A udrey Warner is a warm and friendly woman who describes herself as a type A personality. She’s the mother of twin girls with a sometimes hectic, always challenging full-time job. When she was diagnosed with breast cancer Audrey initially expected the experience to be serious but a challenge she would handle head on. “I had great family and friends to support me,” says Audrey. “And I am a person of faith.”

Her breast cancer journey included lumpectomy and radiation, and eventually, a second surgery. In some ways, the hardest part of the journey was toward the end of her treatment. “I was so very tired,” Audrey explains. Despite all the support she had, in her heart Audrey thought talking to someone who had been there would make a world of difference. So did her health care team. Audrey was given ABCD materials at her doctor’s office and a nurse encouraged her to call. She was amazed by how well she was matched with Therese Burkhart. Therese had been there alright. Her breast cancer diagnosis and treatment plan was similar to Audrey’s, involving many of the same medical team and similar surgery and treatment decisions. She, too, was married, working full-time, raising children and involved in community activities when she heard the heart-stopping words, “breast cancer.”

“I got through it because of the support I had, including my faith,” says Therese. She adds, “But talking directly with someone with breast cancer, someone who’s been in ‘your shoes’ — that’s the key. I became an ABCD mentor because I understand that personally. I have this need to give back now.”

According to Audrey, Therese’s support kept her focused. “She was really good at reminding me to take care of myself. She encouraged me so that when I spoke with my daughters I could be honest without frightening them. And, like no one else, she got the ‘how do I manage breast cancer in a professional setting’ concern 100%.”

As it turned out, Audrey and Therese worked across the street from each other. So, after several heart to heart telephone conversations, they met in a coffee shop. Audrey was almost finished with radiation treatments and the holiday season was underway. Therese brought her a gift — an angel ornament. Audrey hangs that ornament on her Christmas tree each year, a reminder that her “new normal” life is joyous and full — and that her ABCD mentor helped her get there. Recently, her husband’s cousin was diagnosed with breast cancer and Audrey sent her the same angel ornament. She observes, “Because I’ve experienced the support of someone who’s been down this road, I know how important it is that she knows she isn’t alone.”

Reflecting that she can carry ABCD’s vision forward, Audrey says, “Nothing is more powerful than ABCD’s one-to-one support mentoring. I want to train as a mentor soon.” Therese, who now serves on the ABCD Board of Directors, isn’t surprised that Audrey is interested in mentor training. She says, “Mentoring is fulfilling. Helping someone in a uniquely qualified way — that is immensely powerful.”

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Audrey Warner

ABCD provides free, personalized support for those affected by breast cancer.