Support Groups

- The TLC support group program offers open-ended, ongoing peer support groups for children between the ages of 3 and 18 and for their parents or guardians.

- These groups provide a safe, accepting environment in which family members can express their feelings, connect with others who are going through a similar experience, and learn new coping skills.

- The children’s groups are divided by age so that developmentally-appropriate activities can be planned and children will have the opportunity to interact with others close to their age.

- In addition to groups for the “well” children and adults in the family, groups are also available for both children and adults who are ill. Groups are facilitated by trained volunteers, with professional staff supervision, and meet every other week for an hour.

- Themes such as coping with changes, dealing with feelings, and identifying strengths and sources of support are explored in the groups. There are also opportunities to share common experiences, ask questions, and have fun.

“At Ele’s Place, it helps to talk to other people my age about it…”

Kyle, age 16

Workshops

Ele’s Place offers parent and community workshops on topics related to talking with children about a life-threatening illness, and helping them cope with the stress and changes that occur in a family when a family member is seriously ill. Staff are also available to speak with groups about the TLC program. For the date and topic of our next workshop, please call or visit our website.

“Ele’s Place staff are available to consult with parents or others who have concerns or questions about helping a child cope with the life-threatening illness of a family member. Informational material is available, including tips for helping children and a list of local resources and helpful websites. Please call Ele’s Place or visit our website for information.”

Sherry Kreiser

Resource and Referral

“When my husband was diagnosed with cancer, we did everything we could to help the kids, but they needed more . . . they needed Ele’s Place.”

Sherry Kreiser
When someone in a child’s family has a life-threatening illness, that child’s life changes.

The serious illness of a family member can result in long-term family disruptions, changes in lifestyle and relationships, financial strain, and excessive demands on the caregiver. Because the family’s focus and energies are on caring for the ill person, children often lose the attention and availability of one or both parents.

Frequently, children do not have the skills or confidence to cope with their feelings about the illness in their family, including strong emotions such as fear, powerlessness, anger and guilt. They may have many worries and fears that they keep to themselves, not wanting to burden their parents. Children may be confused about the illness itself and what is happening, and often have many questions that parents feel unprepared to address.

Children are also coping with many losses associated with the illness in the family. For example, they may no longer be free to make noise in the house or be able to participate in extracurricular activities because a parent is no longer available to provide transportation for the child. The child may have to spend time away from home, with relatives or friends of the family.

Ultimately, these changes, losses and emotions—if left unaddressed—can lead to acting out behaviors, problems in school, substance abuse, anxiety and depression. Parents can learn to understand the needs of their children and help them cope…and Ele’s Place is here to help.

Ele’s Place services are free of charge and are open to families in the Mid-Michigan area. A federal grant from the Healthy Tomorrows Partnership for Children is funding one-third of the start-up costs of this program. Ele’s Place is seeking individuals and businesses in the community who are interested in providing matching funds for this new program. Please call Ele’s Place for more information.

“Ele’s Place makes my heart feel better.”

Christina, age 5