

### **A note to parents and helpers on how to use *Cinnamon Roll Sunday*:**

This book is a bibliotherapy resource—a story intended to be read aloud by an adult to one or more children (ages 4-10) as a therapeutic adjunctive that serves as a reference for healthy coping and also normalizes and prompts sharing of the child’s experience. *Cinnamon Roll Sunday* is a story for children experiencing a loved one’s illness and possible impending death. This story may also be helpful after the death of a loved one from a long illness. Parents reading this story also benefit by having communication about difficult topics, such as illness, treatment, and death, modeled for them.

Although it is often very difficult to know if and when someone with cancer will die from it, acknowledging when death is imminent is often times more difficult. Children follow adults’ lead. If the rule is not to talk about it, they won’t. Parent’s mistakenly believe that this means the child doesn’t know what is going on. Children are like sponges, soaking up both spoken and unspoken messages in their environment. Not talking about it leaves them isolated with many feelings they don’t know how to cope with and deprives them of an opportunity to experience death as an integral part of life. Bottom line: It’s better to “go there” and read about a boy whose dad dies and have the opportunity to make all dialog acceptable vs. avoid the topic of death because you are hoping your loved one will live. If the illness is serious, the child is likely already worried.

As you read *Cinnamon Roll Sunday*, pause along the way and allow your listeners to relate to parts of the story, especially feelings (ie. Ask “Have you ever felt that way?”), but also situations (ie. Ask “Did your Mom lose her hair?”). The story covers a lot of ground from diagnosis through illness, death, and life after loss. It serves as a springboard for children to express thoughts and feelings and share with others in like circumstances.

Anticipatory grief happens in anticipation a loss. The hallmark is uncertainty—not knowing if or when the loss will happen. It encompasses the many feelings that happen in anticipation of a loss as well as in bereavement: worry, fear, sadness, anger, numbness, feeling that it isn’t fair, guilt, jealousy, and relief, just to name a few. *Cinnamon Roll Sundays* helps normalize a wide range of feelings and thoughts, as well as demonstrates, through story, ways of coping (ie. open communication, art expression, play, community support). Children’s experiences are validated, and they realize they aren’t alone.

The book can be followed up with coping exercises like feelings pictures, demonstrated in the story and play. Children go in and out of feelings and don’t usually exhibit grief the way adults do. Younger children may show grief through behavior (ie. regressed, or acting out) or through body symptoms (ie. tummy aches), while older children may mask unwelcomed feelings, only to have them leak out in other ways (ie. aggression, apathy). Talking about feelings is one way of expressing and coping with them. Bibliotherapy, art, and play are other ways that are often less threatening.

For other bibliotherapy books for children and teens experiencing the serious illness of a loved one, or grief, as well as books for parents, please go [www.jenniferallenbooks.com](http://www.jenniferallenbooks.com) and click on “grief/books” → “resources.”

*Also by Jennifer Allen:*

*Bone Knowing: A True Story of Coming to Life in the Face of Impending Loss* a memoir written for all adults and especially pertinent to those in relationship to someone facing a serious illness.

///