

REALITY CHECK

You have found yourself on a path that no parent or caregiver imagines themselves walking. You may feel frozen in place right now, but tomorrow you will wake up on this same trail and possibly be ready to take the first few steps. What are the steps you need to take to re-organize your life?

First and foremost, take a quick reality check:

- **Your role** as a primary caregiver has shifted...it has not diminished. It is true that the doctors hold the oncology treatment plan for your child, but soon enough you will become an expert on your child's cancer. In the mean time, you are still the person who understands your child best.
- **Although it may feel like you have little control** over your current situation, your influence over your child's life is as solid as ever. You affect your child's happiness and comfort level greatly by remaining calm and reassuring.
- **The best way** to feel composed is to educate yourself and prepare for the task ahead. You may not feel ready to make plans for next week or next month. Preparation can be done at your own pace. If you need to plan moment by moment or day by day, then do so.

When you are educated and organized:

- **You can worry less** about small details and finances, leaving you able to focus on the task at hand.
- **You are able** to educate your family and friends about your child's cancer and prepare everyone for the changes ahead.
- **You can prepare** your child with cancer by letting them know what to expect from procedures. You can prepare siblings and friends as to the changes in your child's appearance and health.
- **You can educate** your close circle of friends/visitors about good hygiene and how it will help the child with cancer stay healthy and enable treatment to continue as planned.
- **You can assure** that your child is comfortable and relaxed for the upcoming treatments and that they are taking all prescribed meds.
- **It can be very difficult** to organize your thoughts at the time of diagnosis. So keep the book handy, and fill it out when you feel the need. No plan is one-size-fits-all, so pick and choose the information and printable pages that work for your family.