Six Ways to Talk About Testicles

August 14, 2017 By Justin Birckbichler

My last post was all about how talking about cancer can be awkward for those who aren't experiencing it personally, but talking about testicular health as a survivor can be just as hard. I've also shared about some excuses guys may use to avoid doing a self-exam regularly. The topic of testicles can be considered impolite, even if it's coming from a place of education. One of the primary goals of ABSOT is to get these "private" conversations out in the open, but that's easier said than done. So to help, a la Barney Stinson's Playbook from How I Met Your Mother, I've crafted various ways to bring up self-checks and testicles into everyday dialogue, based on some real life experiences.

1. The Conversation Weaver

While mowing my yard a few weeks ago, I saw my neighbor gearing up to do the same. He's about my age, and we've only talked twice. We started chatting about my upcoming wedding and honeymoon. I said something to the effect of, "After facing cancer this year, I really need a Hawaiian vacation." It was that easy to weave the topic in naturally. Knowing his age put him at a higher risk for testicular cancer, I segued into telling him to do a self check. He looked at me and said, "How? I've never even heard of that."

This anecdote is what sparked this whole blog post. While it was relatively easy to bring testicular health up in conversation, it proves there's still work to do with raising awareness. It's not enough to simply say to do a self check; men need to know how to do them too. I told my neighbor the steps: Place your index and middle fingers under the testicle with your thumb on top. Firmly but gently, roll the testicle between your fingers. Repeat on the other one. After sharing this, he actually thanked me, even though it was a semi-awkward third conversation.

2. The *Carpe Scrotiem*

I'm not sure if it is because I have become more attuned to news media about testicular cancer due to my personal circumstances, but it seems that more celebrities are speaking out about their testicular cancer diagnoses. In the past few months, several baseball players have gone on the record about their battles, and HGTV's Taurek El Moussa from *Flip or Flop* shared that he overcame testicular cancer in 2013.

Use these celebrities to get a conversation going. See them on the cover of People or on the scrolling banner thingie on the bottom of the screen on SportsCenter (I don't watch ESPN much)?

Point it out and say, “I had testicular cancer, too. Do you know how important it is to do regular self-checks?” Whoever you’re talking to will now have two connections to testicular cancer - the celebrity and you. If you follow it up with a how-to if necessary, it will make that person that much more likely to keep up with their self-check schedule.

3. The Question

While on our Hawaiian honeymoon, our tour bus driver, Hanalei (Henry in English), asked my wife Mallory and I what we were celebrating. We said that we were on our honeymoon and also celebrating my good health. With a quizzical look, he asked, “Have you had some medical problems lately?” This question gave me a perfect opportunity to bring up testicular cancer, educating not only him but others who were also on the tour.

It turns out, he is a ten year stage 4 lung cancer survivor. I would have never known that if he didn’t ask the question. You might not always have someone asking you a question that segues nicely into a discussion about testicular cancer, but you can ask them a question about their health, if you feel comfortable. Sometimes, it might be as simple as asking after their well-being. After truly listening, you can then share your own story, making sure to include the relevant self-check information so that your listener can take action.

Click to read more tips and the rest of this blog entry on A Ballsey Sense of Tumor (ABSOT).

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