

Back to School with HOPE

A Resource and Support Guide for
Patients, Parents and Caregivers



Hope & Heroes

Treating Children. Curing Cancer.

September is **Childhood Cancer Awareness Month**, a time to raise awareness and honor the strength of children and families.

As the new school year begins, we know it can bring both excitement and challenges—especially for families facing childhood cancer.

That's why we created this Back-to-School Guide, a free resource for patients, parents, and caregivers. Inside, you'll find tasty, quick recipes to make mealtimes easier, fun art activities to spark creativity, practical tips for returning to school, and inspiring stories of courage from patient families. You'll also learn more about Hope & Heroes and our impact across the New York Tri-State region.

This guide is more than a collection of resources—it's a reminder that no one walks this journey alone. We are here with you, every step of the way.

To learn more about our work and ways to get involved, please visit HopeandHeroes.org



Hope & Heroes supports the region's leading pediatric cancer centers, advancing pioneering research for tomorrow's cures and comprehensive clinical care for patients today.

7

Top-flight medical institutions funded in the NY Tri-State region

600

Physicians, researchers, and health care providers that benefit from Hope & Heroes funding

1,000

Newly diagnosed children and adolescents with cancer across our member institutions annually



Top 5 Ways to Eliminate Smartphone Stress

Smartphones help us stay in touch, take fun photos, and learn new things. But sometimes, all those texts, pings, and apps can make us feel stressed without even realizing it. Whether you're a kid, teen, or grown-up, here are five smart (and simple!) ways to feel less overwhelmed by your screen time.

1 Keep your phone on silent.

It's hard to resist the urge to check your phone when it's vibrating away in your pocket. Help yourself by switching your phone to silent.

2 Turn off notifications.

Another simple solution to a nagging problem. By turning off notifications, you can use your phone efficiently without distraction.

3 Try "Inbox Pause"

Inbox Pause is an application that can be synced to your Gmail, Outlook, or iPhone, allowing you to stop new emails from coming into your inbox. It reinforces the separation of work and leisure time, and can also be used during the day to help you focus by preventing interruptions.

4 Charge your phone at a distance.

If you're charging your smartphone on your nightstand or next to the couch, you're more likely to respond immediately to a message or notification. A little distance from your phone will do you some good; charge it in another room where it isn't easily accessible.

5 Delete apps.

The thought of deleting your favorite apps might make you shudder, but you'll quickly realize how easy it is to get through the day without them. Who knows? You might be fine without them for longer than you'd expect!



Our network reaches over 1,000 newly diagnosed kids and teens annually — nearly 8% of U.S. pediatric cases.

When Brynn Forlizzi was diagnosed with cancer at just fifteen, everything changed in an instant.

One day, she was a busy high schooler juggling classes and tennis practice—and the next, she was navigating surgeries, chemotherapy, and all the uncertainty that comes with a cancer diagnosis.



It wasn't just the physical side effects that were hard. Losing her long, thick hair during treatment made Brynn feel like she was losing a part of herself. Even with a wig, she didn't quite feel like her. "My hair was a defining part of who I was. Losing that was like losing a big piece of me."



But during those tough moments, the support of her family, friends, and school had the greatest impact. Her friends showed up with little gifts, her favorite snacks, or just their presence when she needed it most. Her teachers ensured she never fell behind, helping her smoothly transition back into class with her peers. For Brynn, these acts of kindness meant everything.



During her treatment, Brynn learned about Hope & Heroes, an organization dedicated to supporting pediatric cancer patients and their families throughout the tri-state area. What struck her most was their quick, compassionate response to help with whatever families need—groceries, housing, emotional support, or financial relief.

Now cancer-free, Brynn is back doing what she loves. She's serving as her class president, back on the tennis court, riding competitively again—and finding ways to give back. "After healing myself, I was able to think about how I wanted to help." Lending her support to Hope & Heroes has also been an integral part of her recovery. To learn more about Hope & Heroes and how you can support kids and families facing cancer, visit www.hopeandheroes.org.



Hope & Heroes is the only regional nonprofit solely focused on pediatric cancer.

Mindfulness can be used to regain focus, calm the mind, and remain calm in stressful environments and scenarios.

Although the idea may seem abstract at first, here are a few simple and fun ways to incorporate this practice into your daily life.

TAKE A RAINBOW WALK

While walking outside, take a moment to look around you and see if you can spot every color of the rainbow.



HEALTHY MONDAY

Rainbow Walk:

Take some time to really explore your environment, noticing the details of your surroundings. Make mental notes of all the different colors, shapes, and patterns. Slowly, disruptive or unpleasant thoughts will melt away into the background.

The Mind Jar Snow Globe:

Imagine your thoughts and worries are like snowflakes being shaken in a snow globe. Breathe slowly and visualize your negative feelings falling down. Next, settle your mind as the snowflakes begin to rest on the ground. Finally, take a mindful moment to remember and imprint these feelings of positivity and serenity.

Looking for more mindful practices?

 healthymonday.com



Since 1996, Hope & Heroes has raised over \$50 million for kids with cancer and blood disorders.

Start the week with self-care

Practicing self-care is important. Try these simple tips to reduce stress and improve your mood and energy.



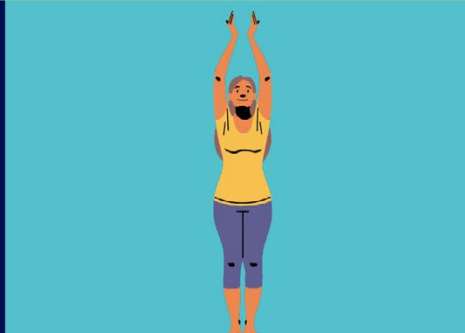
Go For A Walk

Feel the air or the warmth of the sun.



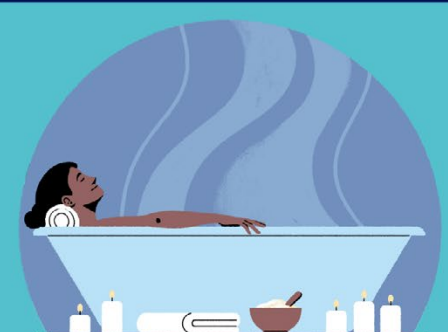
Take A Breath

Take a pause with some deep breaths.



Yoga Moment

At your desk or in your living room, do some relaxing moves.



Take A Warm Bath

This is also a way to take a digital break from your phone and/or computer.



Call A Friend

Catch up and share the latest. This will boost your happiness and it's a natural way to destress.



Sleep

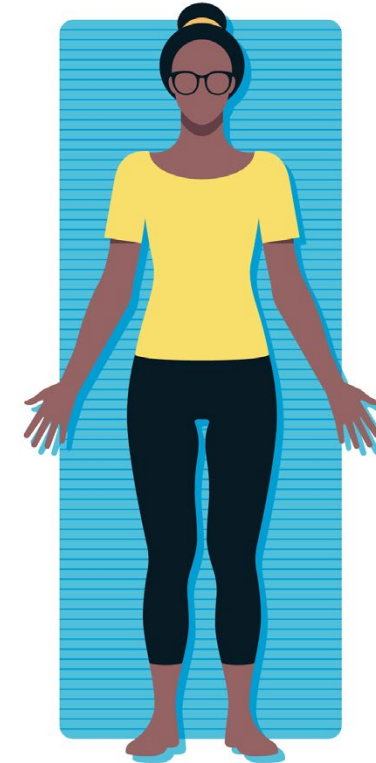
Go to bed early, read, relax, do some bed yoga, sleep soundly, and wake up refreshed!

Content adapted with permission from Healthy Monday, an initiative of the Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion and Population Health at Syracuse University. [Learn more at healthymonday.com](https://healthymonday.com)

FEEL CALM ALL OVER

This Monday, try a mindful body awareness practice to ease tense muscles and let stress drift away.

1. Sit quietly or lie down.
2. Start at one end of your body and focus on each body part.
3. Notice any areas of tension then soften and relax.
4. Continue until your whole body feels completely relaxed.
5. Relax.



HEALTHY MONDAY



We invest in research, care, and survivorship — so kids can get back to being kids.

The Alfano Arts in Medicine Studio (AIM) strives to empower patients, families and medical workers through artistic expression and play before and during the rigors of treatment.

Led by Artist and Educator, Nitza Danieli, the studio offers a universal safe space for patients, families and healthcare workers to express themselves creatively.

Arts in Medicine... an Artist-Led Model

Often confused with art therapy, the arts in medicine model is distinctly artist-led and non-clinical in its approach. While art therapy is a licensed mental health profession aimed at clinical outcomes, arts in medicine supports well-being, reduces stress, and fosters human connection. AIM Studio was founded in 2004 by Dr. Wilma Siegel, an accomplished artist and retired oncologist, at Columbia's Pediatric Neurology Clinic. Hope & Heroes has sponsored the project since 2018, which has allowed the studio to expand to other hospitals in the tri-state area, build an online activity library and maintain partnerships with arts institutions, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Nitza "Pizza" Danieli



DISCOVER MORE ART PROJECTS HERE

MAKE YOUR OWN CATAPULT!

YOU'LL NEED:

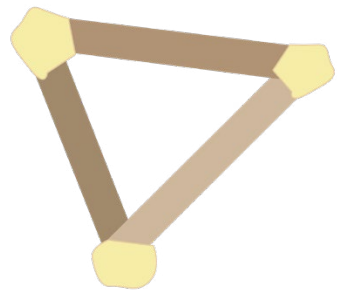
- + Nine wooden tongue depressors
- + Medical tape, duct tape
- + Medicine dosing cup or dixie cup
- + Rubber band
- + Cotton ball (optional)



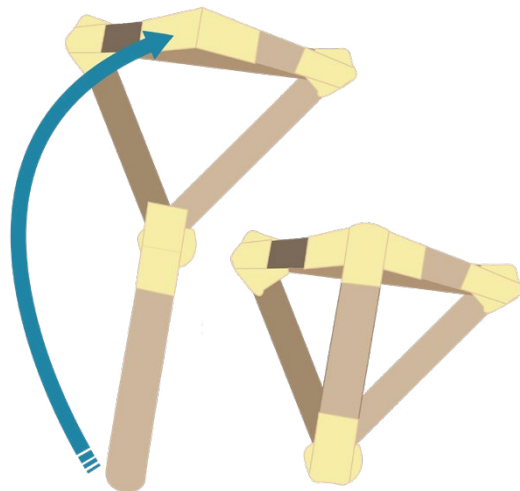
DIRECTIONS

1. Make a triangle with three tongue depressors and secure the edges of the triangle using tapes. This is the base of your catapult.
2. At the three points of your triangle, connect three additional tongue depressors at the triangular base. Fold them up towards the center to form a pyramid. Connect the depressors at the center with tape.
3. Connect two tongue depressors into a long line using tape. At one end, secure your medicine dosing cup with tape. This is going to be the long arm of the catapult.
4. Slide the rubber band on the top of the pyramid. Then, slide your long catapult arm through the rubber band, securing it on the inside of one point of the triangular base. You don't need much tape for this, just a hinge to keep it in place.
5. Use a cotton ball or make a small ball of tape. Put it in your cup and test your catapult!

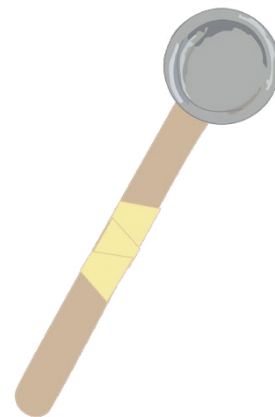
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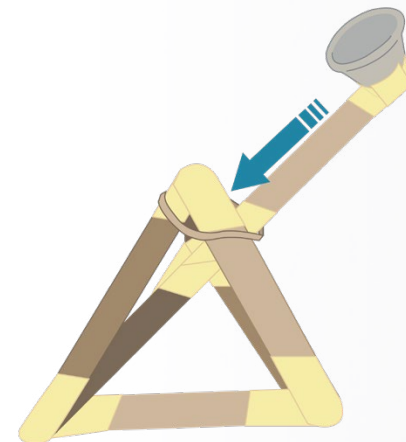
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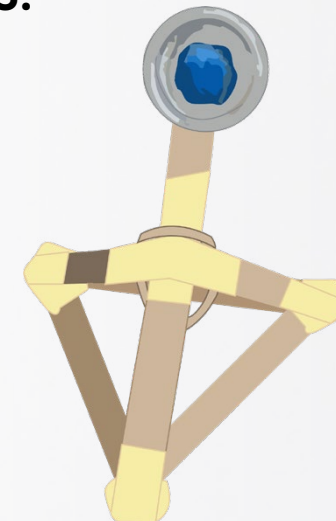
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4.



5.



DISCOVER MORE ART PROJECTS HERE

This group drawing game was developed by a patient and parent duo on the way home from the Arts in Medicine Studio.

TRY IT FOR YOURSELF!

KIDS!

Draw your Nurse or Doctor Here. Be sure to include a background! Send it to us at aim@hopeandheroes.org to be featured on our Instagram page!



DIRECTIONS

1. Take a blank sheet of paper.
2. One person draws a line.
3. Without lifting the pencil, the other person takes hold of the pencil and continues the line.
4. See what creative and surprising shapes and images develop when there are two minds behind a drawing!
5. When do you know the drawing is “done”?



Discover more fun art projects, stories and our online gallery at www.alfanoartsinmedicine.org or simply scan this QR code!





Our local model helps families stay close to school, work, and home during treatment.

Simple Tips for Healthy Eating

- 1 Swap in Whole Grains
- 2 Skip the Sugar
- 3 Try Plant-Based Proteins
- 4 Add Vegetables to Everything
- 5 Keep the Pantry Stocked

250 CALORIE SMOOTHIE!

1 BANANA

1/2 CUP OF FRESH
OR FROZEN FRUIT
OR BERRIES

1 CUP YOGURT, MILK
OR DAIRY ALTERNATIVE

1/2 CUP ICE

COMBINE THE INGREDIENTS,
BLEND UNTIL SMOOTH AND ENJOY!

Fruit Tips!

The riper the banana, the sweeter the flavor.

Try a variety of different fruits like strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, cherries, mango and papaya.

Use fresh or frozen fruit. Always wash fresh thoroughly before eating

7 Tips from a Pediatric Cancer Doctor to Help Your Child Have a Healthy School Year

For children and teens continuing school during cancer treatment, the start of the school year is a great time to bring a sense of normalcy back into their lives. It is also important to embrace healthy habits to reduce the likelihood of health-related challenges. Peter Cole, MD, Chief of Pediatric Hematology/ Oncology at Rutgers Cancer Institute and RWJBarnabas Health, shares tips for a healthy start to a new school year.

01 Prioritize the basics: sleep, exercise and nutrition

For children going through cancer treatment, being by their support network with more opportunity for activities and physical exercise can be a welcome break from a hospital setting and may help with some treatment side effects. Balanced meals rich in vitamins, minerals and other nutrients improve brain function, provide sustained energy throughout the day and support proper growth and development. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends that children ages 6 through 12 sleep 9 to 12 hours per night. Teens should get 8-10 hours of sleep.

02 Communicate with your child's school

First, communicate with your child's doctors to learn about how treatment may impact your child's energy level and ability to do schoolwork. Tell your child's teachers and principals about your child's medical situation. You may need to let your school know of any medications your child takes, and make 1/2 arrangements with the school nurse to administer any medications if needed. Continue to keep the school updated on your child's health status and any changes in their treatment.



03 See your pediatrician

A visit to the pediatrician before starting school can ensure that a child with cancer receives comprehensive care and the appropriate support to safely reintegrate back into the school environment.

04 Make sure vaccinations are up to date

Children undergoing cancer treatment can have a weakened immune system, making them more susceptible to infections. Staying up to date with recommended vaccines, when appropriate, can provide critical protection. Some immunizations might be delayed or modified depending on your child's treatment plan. New Jersey schools require specific immunizations based on age.

05 Remind your child about healthy habits to prevent spreading germs

Children undergoing cancer treatment can have a weakened immune system, making them more susceptible to infections. Staying up to date with recommended vaccines, when appropriate, can provide critical protection. Some immunizations might be delayed or modified depending on your child's treatment plan. New Jersey schools require specific immunizations based on age.

06 Monitor your child's health

Watch for signs of illness (cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, etc.) Other important parts of your child's health include their cognitive (learning and thinking) development, social and emotional growth, and mental health. Some treatments may cause a decrease in memory or other learning difficulties.

07 Provide a support system

Let your child know that their medical team will take care of them and that you will provide support. Children with cancer face unique challenges and adjustments, but can be very resilient. Encourage your child to share their feelings and experiences, make time to listen actively and validate their emotions, and demonstrate healthy ways to handle stress and challenges.

Dr. Cole is the Embrace Kids Foundation Endowed Chair and Professor of Pediatrics at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. He is the Medical Director of the Pediatric Hematology Oncology Service Line for RWJ Barnabas Health, and Chief of the Division of Pediatric Oncology at Rutgers Cancer Institute, New Jersey's only NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center.



September is **National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month**. The gold ribbon is more than a symbol. It's a promise to fight for cures and care. This month, join Hope & Heroes in raising awareness and supporting the children and families who need us most.



Our Mission To Save Lives

Hope & Heroes is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit that funds research, treatment, and care for children with cancer and blood disorders in the New York Tri-State region. Our unique model of support underwrites cutting-edge research and innovative care, giving children their best chance to lead healthy lives. Because we are local, we can provide timely access to care and resources, keeping families connected and supported in their daily lives.



Learn more at
HopeandHeroes.org

