WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

A CHILDREN’S GUIDE TO LIVING WHEN A LOVED ONE IS DYING

WRITTEN BY ROBIN HOPKINS  ILLUSTRATED BY NICK GANCI
This book is written in loving memory of Terry S. Langbaum, and her tireless dedication to ensuring cancer patients and their families have the support they need during treatment and beyond.
WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

A Children’s Guide to Living When a Loved One is Dying

Written By
Robin Hopkins

Illustrated By
Nick Ganci

Images created and used under license to Johns Hopkins University by Nicholas M. Ganci
Copyright © 2022 Johns Hopkins University
I got some really bad news today,

and it’s hard to talk about.
Mom’s cancer is back,

and the doctors said
she won’t get better this time.
Even though I was little,

I remember from before.

The side effects from chemotherapy made mom feel really awful.

She slept a lot,
Grandma took care of us while mom was sick, and she even knitted mom a purple hat. And she lost all of her hair. Sometimes she would throw up,
But Mom got better,

life went back to normal.

There were big birthday parties,

days at the beach,
amusement parks,

family breakfasts and dinners,

movie nights,

and of course, Mom’s hair grew back!
But Mom’s cancer came back, too.
Sometimes people get better.
Sometimes they don’t and they die.

Sometimes, treatments like surgery, chemotherapy, or radiation get rid of all of the cancer.

But cancer can spread or return.
Cancer that spreads is called metastatic, which means that the cancer that started in one place has spread to other places, like into bones and the brain.
So she’s going to die?

Yes.

The doctors don’t have any more ways to treat or cure her disease.
But just because your Mom will die, that doesn’t mean it will happen right away.

Your Mom can still live for many more years.

So you will live your life, and enjoy the special moments you have together.
Your mom will still see her doctors, and she may still take medicine to feel better.
She might have bad days, where she needs more rest, but she will also have good days!

She may still go to work, help around the house, and be here to help you with your homework.
How do I act normal when I know she’s going to die?
That’s the hard part.

We won’t know what’s going to happen until it happens.

Death is just a part of life.
That’s why it’s okay to just be with your Mom.

Take one day at a time,

and talk to other people about how you are feeling.
Remember,
no matter where they go,
YOUR LOVED ONES WILL ALWAYS BE A PART OF YOU.
I love you.
Terminology

Cancer: Cancer is a disease that happens when the cells in your body start growing uncontrollably.

Surgery: Surgery is a medical treatment where doctors use special tools on the patient’s body. A doctor who performs surgery is called a surgeon.

Chemotherapy: Chemotherapy is a medical treatment where doctors use chemicals to kill cancer cells.

Side Effect: A side effect is an unpleasant feeling that can happen after taking medication. This doesn’t mean the medicine isn’t working!

Metastatic: Metastatic means that cancer cells have spread from the first place in the body to another place in the body. This means the disease has gotten worse.

Life-Limiting: A life-limiting illness is one that will get increasingly worse and cannot be reversed by medicine or treatment. This is sometimes called a terminal illness.

Survivorship: Survivorship is the experience of the physical, mental, emotional, social, and financial effects of cancer that begin at diagnosis and continue through treatment and beyond. Family members, friends, and caregivers are also considered part of the survivorship experience.
Journal

Sometimes it's helps to process events that are out of your control by writing down your thoughts and feelings. What questions do I have? What am I worried about? Who can I talk to about my feelings?
Creative Space

Finding the write words can be difficult. Use this space to express your thoughts and feelings anyway that you can.