

PARENTING THROUGHOUT TREATMENT

Parenting from a sofa is OK.



Your kids will be OK with this. Explain why you need to stay on the sofa, and that some days will be like this and some days you will feel stronger

PRE-TREATMENT PLANNING

- Make a calendar – put on all school dates, kid's activities, your appointments – everything
- Write a list of important numbers including chemo ward, oncologist, CNS, school, GP, leaders for children's activities, other school parents – stick it somewhere obvious
- Think of all the people who can support you. Contact them and ask for their availability and allocate jobs
- Sign up for delivery services, and fill the freezer with meals
- Strip back family life. Make it simple and meaningful. Don't fall into the trap of trying to pack more love and fun into every day because your future may be uncertain. Focus on manageable activities so you can spend quality time with your family. Reconsider your family's schedule. If your children are involved in many activities, ask them to take a break from some or pick one only
- Create a games/activity box which only comes out when you are feeling too tired/sick after treatment. Fill it with books, comics, sticker books, pens, puzzles, Lego, paper – anything they like. Get friends to collect stuff or make things like lentil shakers
- Get friends and family on board. Ask for help—both with mundane tasks and with care giving duties
- Rotas, calendars – give everyone a job. If you can try to plan childcare for treatment days, and for the following five days or so afterwards. Include school, friends, family, other parents
- Set up an area at home where all household, child care and school information is stored so that on rough days, someone else can take charge over these things. Things like school letters and forms (perhaps think of having separate folders for each child)
- Asking your children to do chores around the house may help them feel like they are making a difference. Use a chart to help children keep track of their chores. Ask your children to help each other. Build incentives into chores. For example, let your children pick their drink and dessert when they make their own school lunch. Say thank you

MAKE YOURSELF A PRIORITY

Learn to say

NO

to activities until you feel you are ready.

Accept that you do not have the time or energy for everything. Make sure you are realistic about what you can do.

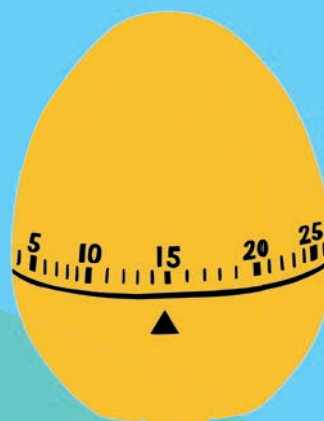
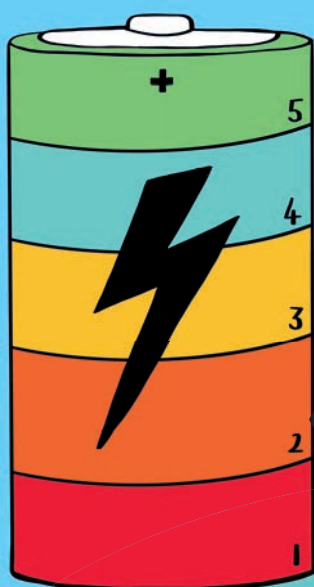


HOW TO CARRY ON PLAYING

Little kids don't have a lot of sympathy on those days when you don't feel great. Try using these two tools:

Make an energy scale from 0-5 out of paper so you can say 'Today I am a number 2'. The family will know what a number 2 is (e.g. 30 mins of passive sitting) and manage their expectations.

Set a timer for 15 minutes – set your child's expectations 'At the moment I can only play for 15 mins because I really need to rest afterwards'. It is manageable and psychologically it helps to know it won't go on forever!



Here is a list of ideas. Do them in bed, on the sofa, lying on the floor.

1. Watch TV, a film, a Netflix series, play an iPad or Xbox game with them
2. Reading together - them reading to you, you reading to them, reading separate books on same sofa
3. Have a picnic in the front room – put towels down and get in picnic food
4. Playing cards (top tip - teach them solitaire and you can just watch!) – simple things like snap
5. Easy puzzles, Lego building
6. Easy crafting with no mess – colouring in, sticker books, making bead bracelets (nice thing to do for separation anxiety – you both pick your favourite colour, make them and wear them)
7. Role play – you are a sleeping kitten, you are the resting hospital patient. Or they are a dog and they have to collect imaginary balls you throw. Or give your kids a hairbrush, spray bottle filled with water and a handful of hair clips for an hour of hairdressing.
8. Putting on make up – if your skin isn't too sore, allowing your child to apply makeup to your face or arms
9. Shooting targets – roll up paper or socks and try to get them on a target (saucepan, cup etc)
10. Word game – 'I went to the market and got' (not good for memory loss), alphabet game
11. Name game – stick a celebrity/character on your forehead and guess who you are by asking yes/no questions
12. Ask them to put on a show. They have to plan it, get costumes ready, draw and cut out tickets. They can play some songs on your phone.
13. Sock puppets. Get some socks, put them on your hands and their hands and get them to think of a story.
14. Give them your phone. Tell them to photograph objects in the house that are green, red, yellow, blue, orange, purple.
15. Get them to build a fort out of blankets, duvets, towels, sheets, and two chairs. Give them some colouring in, some toys and snacks and a torch.
16. Dancing competitions – you choose the music, they have to dance. You could give prizes like a sticker or box of raisins.
17. Virtual babysitters are good. Facetime Grandma.
18. YouTube – find Cosmic Kids Yoga videos for them to do
19. Put on an audiobooks (loads of free ones on YouTube) and give them a toy to fiddle with, or some colouring.
20. Send them on a scavenger hunt to find random items (or things you need) from around the house.

Older kids and teens want their own space and are less demanding physically, however, if they want to, spending time doing something together can be a good as a reminder that cancer isn't always the priority.