



Reading *The Adventure Jar: A Story of Magic for Families Living with Metastatic Breast Cancer* is a great way to start or continue a conversation about a parent's advanced cancer.

This discussion and activity guide is intended to be used by parents and guardians, but can also be used by any loving member of your community.

These questions and activities may not work for every child depending on language development, understanding of cancer, and all of the things that make our kids unique. Remember you know your child the best.

When reading together you might find new opportunities or new ways to talk about cancer. Remember:

- Talk to your child using clear, honest, and age-appropriate language.
- Remind your child they didn't cause the cancer and they can't catch it.
- Leave space for your kids to ask questions... and remember, it's o.k. to not know the answer!

Please keep in mind that some children will not want to talk about their feelings. Some children will have a million questions. Other children might have huge emotions and big behaviors. It is ALL o.k. Let your children know that you love them no matter what and that they can come to you when they are ready (over-and-over again).

It is helpful to keep sentences short and to the point when telling young children about your cancer diagnosis. Here are some sentences to consider and edit to your specific situation:

I have cancer.

**You can't catch it.
I didn't catch it or
get it from you or
anyone else.**

**Cancer is a
(sickness, illness or
disease depending
on your child's
developmental
level).**

**There are different
types of treatments I
might get.**

**I am going to the
doctor to get
medicine.**

**You can hug and
snuggle me all you
want and you will
never catch cancer.**

**My doctors are
helping me live as
long as possible.**

**You can always ask
me questions about
cancer or how I feel.**

**Nothing you did
or said caused
me to get cancer.**

**I will have days when
I feel good, and
other days when I
may feel sick or tired.**

**I want to focus my
good days on
spending time
together with family.**

Discussion Questions and Activities

FEELINGS

Questions for Further Discussion

Cassie feels many different feelings throughout this book. Let your child know that every feeling is normal and okay! Any loved one can have this discussion, not just parents (just adjust the language).

1. At the beginning of the story, Cassie is disappointed. What has made you feel disappointed since I got cancer?
2. Cassie worries about her mom when they are at the Nature Center. Have you ever worried about me? *Note to adults: Remind children that it is your job to be the parent and take care of them, even though they may want to take care of you. Remind them about all of the adult helpers in your life who are helping to care for you (doctors, nurses, social workers, friends, family, neighbors, etc.).*
3. Cassie sheds some tears throughout the story. What makes you feel sad?
4. Who in your life can help you when you have big feelings?
5. What makes you feel better when your feelings are too big?

Activities

Help your child to create a [Feelings Wheel](#) to explore their emotions. Consider adding pictures or words in each feeling that reminds them of what they can do when they are feeling these emotions to help them feel better.

Bonus: Help your child to cut out the Feelings Wheel and paste/tape it onto cardstock (or old piece of cardboard box or cereal box). On another piece of cardstock (or recycled cardboard) create an arrow. Add the arrow to the center of the Feelings Wheel with a brass fastener so it can spin. Hang this on their bedroom door or place it somewhere near a quiet space so they can use it to let other people around them know how they are feeling.

YOUR SUPPORT TEAM

Questions for Further Discussion

1. Cassie and Josh have a grandma who comes to help when mom isn't feeling well. Who are the helpers in your life?
2. Cassie helps her grandma to make soup for her mother when she isn't feeling well. Are there times you would like to help me when I'm not feeling well? *Note to adults: Giving kids simple ways to help can make them feel close to you and feel helpful. Ask your child if they want to help you through simple tasks like getting you water or rubbing your feet.*
3. Cassie's mom attends a support group. A support group has people who all have something in common. What do you think happens at support groups? Why might someone want to attend a support group?

Activities

1. Help your child to trace their hand on a piece of paper. In each finger, help them to write the name of someone who helps them or your family.
2. Ask your child to draw you a picture to hang up that makes you smile. Or ask them to put on a show (dance, sing, puppet, comedy, etc.) to make you laugh.
3. Invite your child to lead their very own support group with their favorite stuffed animals, dolls or toys. Kids can gather the "members" together in a circle and take turns sharing how they feel. They can also ask each other questions. Let your child know they can bring the group's questions to you so you can help them find the answers.

FINDING MAGIC MOMENTS

Questions for Further Discussion

Cassie's mom reminds her to **"Make it a habit to look for the magic."** What do you think that means? What is something magical that happened to you this week? *Note for adults: "Make it a habit to look for the magic" reminds us to be present and grateful. Does your family practice any mindfulness routines? Consider trying out some kid-friendly activities:*

1. **Go for a mindful walk outside.** This doesn't have to be a long distance—you can even practice this while seated on your front step or a park bench. Notice what you hear, see, smell, feel, and even taste. Another variation is to send your child on a Mindful Scavenger Hunt around the house to gather items that they like to hear, see, smell, feel, and taste.
2. **Do silly stretches.** Let kids make up their own poses! Or watch a yoga video together (there are many free kid versions online).
3. **Try guided imagery.** You will find many free videos online suited for kids of all ages. This is a great option for kids who worry a lot or have a hard time falling asleep.
4. **Start a gratitude journal.** Use a simple notebook and make a practice of writing (or drawing) something each day about something you appreciated.

Cassie and her family imagine an adventure to another planet where they collect rocks. Cassie is drawn to a rock that looks plain on the outside, but is filled with beautiful crystals on the inside.

1. What is something beautiful that has happened since I got cancer? *Note to adults: Use this lead-in to have a discussion about how happy times can coexist with sad, scary or angry times. Remind them it is okay to laugh, play and be silly even though you have cancer.*

Activities

Go on a rock hunt! Find rocks in your backyard or on a nature walk. Here are some ideas of what you can do with the rocks:

1. Help your kids to paint rocks with acrylic paints. Feel free to add on glitter, sequins, stickers, or other fun decorations. If kids want to keep their rocks outside, seal them with a spray or outdoor glue for protection. Invite kids to leave some of their painted rocks for strangers along a sidewalk or even in their yards or gardens. They can also give some away to the people in their life they appreciate or love.
2. Create rock pets with googly eyes, pipe cleaners, and other crafts. Kids can give their pet rock a name and build it a dwelling with recycled materials (old boxes, containers) or items from around the house.
3. Kids can decorate a special rock that travels with you to treatment or doctor's appointments. Maybe this is a rock pet, decorated rock, or a rock with a powerful word on it to help you feel brave and loved. Kids may enjoy seeing pictures of the rock with your medical team or at the doctor's office to help demystify what happens when you go to appointments.

At the end of the summer, Cassie's family puts together a scrapbook of their adventures. Make a family scrapbook. Print photos and gather special items from activities you've done together. If you don't have a scrapbook or photobook, make one out of printer paper or construction paper stapled together. Kids may want to draw pictures or write letters, stories, or poems to add to the scrapbook.

Lastly, of course, create your own Adventure Jar with your family!
Visit **Expose-MBC.com/AdventureJar** for a printable handout to get you started.

This material was developed in partnership with the advocacy organization Bright Spot Network and Carissa Hodgson, LCSW, OSW-C.

Bright Spot Network 
Helping families through cancer.