

The Adventure Jar

A story of magic for families living with metastatic breast cancer



write kind
notes

family painting
night
★

HOMEMADE
OBSTACLE
COURSE

Make our
own terrariums

BAKING
TOGETHER

♥
DRAW
A FAMILY TREE

INDOOR
CAMPING

picnic outside

Make
giant
bubbles

TALENT
SHOW

create play dough sculptures

Start a
mini
garden

"FLOOR IS LAVA" AT THE
PLAYGROUND

CRAFT
WITH
HAND
PRINTS

make up
a family
song

Movie night
with themed
snacks

VISIT A
FAVORITE
HOMETOWN SHOP

DRAW WITH
SIDEWALK CHALK

Try a new
recipe
together

AT-HOME
KARAOKE
NIGHT

GO
MINI-
GOLFING

play in
sprinklers

neighborhood
scavenger hunt

FAMILY game night

With thanks to...

This book was created in collaboration with members of the metastatic breast cancer community:

Amanda C.	Angelina C.	Cheryl L.	Jonise L.
Amanda M.	Beth G.	Deborah O.	Lauren H.

We are deeply grateful for your thoughtfulness. **Thank you.**

Special thanks to Eliza Park, MD, MS for offering your perspective as a psychiatrist to families impacted by metastatic breast cancer.



Illustrator Alexandra Colombo lives in Milan, Italy, and when she’s not illustrating books, she and her dogs work with a rescue dog unit. Having lost both her father and her partner to cancer, illustrating this book was personal for Alexandra. She knows the importance of human dignity, compassion, and courage in the face of a cancer diagnosis, and is proud to have helped bring *The Adventure Jar* to families around the world.



The Adventure Jar

A story of magic for families living with metastatic breast cancer

Illustrations by Alexandra Colombo

This book was created by Gilead Sciences for and in collaboration with the metastatic breast cancer community.

Summertime at last!

But even with the warm sun
on her skin, Cassie felt glum.

There would be no adventures
this summer. Mom's cancer
meant that close to home
was the place to be.



Cassie saw Mom looking
and made sure to smile.

She shouldn't worry about me, too,
Cassie thought.

But what was Mom holding?

"This is our Adventure Jar!"
she announced.

"We'll all dream up adventures
and write them down. And when
my good days come along,
I'll pick one out."



The jar was stuffed to bursting in no time, full of the family's best close-to-home adventure ideas.

Later, when Mom's support group asked for summer activities, she held the jar up proudly.



"Let's all make Adventure Jars!" she invited.
So they did.



FROGS
at the nature center

NATURE
CENTER
OPEN

The first adventure?
Well, it wasn't hard to
guess who wrote it.

Josh didn't waste any
time. He leapt across
the lily pads.

SWAMP
CYPRESS

VENUS
FLYTRAP



"Slow down, you know Mom can't go that fast!" Cassie reminded him.

But Josh didn't slow down—there were frogs to be found!

"You don't need to worry," Mom reassured Cassie. "I'm glad he's so excited."

Then, looking thoughtfully at Cassie, she added,

"Make it a habit to look for the magic."

Cassie sighed, but she looked. Was that a plant she saw, changing color right in front of her?

It was—and the magic was everywhere.



Up, up, and up
Josh looked.

The frog blinked.

“Ribbit, ribbit, ribbit,”
it croaked, and when Josh
named it “Peabody,” it ribbited
again with happiness.



Mom watched Josh, but Cassie’s
anxious eyes were on Mom.

“It’s time to go,” Cassie decided.

Tears filled Josh’s eyes.

“Don’t worry,” Dad encouraged.

“You can find more frogs on the way out.”

Cassie trailed behind them.
Mom waited for her.

"You're feeling a lot right now, aren't you, my Cassie? You want to take care of me, but it's my job to take care of you."

Cassie nodded, sniffing.



"I wanted to stay longer, too," Mom confessed,
"and it's okay to be sad. But let's keep something
to remember the magic with, okay?"

She tucked a water lily into Cassie's hair and held
her hand as they walked out.



The second adventure didn't go the way any of them imagined. Mom was too tired to go out for dinner.

That's when they called Grandma.

She swept in, then she swept Cassie and Josh into the kitchen, and then she swept carrots into their laps.



"Peel away and we'll make your Mom some soup," she said and dropped kisses onto each of their heads.

So they did. (Well, Cassie did.)

Plop, plop, plop,
went the carrots into the pot.

Swish, swish, swish,
went Grandma's ladle as she stirred.



When the hot soup was on the table,
Cassie scooted close to Mom.

"You're still feeling bad?" she asked.

"It's been a hard day, my Cassie."

Cassie hugged Mom, but not too tight,
and said, "It's okay to be sad."

Cassie paused and then quietly said,

**"Make it a habit to
look for the magic?"**

Mom hugged her back. "Let's
look for it together. I love you
so much!"

So Cassie looked. Was that
a seahorse she saw?

It was—and the magic
was everywhere.



Cassie peered out the window and grinned. She recognized those carrots!

Schools of fish flashed by, and a turtle waved hello.

Josh made friends with an octopus.



Then, Cassie saw a shimmer
in a field of swaying seaweed.

"I'm going to get closer,"
she told Dad.



Our dinner adventure with Grandma

Cassie collected her glimmering treasure:
a shell, smooth in her hands and smelling
salty like the sea.





STAR GAZING AT THE PARK

The third adventure was Cassie's.

They unpacked Dad's basket of
blankets and pillows, and they
pointed the telescope at the sky.



Mom and Cassie grinned at each other.

**“Make it a habit to
look for the magic!”**

they said together.

Cassie looked eagerly.
Was that an alien she saw?
It was—and the magic
was everywhere.



Dad held up a piece of asteroid.
“This planet rocks!”

Mom sighed at his joke, but her
eyes twinkled with laughter.

Boing, boing, boing,
went Josh.

One rock caught Cassie’s eye.
She didn’t quite know why—
it was very plain, not fabulous
or perfect like some of the
other ones she saw.

But she knew better by now.



The rock split in half, and Cassie gasped.
Starlight sparkled off the geode.
She had never seen anything so beautiful.



Cassie ran to Mom.

"Look, look!" she shouted, waving
her discovery. "I looked for the
magic, and see what I found?"

Out of breath and smiling, she
noticed that Mom was smiling too—
maybe even bigger than she was.



When summer was almost over,
the family's adventures were
spread out on the table.

Josh pointed. "I want to do this
one again!"

Mom gave Dad a playful look,
and he pulled them all close.

"Why not?" he said. "Let's keep the Adventure
Jar going!"

Josh cheered, and Cassie realized something:
if she looked for it, the magic really was
everywhere—especially right here.

With a smile on her face, she made a promise.

**"We'll make it a habit to always,
always look for the magic!"**



Adventures of Mom's support group



A mother's perspective



When I was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer (mBC), my children were two, four, and six. Though I was filled with uncertainty about mBC, the unshakable question I carried was, “How do I parent through this disease?” As a family, what impacts one of us, impacts us all. While we cannot help our children escape mBC’s presence in their lives, we have the power to define *how* it shapes them. This story reminds us that when we focus on the good in life, we can transform the experience of cancer.

It has been nearly a decade since my diagnosis, and mBC continues to shape the lives of my girls. We continue to make it a habit to redefine our circumstances, and because of this, cancer is shaping them into courageous women.

If you are living with mBC, may this book remind you that mBC cannot take away the magic you bring to your family. Your hope reshapes even the most challenging days into unforgettable adventures.

Lauren Huffmaster
Collaborator on *The Adventure Jar*
Living with mBC



From our collaborators...

“In this book, the father’s character resonates with me. The partner’s role is an important piece to the family puzzle that often gets overlooked.” - Amanda C.

“I love how the book incorporates another family member: Grandma. It shows that no matter how old we get, we always need help, and most importantly, it’s okay to accept it.” - Amanda M.

“It’s getting harder to explain this disease to my son in a way that doesn’t scare him. This book takes the patient experience and makes it tangible for little kids to understand—and also reminds me that I’m not alone.” - Angelina C.

“This book lets families know it’s okay to be sad or mad and gives them tools to help deal with these emotions.” - Beth G.

“This book is great to read with your children to build ideas on how to look for the magic in everyday experiences.” - Deborah O.

“This book emphasizes the importance of compassion and continuing healthy parenting while dealing with mBC, and also shows the fun of finding adventures no matter your circumstances.” - Cheryl L.

“This is more than an ordinary children’s book. ‘Looking for the magic’ after an mBC diagnosis helps a family heal while creating memories.” - Jonise L.

“As a psychiatrist and therapist for people with cancer, there have been countless times when I have sat with a parent and talked through ideas for how to connect with and help their children, even amid some of the toughest circumstances. I have often wished I could provide them with resources that are helpful, hopeful, and realistic. I believe that this book helps meet that need.” - Eliza Park, MD, MS





For Cassie and her family, the summer's adventures have to change when Mom is diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer. But with determination and creativity, they discover that the real magic of adventures is in time spent together—and that the magic is even stronger than the struggles they face.

More resources

Living with metastatic breast cancer and looking for more whole-family support? Get a discussion guide for *The Adventure Jar*, printouts to make one of your own, and more at **Expose-MBC.com/support-for-families**.

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