

A middle-aged couple with grey hair is smiling and looking at a large map they are holding. They are outdoors in a forest setting with trees and a wooden bridge in the background. The man is wearing a red jacket and the woman is wearing a light green top.

Life After Prostate Cancer

Real Men, Real Stories, Real Inspiration



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The Stats

Prostate cancer is one of the most commonly diagnosed types of cancer in the U.S. It is also the second leading cause of cancer in men worldwide.¹

The 5-year survival rate in the U.S. for men diagnosed with early-stage prostate cancer is greater than 99%.²

The 5-year survival rate in the U.S. for men diagnosed with LATE stage or metastatic prostate cancer is only 31%.

As advances in prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment have made the disease more manageable, there are now more than 3 million men living with prostate cancer – and a lot of options for support and encouragement.³

¹ www.cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer/about/key-statistics

² www.pcf.org/about-prostate-cancer/what-is-prostate-cancer/prostate-cancer-survival-rates

³ www.cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer/about/key-statistics





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The Guys

These four men shared their experiences living with prostate cancer. They gave their honest insights and suggestions. Each have different experiences and perspective. Together, their hope is that their stories will help motivate other men to take responsibility for their own health and screen annually for prostate cancer.



Mike motivates himself and his peers with education and plenty of laughs. A retired Navy Commander, Mike, 61, knows the importance of strategy. With almost a decade of prostate cancer experience, he shares his plan of attack for navigating life after treatment.



Reggie was diagnosed early with a fast-growing form of prostate cancer in his mid-50s through his annual physical. Now age 58, he is living cancer free. He shares his “real-life” after treatment story, that surviving prostate cancer treatment has ongoing challenges that often are endured in silence.

The Guys continued...



A retired equities trader, Tony C. is fluent in observing trends. He's asking men to invest in themselves – shake the denial, trust the science, and find peace. Now 71, his prostate cancer was found almost 10 years ago. He spent 4 years watching his cancer before tests pointed to the need for treatment.



A former flight medic, Tony M., age 62, loves science and is encouraged by medical advancements. He motivates those around him, including his four daughters and other men with prostate cancer, with his positive outlook and mantra, "I aspire to inspire before I expire."



BACK TO BASICS

Checkups, Diet & Exercise

Mike pokes fun at his fellow man for dodging what's in their best interest. "We're avoiders, right? Men, for some reason, think they've got something way more important to do than go to the doctor once a year. We'll schedule and attend other meetings we think are more important, but not the one that could keep us alive."

"Men traditionally do not think about or concern themselves with cancer, until they are personally impacted. It either takes a close friend, relative, or their own diagnosis to get their attention. Then most men focus on the

side effects, so they avoid treatment," Mike explains. "Men need to understand the earlier you intervene and seek treatment, the higher the probability of curing the disease. If you avoid the treatment, it just gets worse."

Trips to the doctor's office don't stop once you're finished with treatment. Your doctors will still monitor you closely. Follow up visits are important for staying on top of your cancer and should not be avoided. These visits are a good time to ask questions about any changes, side effects, or other issues you have. It's also a chance to be open about any new symptoms or concerns.

"Listen, I don't think there's a magic cure," Mike jokes. "I don't know if there's some special plant root that will help you, but there are studies that show exercise including aerobics and weightlifting can reduce recurrence. There are also questions you can ask yourself about living a healthier lifestyle. Can you lose some weight? Eat healthier? Lower your cholesterol?"



Tony C. agrees. "You'll feel inclined to say I beat this thing, and not look back. But it's never truly behind you. And you must take charge of your life to not allow it to come back."

He says that men should set goals. "Goals keep us focused. So, create goals to get healthy, and stay healthy once you're beyond 'the scare' – it becomes more important than ever to be proactive with your health and fitness. You need to create a healthy lifestyle."

Tony C. reminds men, "You are fortunate enough to get a positive result, and you're in control of your destiny. Once you're given a clear path for life after cancer, you think of how important diet is with this. You realize maintaining a healthy weight after surgery,

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and exercising regularly, it's important. We can't take anything for granted."

He doesn't just talk the talk. Tony is walking, hiking, lifting and going to the gym. He's doing everything he did before cancer. He remains focused on his lifestyle.

Research says that regular exercise and healthy eating improve your odds against prostate cancer. Some studies suggest that eating a "Mediterranean" diet with foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, has been linked to a lower incidence of mortality and a positive impact on your overall health⁴. If you're ready for exercise, be sure to check with your care team before starting so that you can set goals based on your current health. Don't push yourself – start slow and do something you enjoy. Focusing on cardio and maintaining

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a healthy weight are good places to start. Afterall, there are other benefits to exercise – like protecting against heart disease and lowering stress – that are important to keep in mind.

Tony C., who monitored his cancer for years before moving forward with treatment, doesn't hesitate to make the connection between the stress that follows hearing you have cancer, and the impact on your body. He points to research that shows stress causes tension and fatigue, increases anxiety, and can lead to poor habits like overeating, alcohol use, etc.⁵

"Guys need to know this stuff," he urges. "Stress causes damage. You need to find a way to eliminate stress. And I know, when you hear 'you have cancer' – those sleepless nights – what happens in your mind – it's total distress."

He suggests that you pause and reflect.

"Sure, you're worried. But once you've done your research, and you've built your care team...trust the science. Trust your doctors. Too many men have heard a one-off horror story and use that as a reason to avoid doctors.

⁴ www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6770822

⁵ www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-symptoms/art-20050987

“Once you're beyond 'the scare' – it becomes more important than ever to be proactive with your health and fitness.”



SUPPORT

Take as Much as You Need; Give What You Can

A support network is important. Even, and maybe especially, when treatment is over. When prostate cancer is a part of your life, feelings of depression, anxiety, or worry are common. Some men may have a harder time with it than others. If people want to help carry the load; let them. The people who provide the most support may not be the ones that you expect.

Mike recommends tapping into your network for connections, and then building it out for support. That includes your doctors, your

spouse, your kids, your friends, whomever that may be ... and then you add “some guys who’ve gone through this.”

After 20 years in the military, his network is large. So he called upon many people for advice and connections. Some contacts led him to figuring out cancer treatment, and some helped him find mental health support. “As you go through this process, you want to find people who will be helpful – but also clearheaded,” he says. “This disease is not only going to affect you, it’s a relationship disease. Your relationship will be affected regardless of the diagnosis, treatment options, or resulting side effects. It’s imperative you understand this as your spouse and your relationship are also affected by this disease.”

In addition to finding a care team focused on cancer, Mike advises men to address their mental wellbeing.

“Anxiety is present because no one wants cancer and many believe it’s an awful death

sentence. You have this disease, and it’s manageable if you take the responsibility to educate yourself. But the anxiety hangs around, and you need to find someone



to talk to. Your family or care team – they aren’t necessarily the best people for this job, because they have a “dog in the fight.” They’re more likely to side with you because it’s emotional. You need someone that can

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challenge you a little bit, help you work through some things, and give you the tools to deal with it.”

“I was in a meeting recently, and all of us had therapists – I was amazed – and everyone laughed and said, ‘Oh yeah, they’re on the Christmas Card list!’ The resources are there to support your mental health, and I highly recommend it. All you have to do is ask.”

Reggie took a different path, but he also stresses the importance of finding support. He found a therapist who understood how some of his post-treatment changes and side effects would affect him as a gay man. He advises that all men – gay or straight – do the same.

He believes that emotional and mental wellness have as much impact on recovery

as physical shape. “Having a good therapist to help you through this – that’s absolutely essential. And to the credit of my care team, they practically mandate that you work with a therapist as part of your treatment plan.”

Reggie’s care team provided some therapist recommendations, but he did the research himself. Through many interviews, he found the perfect match: a therapist who is also gay, his age, and has experience with prostate cancer patients.

Reggie also encourages men to join support groups as soon as they find out they have cancer. “You want to speak with other men who are going through, or have gone through, what you’re experiencing. I visited a few support groups, before finding the best one for me.”

The group helped him process his situation and knew that he did not need advice or cheerleading. “I feel like this warrior culture that we construct around cancer and survivorship is toxic.”

“So many times I would hear, ‘Oh, you got this!’ Well, I know I’ve got prostate cancer, but I don’t

“You want to find someone who’s willing to share the ups and downs. Find a support group – one-on-one with other survivors.”

- whatever this is - I don’t got it. Many people will want to offer advice instead of support. Find people who will listen. Become your own champion, your own expert. The faster that you do that, the more resources you’ll find to help you.”

Tony C. nudges men living with prostate cancer long term to share their stories and reach out to others. “You want to find someone who’s willing to share the ups and downs, how to get around the pitfalls that may come your way. Find a support group – one-on-one with other survivors.”

He’s witnessed the relief that comes from men telling their stories: good, bad, and ugly, and

encourages men to join the conversation. “If you’ve gone through this, you have something to share. We all have to be a team. The more information, the less stress.”

Tony C. has developed a deep sense of gratitude to be alive which fuels his commitment to being open about his journey. He works to take down the stigma against men showing vulnerability or asking for help.

“The more we share our stories – what went well, what we wish we’d known, or done differently – the more men learn from our mistakes and can avoid making them. And we can help young men understand the value of early detection and knowing your family history.”

Tony M. emphasizes the value of informing those around you of your journey. “I was not afraid to open up about what was going on with me. I didn’t keep it to myself, and I think that’s important. When it comes to something below-the-belt, men typically don’t like to talk about it. I was just the opposite; I didn’t care what people thought as far as my ability to “be a man.” That wasn’t important to me. It’s

important to me to share and help save lives.” He credits his wife, Tammie, for supporting him through his cancer, and shares advice about the significance of a strong caregiver – both needing one and being one.

“My first critical resource was my wife, because mentally I was in a bad place,” he says. “I felt like I was letting her down. But, having her join me in this fight, making me believe that we are in this together... mentally, that did so much for me.”

He learned that the emotional impact of a cancer diagnosis made doctor’s appointments more complicated. Tammie often joined him to share her support, but also to ask questions and listen to the information provided.

“On the caregiver side, you have to be the ears at those appointments, because the person with the diagnosis isn’t locked in. My wife had done her research, she knew the choices and knew the best one. I was suffering so bad for years that I didn’t even want to be here anymore. Now, after treatment, I’m more energized than I’ve ever been. She was right.”



But caregivers be warned, there’s no coddling allowed, according to Tony.

He jokes that most men aren’t going to take action unless women make them. “You can be supportive, but don’t coddle; you have to push ‘em. In my experience, not only me, but most of the men I encounter, their will to fight comes from the pushing from the women in their lives, and their family and loved ones believing in them. They’ll admit that if it wasn’t for their family fighting for them, they would’ve given up. So, you caregivers have to somehow get them to listen to you. The role that you play is tremendous. That’s part of the journey. It’s part of the team. It’s invaluable.”

THE NEXT CHAPTER

“For me, one of the biggest parts of prostate cancer was the emotional part, and how it made me question my identity, my sense of self. My doctors kept wanting to do this song and dance, you know? It’s like *Prostate Cancer: The Musical*, Reggie laughs. “But, when you’re cancer free, does that mean you’re back to normal? Not necessarily. If you ask another cancer survivor, they will probably tell you, they’ve lost something considerable in beating this disease.”

Reggie is honest about life after prostate cancer treatment; he doesn’t leave out the hard parts. He decided with his medical



team to undergo a radical prostatectomy. Reggie says, “It felt like I pay now, or pay later. Either way I’m gonna pay.” For Reggie, that meant devastating side effects, but he hasn’t stopped his efforts to work through them. “I’ve been recovering ever since,” he shares. “That first month, post-surgery, you’re focused on regaining basic bodily function, like bladder control and urinary function. That was a major victory for me. Then you work toward the recovery of sexual function...and that’s been a more challenging story.”

Reggie is up-front about the ways prostate cancer can affect your self-esteem and your sex life. He has struggled with trying many treatments to fully restore sexual function after cancer treatment. He admits, “It’s a redefinition of your body and you’ll adapt to it in different ways.”

Tony C. also went through side effects from his prostatectomy, such as incontinence and loss of sexual function.



“Those are the big enchiladas, you know? And sometimes men weigh so heavily on those. But with today’s technology, there’s usually a way of taking care of things. Robotic-assisted surgery – it can reduce the sexual side effects. The incontinence: that’s something you have to work on, but they have tools for that, too.”

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FOLLOW THE SCIENCE



We are constantly learning more about prostate cancer. New ways to find it and treat it are being rapidly developed. Even if you were diagnosed only a few years ago, the changes made since may be significant. It's important to stay up to date on what's available. Asking your doctor is a good place to start. Mike says to ask all the questions and stay up to date on the latest advances. Always, ask for a second opinion upon your first diagnosis. Today, there are options with urologists, radiation oncologists, and now interventional radiologists. Simply put, your options for treatment are surgery, radiation, and focal laser ablation techniques.

Mike urges men with prostate cancer to continue their own research throughout the process, and beyond. "What are the new technologies out there? Find credible resources by getting involved in patient advocacy organizations who verify the sources of data they promote. Look at the clinical trials and consider them. Always ask for a second opinion and if anyone questions the request, it's time for a new physician. If your care team doesn't take the time to hear your questions and give you a complete response do not be afraid to speak up and



“ If your care team doesn't take the time to hear your questions and give you a complete response do not be afraid to speak up and demand the answer. ”

demand the answer. The best physicians will encourage you to look at all the options. In my case, something new became available during my treatment and my doctor encouraged me to try it. It worked! Cancer that had gone undetected on my prior scans, was discovered with high precision PSMA PET imaging. Because the Veterans Health Administration is not placing restrictions on the use of PSMA PET I've had four of them and they have significantly changed the course of my treatment at each imaging.”



Tony C. supports men following the latest science but warns against using the internet too much. “Sometimes, you need to keep your fingers off the keyboard,” he chuckles. “A lot of what you find is opinion, and you don’t need the stress of trying to be your own doctor. Find the sites for hospitals with cancer centers, so you know you’ve found science-based information.”

Tony M. mentions that while the treatment and side effects can be challenging, with each scientific discovery comes improvement. Be honest with your doctor. Speak up about what’s important to you, especially related to your quality of life.

“I have a friend who was told he only had six to nine months to live. He lived for 15 more years. I want guys to understand that whatever side effects that you may encounter, there are things that can be done to give you a tremendous quality of life.”

He remembers the internal struggle of considering his treatment options. “I wanted to choose something that would give me the security of feeling like I was cured, but also afterwards, have a good quality of life. To do that, I had to decide what one thing was most important, and that was getting rid of the cancer.”



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Resources

For more information about living with cancer, ask your care team for referrals to local support groups or seek information from the following patient-centered organizations.



Veterans Prostate
Cancer Awareness

Veterans Prostate Cancer Awareness

veteransprostatecancer.org

888-899-VPcA (1-888-899-8722)

info@VeteransProstateCancer.org



Prostate Cancer
Foundation

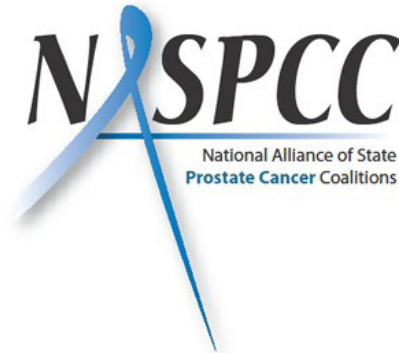
Curing Together.

Prostate Cancer Foundation

pcf.org

1-800-757-CURE (1-800-757-2873)

info@pcf.org



National Alliance of State Prostate Cancer Coalitions

nasppc.org

424-253-1168

info@nasppc.org

Resources



THE END OF PROSTATE **CANCER**

ZERO - The End of Prostate Cancer

zerocancer.org

1-202-463-9455

info@zerocancer.org



**Prostate Health
Education Network**

Prostate Health Education Network

prostatehealthed.org

1-617-481-4020

rapcancer@prostatehealthed.org

Urology Care
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urologyhealth.org

1-800-828-7866

info@UrologyCareFoundation.org

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