A Ballsy Challenge

April 1, 2018 By Justin Birckbichler

April is testicular cancer awareness month, my second favorite month of the year (right after July, since that is my birthday — hint, hint). Last year, I wrote a piece about using April as a spark for twelve months of testicular cancer awareness.

This year, I'm taking the challenge to the next level and simplifying it with tasks you can easily implement. Similar to the "making #NoShaveNovember meaningful" post, I've compiled a list of actionable steps you can do all year long, many without even needing to leave ABSOT (yay for laziness!)

Incorporate six ways to talk about testicles regularly

We need to talk about testicles and men's health more regularly, but it's not always easy to start a conversation by leading with, "Hey, I want to talk about balls!"

My all-time favorite (and among the most important, in my opinion) ABSOT post is "Six Ways to Talk About Testicles." It's a post that underscores the core values of ABSOT. The post shares six ways to bring up testicles in everyday conversations:

- The Conversation Weaver: Find an opportunity to connect a normal conversation to something you know about testicular cancer, a patient/survivor, or anything about men's health.
- The Carpe Scrotiem: Seize the opportunity of a celebrity coming out to speak about his experience with testicular cancer.
- The Question: Use or answer a question to get a conversation headed in that direction.
- The Misconception Redemption: Hear someone say something totally wrong about testicular cancer? Hit them with some knowledge.
- The Pun Game Strong: Testicular cancer isn't funny, but puns are. Use plays on words with "balls, nuts, sack," and other related terms for an easy entry point.
- The Blunt Approach: Remember that point when I said to not lead with, "Hey, I want to talk

about balls!”? Forget it and do that. Their shock will give you an opening. Use it.

Share a photo a day

Each day throughout the month of April, I will be sharing a graphic with an interesting fact, statistic, risk factor, or something else related to testicular cancer across Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook (all of these accounts are linked at the bottom of this post). When these pictures come up, I highly encourage you to forward them on to the men in your life or tag them in the comments. All of the facts were sourced from reputable sites, and I’ll link to my sources at the bottom of this post. I did put my own ABSOT flair on them, of course.

But what if you’re reading this in October and the pictures are buried under dozens of pictures of me turning everyday objects into balls? I’ll do you one better, and link to the entire slideshow here. From here, you can grab your own copy of the entire thing, download each picture individually, and share as you wish.

Want to take it a step further? Make your own pictures and share them. Include your own journey, stats you find, and whatever else you’d like. Feel free to email them to me and I’ll drop them into the master deck.

Band with the Band of Ballers

This is a new mission with ABSOT, and one I hope takes off quickly. With the exception of my Healthy But Affected features, ABSOT has been primarily discussing testicular health only through my voice. However, I’m just one man with one experience (and one ball.) As I’ve been working on opening up lines of communication about men’s health and testicular cancer awareness, I’ve had the privilege of meeting and talking with some incredible men who have grabbed life by the ball and made the best of their situation.

In essence, my vision for Band of Ballers is to give a platform for other Uniballers to both share their story and highlight what they’ve done post diagnosis to spread awareness about this disease. There has already been one Band of Ballers feature, written by Ken Lane in March, and I’m looking forward to sharing April’s in a few weeks. For now, this is going to be a monthly feature, but if it goes well, it may become more frequent.

How can you help? Share the posts as they’re published. It’s more than just me who has a mission and a desire to speak about men’s health and get the ball rolling. Follow and reach out to those individuals who are featured. Together, we can make a difference.

I’ve got a skeleton list of people to feature thus far. Know someone (or even yourself!) who is supporting TC awareness and would be willing to share their story? Drop their name, contact, and why they should be featured into this Google Form and I’ll reach out to them and/or you!

Take part in #Takea2nd4theBoys

In Ken Lane's Band of Ballers feature, he shared about the new campaign to #Takea2nd4theBoys. The premise of #TakeA2nd4TheBoys campaign is simple: you're more likely to remember to check yourself if you have a reminder. Using the link below, you can automatically add this as an event on your Google calendar. Because the majority of men have two balls, the 2nd seemed to be the best date as any for a monthly self-exam. (I assume this means that my hashtag needs to be #Takea1st4TheBoy.) It also takes just a few seconds to perform a thorough exam. Even if you don't have Google Calendar, manually adding this recurring reminder can save your life. Add your own self-exam reminder to your Google Calendar here!

Honestly, I think it's brilliant. We're super connected to our phones, and by having a recurring calendar appointment on the second of every month, we're more likely to remember to do a self-check. In the April 2017 post, I shared how we can learn a lot from women. They have a similar campaign — #FeelItOnTheFirst, founded by Nalie Agustin. This can be our movement.

Share Ken's page or the ABSOT #Takea2nd4theBoys page with all the men in your life. I literally mean all. It's as simple as taking one click to add it to your Google Calendar or setting up an appointment on your phone. Include directions in the description so you never forget how. See below for written instructions in the following point.

Simply, talk, text, and tweet

This last point is probably the easiest. Simply put — talk, text, and tweet about men's health regularly. (You can also do other forms of communication, such as email, Facebook, Instagram, and whatever other newfangled apps you kids are using these days, but I'm a big fan of alliteration.) We all have men in our lives — brothers, fathers, husbands, boyfriends, friends, teammates, and random people we meet on the street (or in an Apple Store when you're stuck there for five hours and give the tech an ABSOT bracelet — but maybe that's just me).

Make a point each month to choose one of those guys you know and mention men's health with them. Follow up every month from there. By the end of the year, that's twelve men you'll have spoken to. Task them with doing the same. This is starting to sound like a bad word problem, and I'm writing this on a snow day, so I'll spare you the math — that's a whole lot of guys (and roughly twice the amount of testicles)!

Make sure whatever you do, you include directions on how to self-check. According the Testicular Cancer Society, only about 42 percent of surveyed men know how to perform a self-exam. Self-checks and early detection are critical. Do what I do and keep the following self-exam instructions as a note on your phone or on Google Keep. Copying and pasting (copy pasta is my preferred term) is a heck of a lot easier than rewriting the same thing over and over.

How to do a testicular self-exam: Best done during or after a shower when the scrotum is relaxed,

a self exam is a quick and effective way to catch testicular cancer early on. Just place your index and middle fingers under the testicle with your thumb on top. Firmly but gently, roll each testicle between your fingers. Any weird lumps or bumps should be checked out by a doctor ASAP.

Last year, I ended with a call to action, and it feels like a good thing to do again this year. Next year, I'll just show up at your house, presumably. Choose one of the five options (or make up your own) I mentioned and commit to doing it once month, every month (kind of like a self-check!)

Check in here on this post in the comments below and let me know how you're doing. Tweet or 'Gram me about your action steps. Shoot me an email. Or totally leave me in the dark — that's fine, too, as long as you're following through.

This month helps us crack a tough nut of a conversation, but we can't afford to drop the ball for the other eleven months of the year

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http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/ballsy-challenge