



# Healing My Whole Self

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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

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