



Taking care of you

Caring for your sick child and other children at home is your top priority but remember to take time to care for yourself. A cancer diagnosis brings with it a whirlwind of emotions. During this difficult time, the way you handle stress will affect your ability to manage. Good coping skills can help you integrate the cancer experience into your life, instead of being ruled by it.

Ask for and accept help when offered.

Connect with other parents in CT caring for their children. Find a support group or join our newly formed and private **Circle of Care Parents Facebook Group** -- a safe place to ask and answer questions.

Here are some ways other families cope with the stress.

“One of the hardest things we learned to do that has turned out to be one of the best: live in the present. Enjoy this moment with your child. We learned to live life to the fullest. This disease brought us to an awakening to fully realize how precious life is. It is difficult to live in the moment, to change the way you think, but it will help and it will change your life.”

“We got through it by praying a lot. We asked everyone we knew to pray for our daughter. At first I did a lot of reading, but there came a point where I just put it in God’s hands. That helped me get through our most difficult moments.”

“Find a support group if there is one in your area or online - it was so good to cry and laugh with people who were going through the same thing.”

“Keep a notebook with you at all times and write down questions as they come to you. You may find that a question will pop into your head during the oddest times - and you want to remember what those are. It’s also a great place to write down those moments during treatment that bring joy and there will be those moments!) so you can remember them later when you need to.”

“Get good books to read in the hospital - this again is something that someone could do for you. I read a Janet Evonovich series during Luke’s hospital stays and they saved me. I was able to lose myself in something else while Luke was napping or during the night when I couldn’t sleep. I enjoy reading light books that make me laugh, but people should read what they like.”

“Be sure to ask questions. Do not be afraid to do so. On one occasion about a year into treatment our daughter was getting fevers and one of the doctors thought it was a fungal infection and the other thought it was due to the medication. We were really glad that we asked a lot of questions about the causes of fevers and the treatment options before we went on. Ask a lot of questions and know your options.”

“The first thing I did to try to gain control was to avoid thinking about the long term. I forced myself to only worry about getting through that day. At the end of every day when I said good night to my son I was thankful we had the day behind us and I tried to look at surviving that one day as an accomplishment.”

“I did not read about those things that might never happen or things I was not ready to deal with.”

“I got as much information as I could about the protocol, the science and the medications. To me knowledge is power.”

“Every night after all of the children were in bed I cried with my husband. Eventually we stopped crying every night –the despair was replaced with hope.”

“You DO have the strength to get through this! At first it was so overwhelming; I thought I would never be able to handle it all. But day-by-day (some better than others) you find yourself moving through this experience. Be kind to yourself. You are experiencing one of the greatest trials a parent can experience; pamper your body and spirit.”

“Take care of yourself. Get enough sleep, eat properly and exercise! My run was my “me time” and really helped to clear my head. Make time for yourself with hobbies or other things you enjoy.”