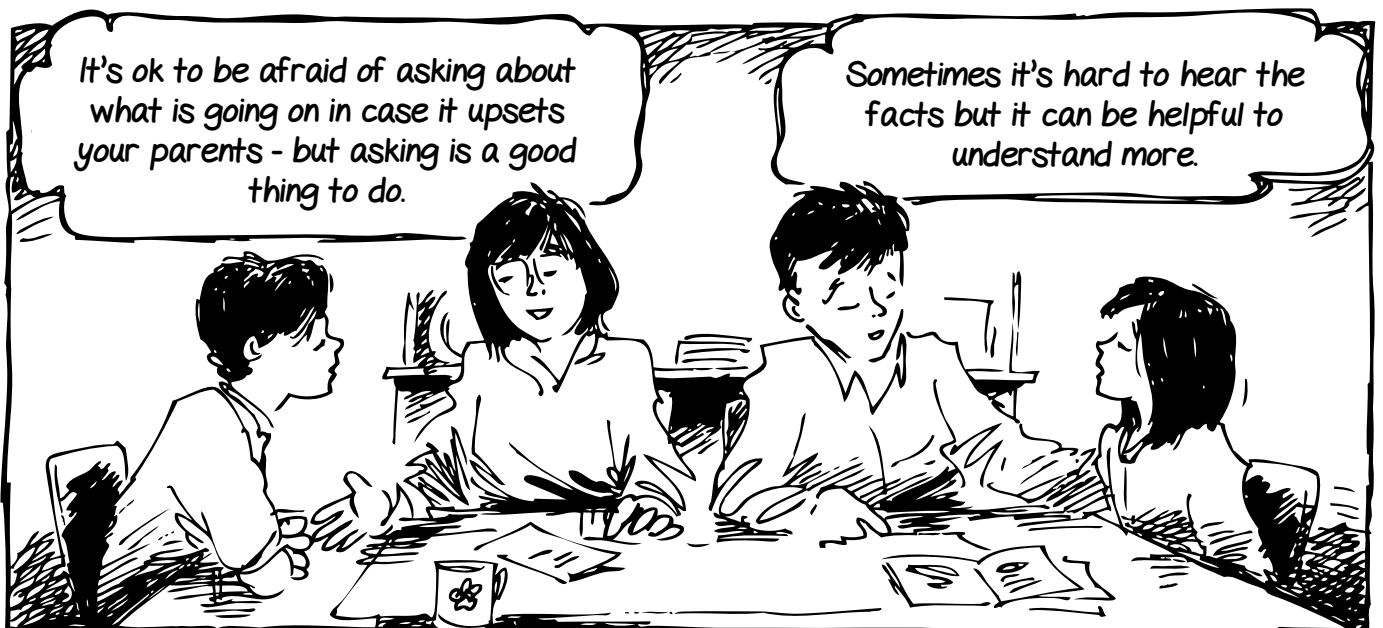
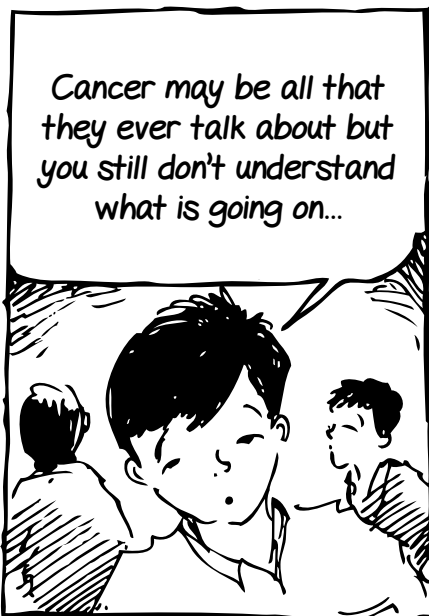
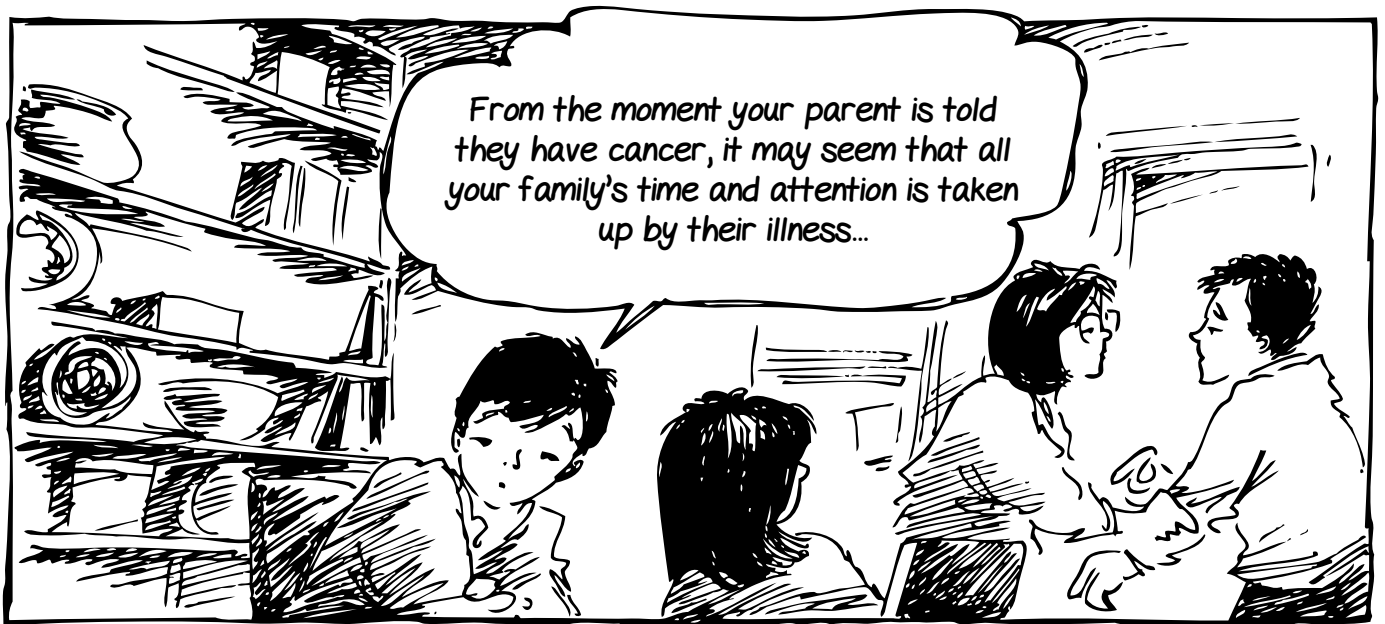
- You may find it was hard to get used to some of the changes.



...Something like cancer can change how you feel and think and force you to grow up very suddenly.



- It's not surprising if you feel mixed up.



Sometimes I'm scared

Unhappiness, confusion, anger - can make up being scared

...deep down you might be scared.

It's ok to be scared.

There are lots of things to get scared about -

- that mum or dad might die

- that mum or dad have changed forever... or that you may get cancer.

Sometimes you might even think that something you have done has caused the cancer - or made it worse.

That just isn't true, but sometimes you can't help feeling that way.

When you feel scared it can help if you find someone to talk to.

This could be a family member, a teacher, doctor, friend...

You may be surprised how supportive and comforting other people can be.

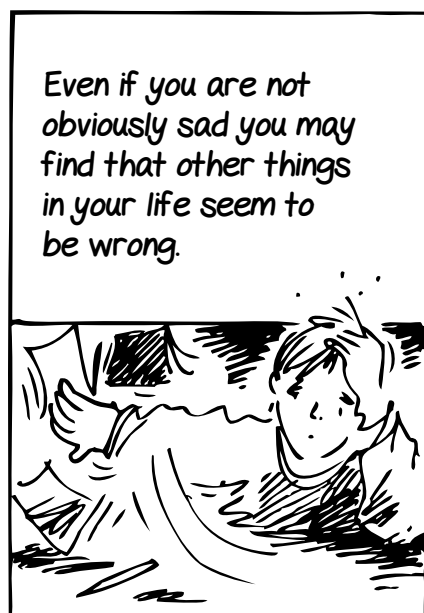
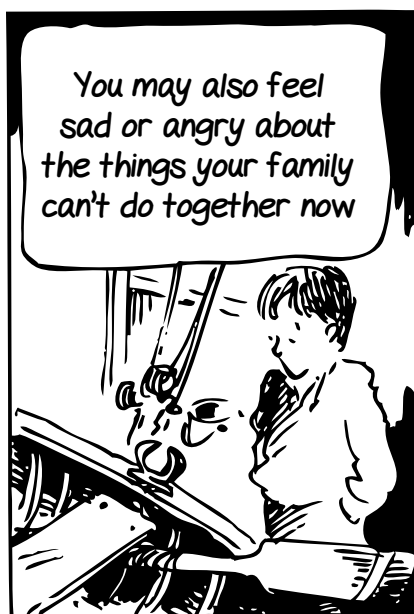
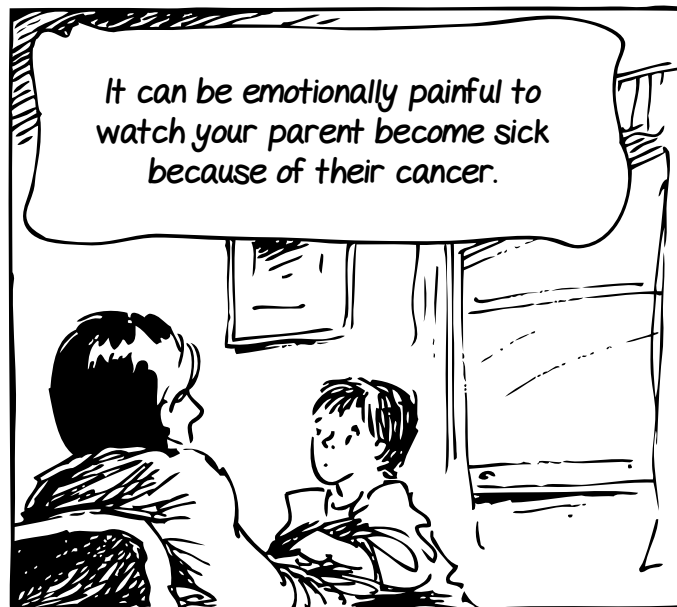
They can also help you figure out what is really happening, not what you are imagining is happening.

...that's a relief!


You will feel a lot better if you can talk about the scary things...

Dad is ok after the treatment but I worry that the cancer will come back...

...rather than carrying a big lump of fear deep inside you.



When things seem really bad, there are lots of ways to sort out how you are feeling inside...



Oh yeah?

If you feel like crying - go ahead. A good cry can often make you feel better.




This won't work for everyone, and crying might not be for you. That's normal.

Try talking to someone else...



If you don't find it easy to talk face to face with someone else...



try keeping a diary or an audio blog

Seeing and hearing your own thoughts and feelings can be a big help.



It won't make them go away, but it can make you feel more in control of your thoughts and feelings.



There are lots of ways to show how you feel, like drawing a picture, or writing a song, a poem or a story.



Doing things that keep you active or trying new hobbies are a way to release your feelings too.



Do something that needs a lot of energy - like jogging around the block or building something.



Try it!

Doesn't anybody care about me?

Sometimes feeling all alone may be the worst feeling you have...

- that no-one has any time for you any more now mum or dad are ill...

It's ok to think about how you feel and how it affects you

- so be honest about your feelings

Let your family or someone you trust know if you feel left out

...there's a good chance they feel the same...

By letting each other know how you feel you'll be able to support each other.

You might find it difficult to talk to your friends about your parent's cancer...

um...

They probably don't know what to say either and might be worried that -

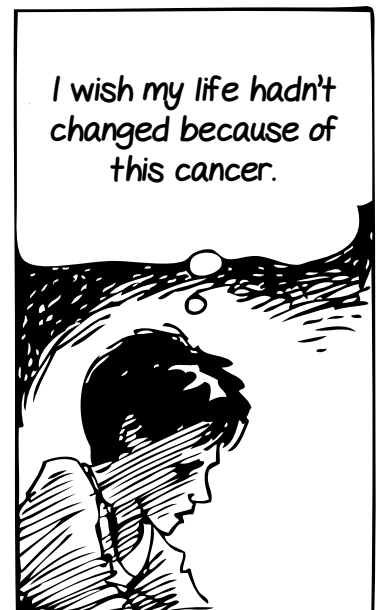
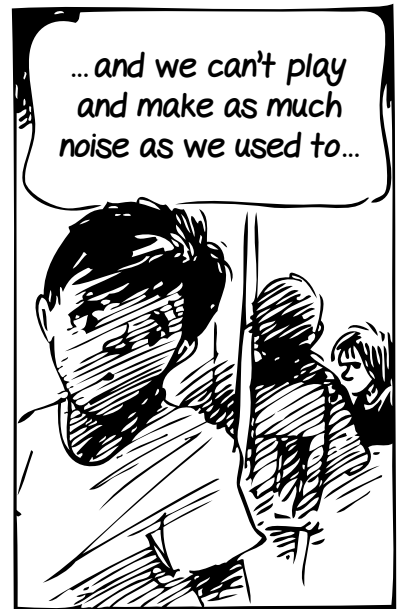
it'll make you feel bad to talk about it

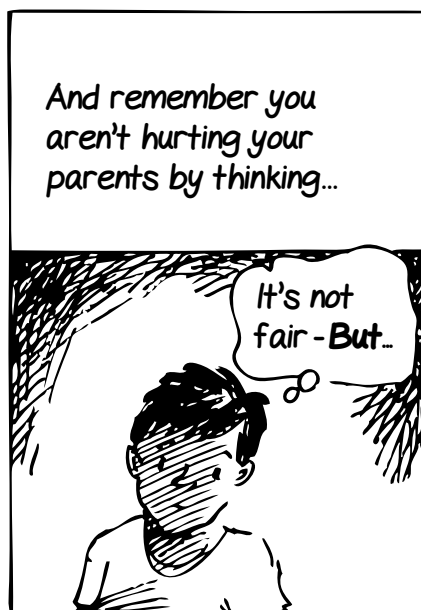
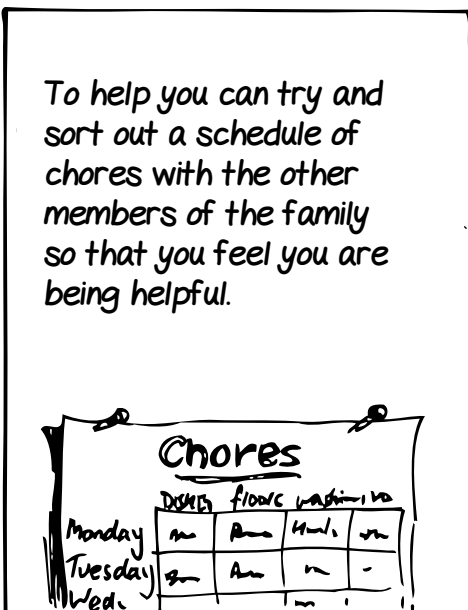
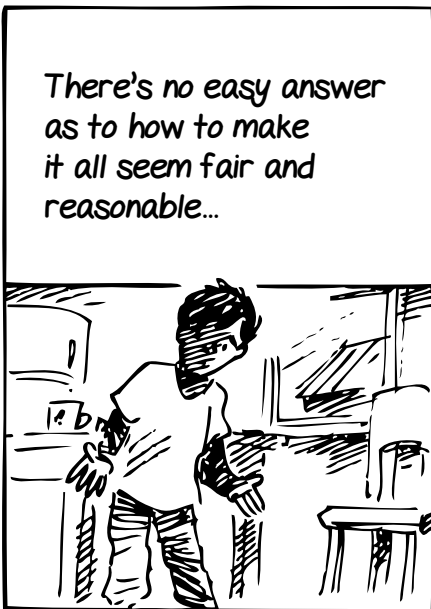
Everyone will solve this in their own way. This is how some other children have started:

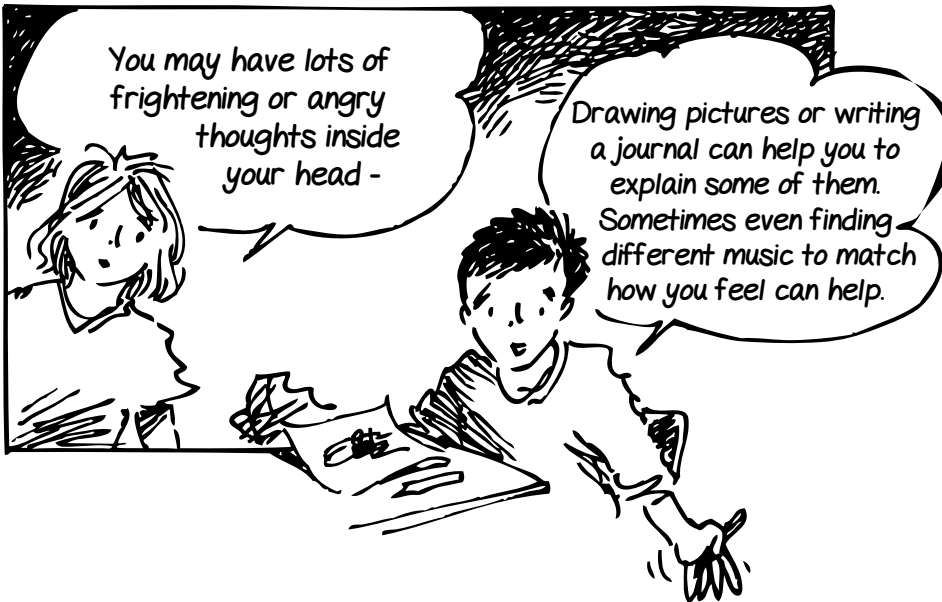
I decided to tell my best friend about the cancer and said she could tell the others.

I told my friends that even though my dad was sick, I didn't want them to treat me any differently - I'm still the same person!

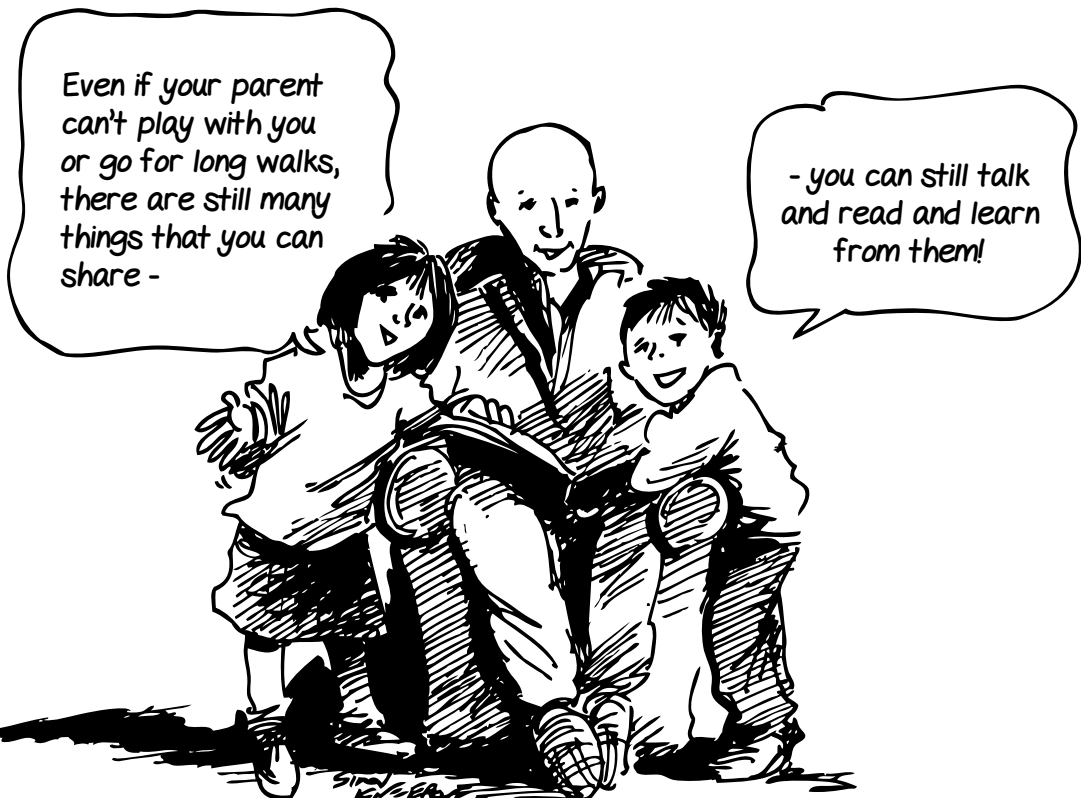
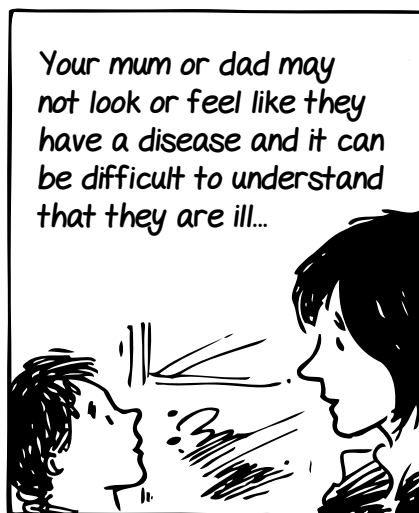
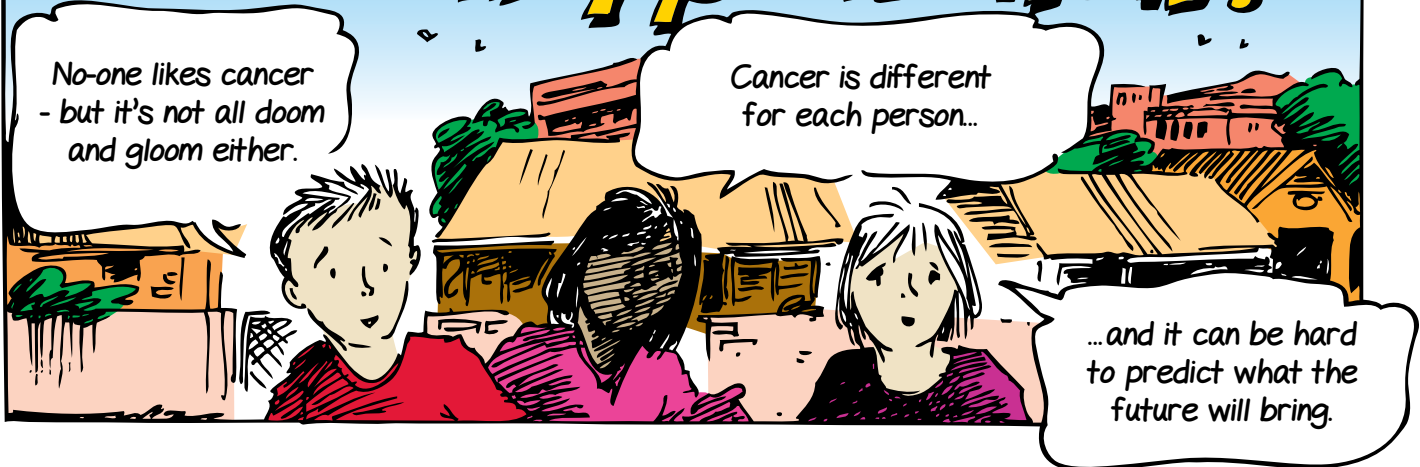
I asked my teacher to help me talk about the cancer in class.







What happens now?



Help is available ...

Your school may have special teachers or counsellors who you can talk to.

You are welcome to talk to us at
Cancer Council 13 11 20

Some other really great places to find support:

Kids Helpline - you can call at any time of the day or night on **1800 55 180** or even hop onto the computer to talk to someone through chat.

CanTeen offers all sorts of support to young people 12-25. They have camps where you might meet other young people going through similar experiences. You can also get individual support in person www.canteen.org.au over the phone on **1800 835 932** or online www.canteenconnect.org.au

Camp Quality - If you are aged 0-13, Camp Quality has services and programs specifically designed to help you cope with the daily ups and downs of dealing with cancer. If you are impacted by cancer, feeling scared or alone, they can help you deal with your fear with apps and tools.



Keep a record of names and phone numbers here:

Do you have any questions or concerns that you want to ask your parents? Write them down so you remember them for when you talk to them next.

What About Me?

For children when a parent has cancer.

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Cancer Council Queensland is a not-for-profit, non-government organisation that provides information and support to people with cancer, their families and friends throughout Queensland free of charge. These services are made possible through the generous donations of Queenslanders and we thank them for their continued support. If you would like to know more about these information and support services, call Cancer Council Queensland 13 11 20, Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm.

13 11 20
cancerqld.org.au

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**For more information
and support services**

Please contact Cancer Council
Queensland **13 11 20**
Mon to Fri 9am - 5pm