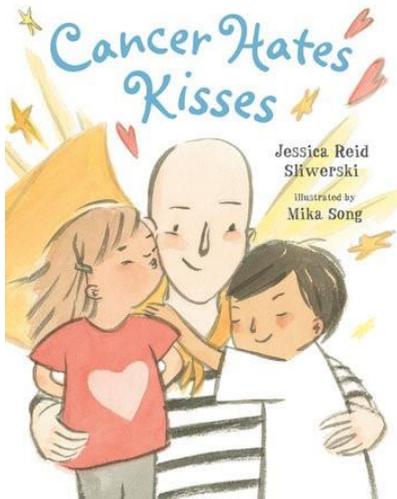


**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**
RIGHT THERE WITH YOU

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



Cancer hates kisses (2017)

Sliwerski JR.

New York: Dial Books (Penguin), 2017.

40pp.

ISBN 9780735227811.

Average star rating 3.9 (out of 5)

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This is suitable for young children up to age seven; it may be more simple to read for older children in that age range but still helpful at introducing the ideas of cancer and different treatments. It is best read prior to and during treatment especially (to prepare a child for what to expect and to encourage them to be supportive rather than scared), but also after treatment to keep spirits up.

It is very clear to understand for children of a young age group. For example, while a young child may not understand the word 'radiation', the explanation that "It destroys the teeniest, tiniest cancer" is useful and sufficient for a child of this age. The story has a clear structure covering the type of treatment and its effects and how children can help and this is repeated consistently. I really like the illustrations; they're not too complicated or dominating but also show enough detail, for example, that sometimes mum might be bald or wearing a hat.

I like the balance between simplicity and detail. A range of possible scenarios is touched on – surgery, chemo, hair loss, radiation – with a mention of why each might occur. This introduces these ideas in a clear way that parents can elaborate on if desired, e.g. chemo, and "sneaky hidden cancer". Each scenario is followed with ways to be positive and help, definitely necessary for families with young children. While the main focus is supporting the mum, it could touch on the fact that it is okay for the family to find it difficult too, that it's a difficult time for everyone.

My mother died in December 2018 with a brain tumour, following bowel and lung cancer (18-25) (April 2020)

This lovely colourful book addresses a very sensitive issue with ease. It will be of interest to many different people and age groups. If a child is very young, I imagine it will be a valuable resource tool as soon as possible after diagnosis. It tells the story very well and is very easy to understand. The cover attracts the eye and the book is very colourful. Credit must also be given to the illustrator, Mika Song; the story and illustrations come together beautifully. A great book.

Carer (breast cancer) (56-65) (March 2019)

This is suitable for children whose parent/family member may have cancer and is best read after diagnosis, during treatment. The author covers treatment in a simple and easy to understand way for young children and in a simple and logical order. The simple pictures have strong meanings: those of the mother losing her hair and showing her both tired and upbeat are good visuals for young children.

I really like this book, particularly the simple explanation of treatment and how mum may feel run down and poorly. However, I do feel that it is more suitable for children whose parent/loved one has a high chance of survival.

My mother died from lung cancer. I have two children (46-55) (October 2018)

This book is for young children but gives adults the opportunities to discuss what happens when someone has cancer. It will be useful any time in the process as it can help children to understand what to expect but can also give them the opportunity to explore their own feelings.

The story is told very sympathetically, and it is also empowering. It shows that having cancer means there are ups and downs and that children can see the positive side to cancer. It is very easy to understand, and the pictures give opportunities to discuss topics such as hospital appointments and scans. The cover of the book is inviting, the illustrations are good and there is plenty to help with discussions. It is an American book so there is language that might need to be explained to younger audiences, for example Mama and kicking butt.

I like how it goes through the treatments that a patient might have. This will help children to understand, in a visual form, what might be happening. It gives the information in a factual way but also shows that the mother in the story as a “Super Hero”. It gives a good account of some of the things that patients and families might have to deal with during treatment. It also shows that there are things that they can do to help during this time such as having fun and caring for each other.

Retired teacher. Pancreatic cancer patient (56-65) (May 2018)

I really like this book. It is very simple, and the illustrations help tell the story very well. It is ideal for a family who have a parent with breast cancer but could be read in relation to any loved one with a cancer diagnosis. It is a useful book for nurses to be aware of and for teachers in case a child in their class is in that situation. There are some useful notes for adults by a cancer specialist and the author is a mum with young children who had breast cancer and who also happened to be a teacher.

It is very easy to understand and particularly good for very young children, although it is American, and some words could read better for a UK market. The cover and illustrations are very good; they are nice and simple and tell the story very well. There are lots of smiley faces and positive things, ideal for younger children that are struggling to grasp what is happening.

A great book for any mum with breast cancer and young children. It could be read at any stage. I like the simple story and how the family cope with mum's treatment in a positive way. Young children can learn that, although cancer is a nasty thing, they can do loving, fun things to help the family through. It suggests that mum is a superhero and very brave. My four-year-old grandson would have loved this when I was having treatment. I highly recommend it for families with children aged two to six.

In remission from breast cancer, with seven grandchildren (46-55) (January 2018)



This deals with the difficult issue of having a parent with cancer. It uses positive language in a simple but powerful way and shows children that it's ok for a parent to be ill and that it's possible to deal with illness. It is all about 'can dos'; 'we can give' hugs, kisses because 'cancer hates...'.

It could be read at any time, not just when someone has cancer. It is very easy to understand. It is written at the right level of care and attention whilst giving a positive message to young children. The language is positive and doesn't shy away from relevant terminology. The book looks ok, although the pastel, soft illustrations lack vibrancy and don't give such a strong message as the words.

All in all, a great must-have book. I like its simplicity and positivity. Some illustrations have more detail than the accompanying text and this enables readers to discuss and talk about what is going on and could possibly answer questions that may otherwise go unanswered. When I was teaching, I would have been happy to read this to my children whether they knew someone with cancer or not. It gives a positive message about illness. It also looks 'normal' and would not be too out of place with, or stand out too much from, other story/picture books.

Living with cancer (myelodysplastic syndrome) (46-55) (March 2018)

This picture book, with just a few sentences per page, is suitable for children aged about 4-7. It tells the story of a mum with two small children going through tests, surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy for her cancer. The children hug and kiss mum to help her as "cancer hates kisses". It has a very positive feel but also touches on the fact that mum is sometimes sad or exhausted. She is described as a superhero for being strong but tells her children she gets all her superhero strength from them. The story and illustrations give a real feel of the family coping together.

It is very easy to follow and understand and provides the reader opportunity to discuss treatments as they appear in the story. It is American, so uses words like Mama and butt! It is a large hardback and the illustrations are just right. They show some medical procedures (scanner, blood pressure) in a basic and gentle way, without unnecessary detail, and show mum losing her hair – great starting points for discussion with young children.

I particularly like the positive feel of the book and the balance between difficult days and good days. It shows the family helping mum when she is poorly in bed but also laughing with her around the dinner table and going shopping as normal. It is suitable once a parent knows what treatment they need. It offers a great starting point to discuss with small children what might happen to a family member going through cancer, and how they can help, and to refer to when children ask questions.

Living with incurable neuroendocrine cancer (NETs) (36-45) (February 2018)



This story is hard to take as it uses reverse psychology. The story doesn't match the illustrations. The cover is spot on – it's a reflection of real life from the point of view of parents and children – but the title is harsh in comparison. It is a straightforward story, but I am not sure for what age group it is recommended. The language is not suitable for very young children and some things shouldn't be stated, it's confusing.

I like the illustrations and how the father plays a significant role in trying to keep everything under control. I dislike some words and phrases, such as “hate”, “kick cancer's butt”, “cancer hates hugs/kisses/love/laughter”, “it poisons the sneaky, hidden cancer”, “we blast music”.

I believe that as soon as someone is diagnosed with cancer and aware of the changes in their body and mind, they need to find strength and the right time and circumstance to share and explain in a mild way all the necessary steps and what they involve so there can be an easier transition. When someone is diagnosed with cancer, the whole dynamic changes. Even if we are aware and understand the process, it's hard enough to cope as an adult; that's why, especially when you have children, some things should not be said. Children are affected by words and behaviour but with understanding, caring, love and how you use the word cancer, you can determine the impact on their wellbeing. Children should know that they don't have to see cancer with hate because in the long run they will be affected by it and it will determine their emotional state. The bad side has a good side too, if only you are willing to see it.

I give it five stars for the illustrations. They are great and make an emotional impact but the way the story is told is quite aggressive. Superheroes are brave indeed but is it necessary that they must be weak in this circumstance? The story could be told in a different manner. I associate kisses with wellbeing, positivity, love and caring. I would prefer a title such as, “Cancer makes peace with kisses”, “Cancer needs kisses”, or even “Kisses from the heart” – something more bearable.

Six members of my family died from cancer (26-35) (August 2018)

No stars

I would use this book with extreme care, preferably not at all! I don't think it is factually accurate or that it is well-balanced emotionally. I don't like how the story is told. Although it explains that there may be a variety of treatments, the way it is presented could be extremely unhelpful. It is wrong to imply that surgery can wipe out cancer. This isn't always the case; sometimes surgery can be performed to alleviate symptoms rather than wipe out 'the meanest cancer'. Similarly, it could lead a child to believe that radiotherapy always cures the person.

The language is suitable for young children, but I found the cover a little off-putting. The children are round faced and reasonably appealing, but the mother looks a little odd and I don't think it is just because she is bald; children could find this off-putting before the story has started.

Despite the endorsement by a cancer specialist I would not recommend this book at all. I feel that it implies that radiotherapy and surgery are always successful in getting rid of cancer. I am also wary of the 'Superhero' theme that runs through the book. Children's perceptions of superheroes are that they always triumph in whatever they set out to do. This could lead to a child thinking that their parent was somehow letting them down should treatment be unsuccessful. The book also tells them that cancer hates love, so should their parent die, this may lead them to think that they didn't love them sufficiently. I feel that book completely lacks emotional literacy.

Lead volunteer for an emotional and practical support service, supporting people affected by cancer in their homes (66-75) (October 2018)

Further information

Why does Macmillan Cancer Support review books?

We use reviews to help us compile a list of suggested cancer books, the [Macmillan Core Book List](#). Cancer information centres and public libraries can use this list to select appropriate and relevant books for people affected by cancer.

We add reviews to the [Directory of information materials for people affected by cancer](#) so that people affected by cancer can see what others in a similar situation think about a book. You can also see details of all the books reviewed in the [Book reviews listing](#), which also has links to all the reviews.

We recruit most of our reviewers through the [Volunteering Village](#) and the [Cancer Voices Network](#), people affected by cancer who have signed up to help Macmillan Cancer Support in a number of ways. Volunteers are a vital part of our book review process; since 2007, over 1,500 Macmillan volunteers have written more than 6,000 reviews of over 500 different books.

If you are a health professional who would like to review books for us, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Information and support for people affected by cancer

If you are looking for support to help you live life with cancer, you may wish to contact one of [Macmillan's cancer information and support services](#). Or you can call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00** (Mon-Fri 9am–8pm). We have an interpreting service in over 200 languages. Just state, in English, the language you wish to use. If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can use textphone no 0808 808 0121 or Text Relay.

You can also email us using the [website enquiry form](#). Alternatively, [visit our website](#).

Feedback

If you have any comments, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

We're here to help everyone with cancer live life as fully as they can, providing physical, financial and emotional support. So whatever cancer throws your way, we're right there with you.

For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit macmillan.org.uk

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