

Chapter 5

What Your Brother or Sister May Be Feeling

Just like everyone else, your brother or sister may be worried, scared, or confused. They may also feel tired and sick because of the treatment. Some kids feel embarrassed because treatment has changed the way they look and feel. You both may be having a lot of the same feelings.

Look at the World Through Your Brother's or Sister's Eyes

Knowing how your brother or sister might be feeling could help you figure out how to help, or at least understand where they are coming from.

Here are a few things young people with cancer have felt:

Afraid

Depending on how old your brother or sister is and how they react to tough situations, they may be more or less afraid.

"It's scary to learn that you have cancer. Will the treatment hurt? Who are all these doctors and nurses prodding at me and asking me questions? I don't like not knowing what will happen. I don't like not knowing if I will get better." —Tamara, age 13

Sad or Depressed

People with cancer sometimes can't do things they used to do. They may miss these activities and their friends. Feeling sad or down can range from a mild case of the blues to **depression**, which a doctor can treat.

"I hate it that I can't do a lot of the things I used to do. I miss hanging out with my friends. I never thought I would say this, but I even miss school. A lot of the time I just don't want to talk at all, and when I do, I can't be cheerful and happy all the time."
—Ryan, age 15

"I admit it. I am not nice a lot of days. I feel ticked off. People get on my nerves. I'm like—why is this happening to me? Some days I just feel mad about everything."
—Jeremy, age 16

Angry

Cancer and treatment side effects can cause your brother or sister to be mad or grumpy. Anger sometimes comes from feelings that are hard to show, like being afraid,

being very sad, or feeling helpless. Chances are your sibling is angry at the disease, not at you.

"Everything is different now that I have cancer. It's like the whole family just stopped doing what they were doing. I know my sisters can't be happy about that. They have to do all the chores. My older sister had to stop cheerleading so she could take care of my little sister after school. I feel guilty that I brought this on." —Nicole, age 14

Guilty

Your brother or sister may feel guilty that they caused changes in your family's life. But just as you did not cause this situation to happen, neither did your brother or sister.

Hopeful

There are many reasons for your brother or sister to feel hopeful. Most kids survive cancer, and treatments are getting better all the time. Hope can be an important part of your brother's or sister's recovery.

"I keep the faith. I put up a huge sign in the living room that says 'If you have to be blue, be a bright blue.' My three brothers and I used all these blue colored markers and we decorated it with glitter. I have to keep believing that I will get cured. It is what keeps me going."
—Julie, age 16

All of these feelings

are normal for a person living with cancer.

You might want to share this list with your sibling. Ask them how they are feeling.

Dear Diary,
What is going on? Everything is changing so fast. Six months ago I was the little sister ready to start high school. Now I am the most adult one in the family. Since Jill got sick, Mom is a mess—sad and stressed all the time. She thinks we don't see, but we do. All our time is spent going to Jill's doctor visits. Dad works day and night and all Jill does is lie around and listen to music. I know the cancer makes her mad, but does she have to shut me out? Is my family ever going to get back to normal again?
—Beth, entry from September 18th

