



# Healing My Whole Self

Robin Bavaro-Sakorafos, RN

Surviving cancer was the beginning of a long journey to healing my whole self. When I was first diagnosed with breast cancer, I was 39 years old. I had spent most of my life working in a number of high-stress communications positions in Massachusetts and had recently become the press secretary for Boston's mayor, the Honorable Thomas M. Menino. On day one, I had to tell my new boss that I would need to step down and help him find a replacement because I had cancer. It was an extremely difficult time personally and professionally, but the mayor insisted that I stay. He was gracious and positive, telling me I would get through this and not to give up. On the outside, I did my best to keep it together, but my internal voice said otherwise.

## Diagnosis and Treatment

I had estrogen receptor–positive stage I breast cancer that had not spread to my lymph nodes. My team of doctors recommended a lumpectomy and several weeks of radiation followed by chemotherapy. They told me I would most likely enter menopause, and I should consider freezing my eggs. The news was devastating. I had a dream of having a family.

My doctors kept asking me what my husband thought, and I had to keep reminding them that I was not married. Having a family in the future was important to me. Therefore, I had the lumpectomy but held off on radiation or chemotherapy decisions. Most of my doctors thought I was crazy and tried to convince me to follow the protocol. My surgeon took the time to deeply listen. I appreciated her honesty and felt her sincerity, and I agreed to radiation.



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## The Next Step

Unexpectedly, in the middle of treatment, my future husband emerged at a friend's wedding. Life is funny. During the next year and a half, we began to think about what I could do next.

I said goodbye to my previous life, married my soul mate, and had our son a year later. This left me with a blank canvas to recreate myself professionally. I chose to focus on health and wellness, and found myself reminiscing about my first job as a nurse aide at 15 years old. I remembered the joy and fulfillment I felt when helping others,

and I began to look at the possibility of becoming a nurse.

## Journey to Nursing

As a communications graduate, my academic path to nursing was challenging and took more than five years. During this time, my beloved father, after a long, stoic battle with lung cancer, passed away. He had taught me to deal with the cards I was dealt with style and grace. He told me that no one will remember the cancer, but they will remember the way you handle it. This personal loss further solidified

Robin Bavaro-Sakorafos, RN, is an employee communications editor in the Department of Nursing and Patient Care Services at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, MA. The author takes full responsibility for the content of the article. The author did not receive honoraria for this work. No financial relationships relevant to the content of this article have been disclosed by the author or editorial staff. Mention of specific products and opinions related to those products do not indicate or imply endorsement by the *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing* or the Oncology Nursing Society. Bavaro-Sakorafos can be reached at robin\_bavaro-sakorafos@dfci.harvard.edu, with copy to editor at CJONEditor@ons.org.

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