



How to help your children through a cancer diagnosis

When a parent or family member is diagnosed with cancer there are two very common first questions: “How will this change my life?” and “What will happen to my children?” Children understand the world through their parents. How a child reacts depends very much on how the parents or other close adults are dealing with their own feelings.

When a parent is sick or experiencing stress, children of all ages can sense this change, even if they cannot identify or understand the cause. It is important to have open discussions with children so that they do not develop their own ideas about the cause of stress.

It is important to be honest with your children about a cancer diagnosis. That is why The Wellness Community-Central Ohio programs are so vital: Research continues to show that social and emotional support is critical components of complete cancer care. The Wellness Community provides families with the skills and resources they need to play an active role in their cancer care and support to *everyone* who is affected by the disease-not only cancer patients but family and friends.

Being honest and explaining the facts of cancer in, an age-appropriate way, allows children to understand and participate in what is happening. For example, including children in discussions about how to help their mother or father feel better lets them feel they are contributing without giving them too much responsibility. Children cannot be shielded from all the stressful parts of life, so it is important to teach them how to cope with this and other challenges. Teenagers may find it especially difficult to cope with cancer, combined with all of the common challenges in adolescent lives. They might be more able to share their fears and emotions with a trusted adult outside the immediate family, such as a grandparent, teacher, or athletic coach, who can lend support.

Cancer is not the same as other major life events; it is ongoing and often unpredictable. It is important to work together as a family to plan how each individual will have their needs met during and after cancer treatment. It helps to include children in the decisions on how to “cut back” to make time for new family routines.

At The Wellness Community-Central Ohio we deliver a comprehensive array of personalized services to cancer survivors, families, and caregivers. All programs are run by trained and licensed professionals and provided at **no cost**. As the leader in cancer support and education, The Wellness Community is strengthening the link between medical and social/emotional health. We are advancing the innovations that are becoming the standard in complete cancer care. Join us for our upcoming **Family and Children Programs**: Monday, December 13, 5:00 – 6:30 pm “Edible Holiday Gifts” and coming in January, 2011 *Creative Family Connections* – a hands-on way to strengthen family ties and wellness, *Family Yoga* and *Caregiver Connections* for families faced with childhood cancer.

For more information www.wellnesscolumbus.org or call 614-791-9510.