

after breast cancer What's it like to win the fight of your life, then pick up where you left off before the battle? Here's what survivors and health-care experts want you to know about working, dating, parenting, and just plain living post-treatment. Plus, the latest word on screening and prevention.

WRITTEN BY Kimberly Goad PHOTOGRAPHS BY Ryan Pfluger

BOLD Buddy, Sonia Chevannes, is one of four survivors featured in October's Real Simple Magazine!



ONE-YEAR SURVIVOR
SONIA CHEVANNES, 58

It's been one year since my oncologist declared me cancer-free, and I do everything I can to protect my health. I eat more fish and vegetables, walk every day, and try to keep down my stress. When my 17-year-old came home with a poor report card, I managed to discuss it without losing my temper.

But it's not only my habits that have changed; it's how I view others. Before I was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer, in 2012, I sometimes didn't pay much attention to people. I had my own day to get through! But when you're weak and vomiting from chemo and radiation, you have a greater appreciation for others treating you kindly. And you don't easily forget when people do.

I'm a single mother of two sons, so I worked throughout my treatment. I barely knew my coworkers, but one saw that I was exhausted and brought me hot tea to sustain me during my nine-hour shifts. Another prayed for me. And when a manager overheard me say that I

couldn't bear chemo and planned to stop, he called me into his office and convinced me to finish.

Getting support like that makes you eager to give it away to someone else. A few weeks after treatment, I began volunteering at the Montefiore Einstein Center for Cancer Care's BOLD Buddies program [in New York]. Once a week, I keep patients company while they go through chemo or I answer questions. Several of the women I've helped call me at home to vent or cry. I tell them that I got through it and so can they.

I have trouble sleeping on my left side and lifting my left arm because these areas are still sensitive from my surgeries. I sometimes have coughing fits, which can be a side effect of chemo drugs. But when a patient thanks me for helping her, I feel like the luckiest woman in the world.

—as told to S.B.