Torsten Koehler — Love Your Nuts

Torsten Koehler, founder of Love Your Nuts, says, “Yes, my one nut is fake, because the real one tried to kill me!”

October 18, 2019 By Justin Birckbichler

Welcome to the Band of Ballers! In this series on ABSOT, I’m turning over control to some other ballsy testicular cancer survivors and patients who have inspired me with their work in advocacy and awareness during and after their diagnosis. This month’s feature is all about Torsten Koehler, the founder of Love Your Nuts. Enjoy!

I had testicular cancer in 1995 at the age of 30.

Being a biology teacher, I had to teach the Grade Fives about sex education. I bought a children’s book on sex education because I wanted to talk on their level using words they understand. Lying in bed in the evening reading I came across a chapter on all STDs and a little paragraph that said: “Testicular cancer is the most common cancer in the age group 15 to 40.”

Being in bed, I felt my nuts and found a lump. Typical male — I didn't go to the doctor until about two weeks later. Turns out, it was cancer!

When the doctor came to tell me that it was an aggressive cancer and they had to remove my right testis the next morning was the moment my life shattered into a million pieces.

Signing a form that says: "Removal of left testis" was a nightmare!

I've been through the whole program — my health and emotions on a roller coaster: surgery, chemotherapy, self-destructing thoughts, depression, and turning into a miserable person. Slowly losing my energy, I couldn't really cope with my work, colleagues, friends, and family anymore.

I made a bucket list when I was waiting for my results after the surgery because it felt like time was running out. I wrote down places I loved to see before I die. The fear that cancer returns was constantly on my mind. Beginning of 1997, I gave up all my secure living. I resigned as teacher, sold my car, and backpacked the world for two years just to come to terms with the cancer.

I underwent a long journey — around the world and back to myself.

During these two years, I undertook an intensive, spiritual examination of the eternal question concerning life and death. I traveled to all the destinations that I had put on my bucket list when I wasn't sure if I would survive the cancer:

- a helicopter ride over Manhattan,
- an active volcano in Hawaii,
- the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco,
- Machu Picchu and the Lines of Nazca in Peru,
- the Great Barrier Reef in Australia,
- Milford Sound in New Zealand, and
- glaciers in southern Argentina/Chile.

Traveling to all the places on my bucket list was the best thing I've ever done. My zest for life returned. I returned to Namibia and started teaching again.

When I was still a biology teacher, I always used one of the lessons every year to talk balls and make the boys aware. A few years later a former student of mine invited me for coffee. He said to me, “Because you made us aware, I went to the doctor in time. I’ve got testicular cancer. I’m 16 and you saved my life!”

This incident with my former student motivated me to start a project in South Africa called “Love Your Nuts — Testicular Cancer Education in a Nutshell.”

My goal is to raise awareness of testicular cancer by educating communities about the ‘rarely spoken about’ cancer. It often remains undetected in young adults due to the diverse society in South Africa, where cultural taboos, stigmas and lack of knowledge about the subject is rife.

Money raised with my project will be used to implement a cancer school program as an educational app in all South African schools. I want to make kids aware and educate them where to find help, how to support family and friends diagnosed with cancer and volunteer to become active members for charities in their community. My aim is to make men aware of this young man’s cancer.

I like to encourage cancer patients not to give up!

Not only cancer patients, but every person. I encourage them to give wings to their desire! Don’t give up on anything that you want to achieve!

Testicular cancer touched my life. I left Namibia to live in the most beautiful city in the world – Cape Town — surrounding me with a beautiful environment nourishes my soul!

Today I'm not teaching anymore, but do what I love to do: photography, design, and raising awareness about testicular cancer. I turned my hobby into my job and Love Your Nuts is my passion and mission in life. Within two years the Love your Nuts campaign, which started on social media, took off enough. I was able to resign end of 2016 from my work as a graphic designer.

Today I've got most fantesticle job description ever: talking balls and saving lives!

I'm a living example that one can survive cancer — just because of early detection. Guys, listen to your body. Check them!

Be sure to connect with Torsten by visiting him at his website, on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Until next time, Carpe Scrotiem!

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!

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