

MEETING ONE GUIDES, RANGERS AND SENIOR SECTION

Top Tips

- you might like to send a letter to parents before this meeting, so they are aware of the topic
- it is likely some girls will already have come into contact with cancer
- have an adult ready to support any girl who might get upset

What you will need

- a large sheet of paper and pens
- 9 statements from 'Fact or Fiction'
- 4 blogs from 'Supporting each other'
- 4 copies of 'How are you feeling'
- the text of 'Danielle's story'
- one copy per girl of 'What Women Should Look Out For' and 'Love Your Ladyparts'
- a piece of paper for each girl with her name written on it, in a container

Before you Start

- You might like to let parents know about our partnership with Macmillan and explain that as well as raising money we are aiming to increase the girls' awareness and understanding of the issues around cancer. There is a letter template you can use for this purpose.
- Check with other Leaders in the Unit to see how these topics might affect them, particularly discussing the effects of a cancer experience, so that they are prepared to interact with and support the girls.
- Decide what ground rules you will have for your discussions – such as valuing what everyone says, letting the Leader know if they feel sad, respecting each other's privacy, etc

Getting Started

Find out what the girls already know – ask them what they know, or think they know, about cancer and any questions they have. It's a good thing to include any misconceptions at this stage. If possible write their comments up on a large sheet of paper. Then read:

What is Cancer?

Cancer is a disease that's been around for millions of years and continues to affect a lot of people. Every part of our body is made up of tiny building blocks called cells. Cancer is an illness of these cells. The cells in our body divide to help us grow or to replace damaged cells. Normally they divide in a controlled way, but this process can go wrong producing cancer cells which divide in an uncontrolled way. These cancer cells then crowd out healthy cells and may spread to other parts of the body.

There are 2 main types of cancer – solid cancers and leukaemia and lymphomas. Solid cancers are when cancer cells crowd out healthy cells, forming a lump or tumour. Many types of cancer take this form. Leukaemia and lymphomas are cancers that affect white blood cells and are often called cancers of the blood. They affect the body's ability to fight disease. Sometimes they are only diagnosed after a routine blood test.

There are lots of different tests that are used to find out if someone has cancer. These include blood tests, scans, or having an operation to remove part of a lump to see if it is cancerous. This is called a biopsy.

True or False?

Enlarge and cut out the 9 statements from 'Fact or Fiction'. The correct answers are found on the reverse of this sheet.

Stick the 9 statements from 'Fact or Fiction' around the room. Ask the girls to read them and decide which are true and which are false.

Run through the answers of 'Fact or Fiction'. Discuss any they are not sure about – what they thought, where they heard that, etc.

Danielle's Story

Print 'Danielle's Story- Questions to ask', and cut into 4 pieces with one sentence on each to give out to the groups

Split the girls into 4 groups. Ask some girls to be Danielle and the other characters from Danielle's Story and to read out her story to the rest of the Unit. Give each group a different question to discuss Ask each group to feed back their thoughts in turn, drawing out the positives, then read:

Effects of a Cancer Experience

There are many positive ways that Danielle was supported by her sister, parents and friends. A cancer experience, like any major event, can have a ripple effect on family and friends. Often these people need support too.

Supporting Each Other

Cut out the 4 biogs from 'Supporting Each Other'.

Give each group one biog and one copy of 'Supporting Each other'. Ask them to read their blog and to choose the feelings they think that person is experiencing (they can add their own words if they wish).

Explain that you would like one person from each group to role play their character in a short sketch with the characters from the other 3 groups. Ask each group to nominate the person to "be" their character.

Ask the 4 characters to improvise a short sketch to demonstrate the effect John's cancer diagnosis has had on them – how each one is feeling and why – then ask the other girls to suggest the emotions they were able to identify. They can also suggest other emotions they feel the characters might have been feeling.

It's Good to Talk... or is it?

Read the passage 'It's Good to Talk' below. Hold a Unit discussion about whether or not Jamil should talk to Alex about his Dad's cancer.

It's Good to Talk

Jamil is finding it difficult to know what to do and say to help his friend. Some people find it hard to talk about a serious illness like cancer. On the other hand, cancer is a part of everyday life. The more we talk about it, the more we understand. Sometimes not talking about something can make it scarier and lead to confusion. What do you think?

How is Cancer Treated?

Read this passage:

How is Cancer Treated?

Depending on the type of cancer and what stage it is at when diagnosed, treatments can be very successful. There are three most common treatments:

Surgery – an operation may be needed to remove a tumour. Surgery is often used with other treatments such as radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy

Radiotherapy – involves exposing cancers to a type of radiation over a short period of time. The area affected by cancer is exposed to radioactive rays in much the same way that an ordinary X-ray is used to view a broken limb. Radiotherapy can kill cancer cells and reduce the size of tumours

Chemotherapy – involves taking powerful drugs that can be swallowed or given directly into a vein. The drugs are sometimes given in one go or slowly over a longer period of time

Radiotherapy and chemotherapy are designed to damage any cells (including cancer cells) that are rapidly dividing. Unfortunately it means they can also destroy good cells. This causes side effects such as sickness, tiredness, or hair loss. But side effects always wear off after the treatment is finished, and any hair loss nearly always grows back.

How to Care For Yourself

Read 'How to Care for Yourself'. Give each girl a copy of 'What Women Should Look Out For' and 'Love Your Ladyparts' to look through and take home. Give an opportunity for them to ask questions or to share any concerns they might have (in privacy if they wish).

How to Care for Yourself

The earlier someone gets treatment for their cancer, the better. It's good to know your body so that if something ever changes you can spot it early. Having a regular cervical screening (smear) test and checking your breasts for lumps and changes is a great start – but there are lots of other tell-tale signs that you should be on the lookout for.

Here are 2 documents - What Women Should Look Out For and Love Your Ladyparts (download or order direct (free) from Macmillan) - for you to take home which will give you more details about what to look out for.

Closing Activity

Show the girls the container with the pieces of paper inside each with one of the girl's name written on it. Ask the girls to each take one piece of paper from the container but not to tell anyone whose name is on it. Give them a few

minutes to think of something positive to say about that person (they can ask a Young Leader/Leader for ideas if they are stuck).

At the meeting closing read the 'Helping Friends' passage below. **Then** ask each girl in turn to face the person whose name she drew and to say out loud the positive compliment that she had thought of. Comment on how good it makes you feel when someone says something nice about you.

Helping Friends

We can all help our friends in tough times. For example by letting them know you are there, being a good listener, and being kind and helpful. These can seem quite small things – but they can make a big difference.