A busy pediatrician and a widow with four children, Enid Okokon didn’t have time for breast cancer. She was diligent about getting annual mammograms and doing self-exams, and one day while showering she felt something unusual in her breast. A mammogram was inconclusive. During three weeks of tests, she prayed the lump was nothing. But a biopsy turned up cancer.

“I didn’t panic. I was pretty calm,” she said. “I was such a busy person, I didn’t have time to worry.” Her children, who ranged in age from a first grader to a junior in high school, asked if she was going to die. Assured she wouldn’t, “they took it OK,” Enid remembered. She and her daughter even completed a planned college scouting trip before Enid began treatment.

Enid scheduled her treatment efficiently, as a busy person would. She had a mastectomy and simultaneous reconstruction surgery, and at the same time, a colposcopy because she’d had an abnormal Pap test. Chemotherapy and radiation therapy followed.

Recovering from the surgery was a long process, and she did not tolerate chemotherapy well. Suddenly, Enid went from a self-sufficient, independent person to someone who needed help. A lot of it. And so her journey began.

“Having breast cancer makes you realize how in just one day, your life can change,” she said. “Everything, in just one day.”

Depending on others was hard for her. “The impact it had on my life was very difficult. I needed help just to get dressed,” Enid said. Her sister and brother-in-law, co-workers and the two other physicians who shared her practice all pitched in.

“I had a lot of support. I just had to learn to accept it,” she said. “And now, I’m more comfortable about relying on other people.”

That was eight years ago. Since then, Enid has become an ABCD Mentor and has mentored three women. “I tell them just hang in there,” she said. “Take one day at a time. It’s going to be all right.”