

Make 2016 fantesticle; be nice to yourself!

New year's resolutions are repeatedly made every year, but do we really get there in the next year? And if not, why not?

Thinking back to the times I've battled with cancer my "New Year's resolution" every day was: I just like to live a normal life again. Will I ever get there? And if not, why not?

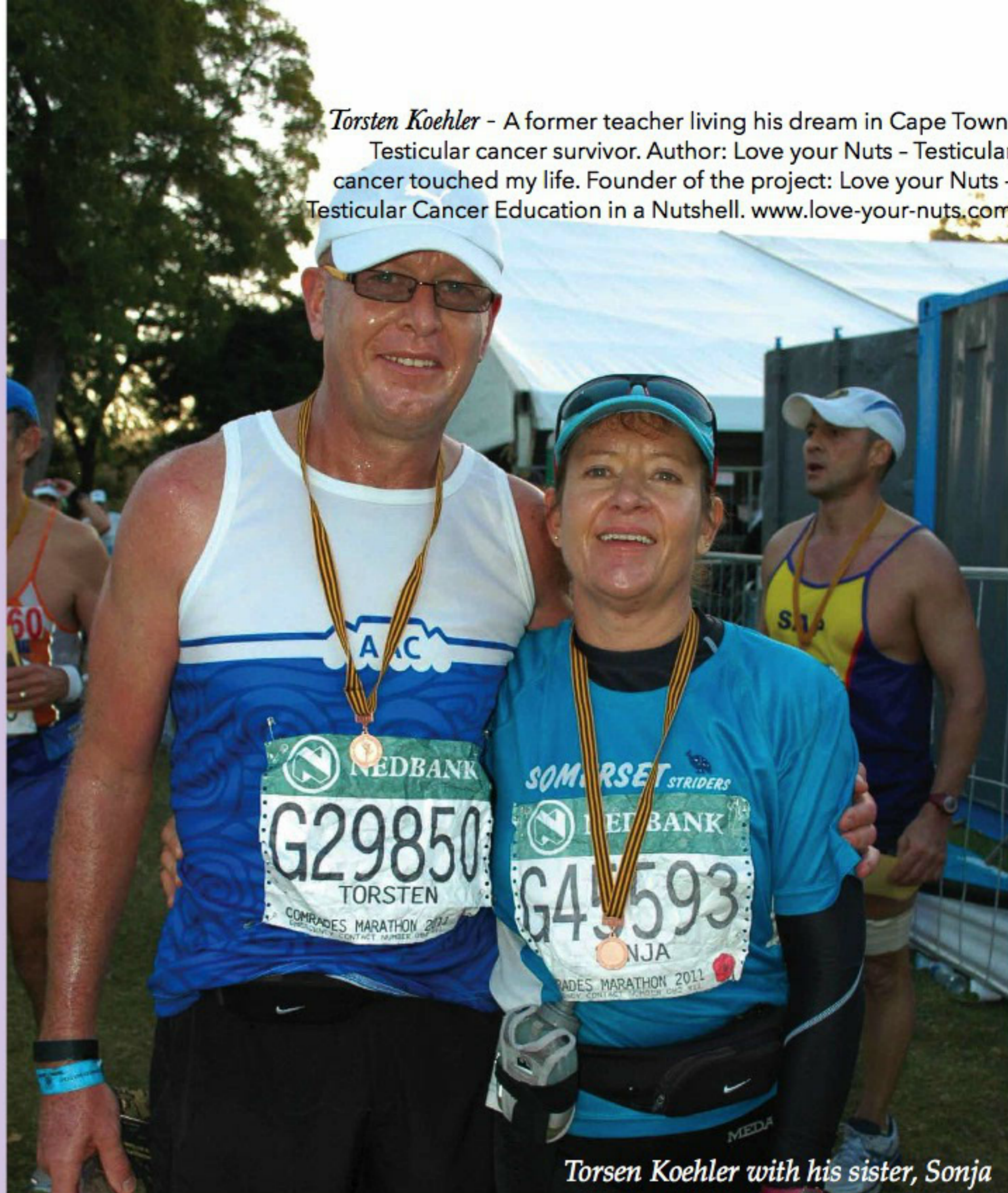
Soon it became clear that medication alone was not enough to deal with my depression after cancer. My doctor referred me to a psychologist.

At the end of the second session the psychologist described a situation for me. "Two people have a car accident. One of them says: 'I was lucky. Lots of people survive car accidents. I am not afraid of cars. I'll drive again.' The other one says: 'I was lucky, but I could have been killed. So many people die in car accidents. I'll never drive again.'"

I went home and wondered how that situation was related to my problem. I quickly realised why he had picked this example. Even though everybody has the same problem, each cancer patient perceives his illness in a different way. I perceived it as negative and frightening. It was up to me to solve this problem.

An idea started forming inside my head on how I could help myself. I wanted to give notice and go travelling. Previously I had already spent a year globe-trotting, and it had been good for me. Travelling was going to be my therapy.

At the same time I was afraid that I was merely running away from my problems. I was afraid that I would ruin the joys of travelling with my depression. I pictured myself in Europe, America or wherever, still in a negative mood. Family and friends would be far away, which would make me feel even more negative. I wouldn't feel like doing anything, I would just brood and mope. That would be the end of me!



Torsen Koehler with his sister, Sonja

Torsten Koehler - A former teacher living his dream in Cape Town. Testicular cancer survivor. Author: Love your Nuts - Testicular cancer touched my life. Founder of the project: Love your Nuts - Testicular Cancer Education in a Nutshell. www.love-your-nuts.com

After discussions back and forth with family, friends and the psychologist I decided to quit my job and travel to find the zest for life again.

During my sessions with the psychologist I also found out how my conflict with the school hostel staff had cropped up. We were unable to understand each other! Their problems were real problems – for them. I regarded them as personal nonsense and banalities because I was sitting with a much larger problem – cancer.

If one of them approached me, with what I thought was a ridiculous matter, I just tried to shake them off. If you had cancer you would know what a problem is, I thought. Go and get your ridiculous stuff sorted out yourself. In addition there was my depressed, and at the same time, aggressive attitude. The staff felt neglected while I found them stupid and narrow-minded. Unfortunately we all lacked the proper insight into the reasons for our problems. It's a pity that it had to come this far. It took me a while to understand the reason, but I was much the wiser for it then.

After sessions with the psychologist I knew what I wanted, or rather, what I didn't want. I wanted to get away from the ordinary routine, away from school in the morning, hostel in the afternoon

and exhaustedly falling into bed in the evening. I wanted time for myself and my problems. I had worried about everything but myself. Often enough I woke up in the morning and said to myself, 'You sod, yesterday you forgot to think of yourself again!'

After my two year journey around the world and back to myself, I planned me-time every day, especially since I moved to Cape Town. I even go so far to tell clients "Sorry at that time I've got an appointment already. Can we schedule the meeting for an hour later/earlier?" This me-time in Cape Town turned mainly into my jogging time. While jogging I am dreaming, planning, listening to nature, enjoying the view over the bay or just simply run. I've started jogging in 2008 and lost 13kg. In 2011 on my birthday at the age of 46, I finished the 89km Comrades – the ultimate human race as it is called – in 11h13min 22sec.

"Life is like a light," a man who suffered from testicle cancer once said to me. Some people only see the white light. In my case, cancer shattered the white light like a prism.

Today I don't only see white light but all the colours. Today I am a fit balanced person that relishes the entire range of colours! Be nice to yourself and make your life colourful!