Article Series Caregivers

Being a Caregiver to a Child with Cancer

3 min read

☐ Like (0) Likes

Bookmark

Share

Print



All Caregivers

Resize

A A A

When you learn your child has been diagnosed with cancer, your first instinct may be to put their needs before everything else. But it’s also important to think about yourself and pay attention to how you are coping with their diagnosis.

You may experience many different emotions during the course of your child’s cancer journey, such as grief and stress. Taking care of yourself, both mentally and physically, can help you be a better caregiver.

Everyone copes with childhood cancer differently, and what works for another person may not work for you. For example, you may find that doing parts of your regular routine, such as cooking and cleaning, gives you a sense of calm and control. But if you find those tasks overwhelming, consider asking a friend or family member if they can help.

With so much on your plate, focus on taking small actions to help you cope with the diagnosis and care for yourself. Here are some Microsteps to consider as a caregiver:

Recording conversations with your child's care team.

You may feel upset or overwhelmed during your conversations with the healthcare team and struggle to remember everything. Asking to record your conversations, or writing things down, can help you keep track of what's been said.

Telling friends and family exactly what you need.

People in your life may want to help, but not know what to do or say. Be direct and specific about how they can help. For example, "Could you pick up groceries for me on Sundays?" or "I could use help walking the dog."

Joining a support group for caregivers of children living with cancer.

Your child's care team may be able to suggest support groups both for them and for you. This can give you a place to talk through your feelings and what you're going through with people in similar situations.

Connecting with a benefits support person at your insurance company.

Getting clear on what’s covered and what your expenses could be may help ease financial stress.

Finding go-to healthy meal options you can prep or buy in batches.

Eating well is important to keep up your own health and energy as a caregiver. If you like to cook, consider batch-cooking some healthy meals or rustling up some on-the-go foods that you can take to appointments with you. You might prefer to check whether your local grocery store offers healthy prepared meals, or ask a friend or family member if they could help with meal preparation.

Choosing an activity that helps relieve your stress.

It doesn’t matter what the activity is as long as you find it makes you feel better. Some options could include meditating, journaling, exercising, listening to music, or yard work.

Identifying a physical activity you can also do at the hospital.

You may spend a lot of time waiting for your child at appointments or during treatment. Physical activity can help lower stress and help you sleep more soundly at bedtime. Find some ways to move that you can even do at the hospital or treatment center. Options could include walking around the unit, going up and down the stairs, or finding a stretching video you can follow.

Spending time with friends and family doing something fun.

Strengthening your relationships with friends and family can help all of you cope better throughout your child’s cancer journey. Finding moments of connection may help you recharge your mind and spirit.

Developed with Thrive Global