

Health Awareness

Cancer Survivors Move Beyond The Cure

(NAPSA)—Doctors have some good news, for a change, about cancer. Today, 79 percent of U.S. children diagnosed with cancer survive it. The bad news, however, is that nearly two-thirds will experience physical or psychological problems or learning disabilities as a result of their diagnosis or treatment.

These “late effects” can occur months, even years after cancer has been treated. If survivors don’t know about late effects, they might not associate the problems with the cancer diagnoses and a minor health problem could become a life-threatening issue.

Whatever their child’s health, parents can take a proactive approach. Here are suggestions:

- You are your child’s best advocate. Learn all you can about the diagnosis, treatment protocol and potential complications.

- Maintain a detailed medical journal. From diagnosis on, keep a pen and notepad with you at all times and write everything down. Not only will this assist you during your child’s treatment, it will give you an accessible record for the future.

- Be open and honest with yourself, your family and especially your child. Knowledge about late effects is necessary to help your child lead a full, healthy and productive life.

- Maintain a healthy lifestyle for your family. A good diet during treatment can help minimize side effects. Follow a low-fat, plant-based diet and encourage daily physical activity to increase energy, improve moods, boost self-esteem and stimulate the immune system.

- After treatment, gather necessary information for your child’s continued care.



New resources are now available to give cancer survivor Davey and his parents the knowledge and power to help him move beyond the cure.

- Realize that as a result of the cancer or its treatment, your child may have difficulties in school. Meet with administrators and teachers to discuss your child’s needs and health issues. Talk to the teachers about educational late effects and watch for learning problems. If necessary, have your child take a neuropsychological evaluation.

- Be aware that transitioning to “normal life” as treatment ends may cause fear, anxiety and stress.

“It is critical that childhood cancer survivors receive accurate and current information about late effects,” said Stacia Wagner, a National Children’s Cancer Society (N.C.C.S.) survivorship specialist and cancer survivor. To help, the N.C.C.S. created Beyond the Cure, offering information on life after cancer. The Web site lets survivors create their own Late Effects Assessments for specific information about complications they might encounter. The site, www.beyondthecure.org, also has information on insurance, employment, spirituality and relationships.