

## [TRACK 3: SURVIVOR STORIES: FERTILITY ISSUES]

Tom, 27 years old

[Narrator]

Tom is 27 years old and comes from Georgia. He has just been diagnosed with testicular cancer. He has been married for two years.

[Tom]

Before my diagnosis, my wife, Mary, and I were making plans to begin our family. After I got my diagnosis, I went to my doctor's office to choose the date for my treatment. As we were talking, he mentioned that, after the treatment, I will probably be sterile -- that I would not be able to have children. This is the first time I heard anything about this. I can't believe it -- just when I think I have one problem beat, another problem jumps up at me. So, I tell my doctor that I'm going to need some time to think about this. I've got to talk this over with Mary.

[Narrator]

As he follows the five steps for problem solving, let's see how Tom handles the problem. Step 1 -- he has said what the problem is: treatment for his cancer will probably make it impossible to have children. This completely changes the plans they made to start a family. When Tom goes home and discusses it with Mary, they are careful not to take any action before they really think it through. They ask themselves a number of questions to look at this problem from several different angles: How does Tom see the problem? How does Mary see it? What are their goals? Do they each have different goals? How important are the issues related to the problem and/or their goals? Are there other circumstances, like expectations from each of their families or aspects of their religious beliefs that could affect the way they see the problem and their goal?

[Narrator]

Let's look at Step 2. Get the Facts. After feeling that they have talked about what the problem is, Tom and Mary meet with the doctor to find out about their options and other treatments. They go prepared with a list of questions and take notes during the visit. Tom brings a small tape recorder and tapes what the doctor says. Tom and Mary also look for other experts and sources for information. Tom gets on the Internet. Mary goes to the bookstore and to the Patient Education Department at the hospital. They ask to speak with a social worker who is able to provide resources. The social worker also tells them about a support group that might be helpful. Do you know of any other sources of information for Tom and Mary? They now have a lot of information on several options, including sperm banking, adoption, and treatment alternatives, so they are ready for Step 3 -- create a plan and think it through carefully.

[Tom]

We decided to write down our options with the pros and cons for each one. Then, we could choose the one that we think would be best to meet our goal of starting a family. We were also careful to think about the steps we would need to take for each option, the resources we would need, and problems we could face. We considered each option on its own and talked about how it could affect us and our families, and the other parts of our plan. Like the idea of sperm banking, where sperm are stored so that they would be available for in vitro fertilization later on, in case I am sterile after treatment. We asked a lot of questions, like: what steps would we have to take to store sperm and then do in vitro fertilization? Where would we have it done? What would Mary and I have to do to make this work? How successful is this approach? How do each of us feel about it? What does it cost? And, will our insurance cover it?

[Narrator]

Now, they are ready for Step 4 -- carrying out the plan. Feeling confident with their plan and with the support of their doctor, family, friends, and new-found support group, Tom and Mary set out on the plan they have chosen. As they do so, they will need to take Step 5, as well -- that's checking the plan along the way. Tom, Mary, and their doctor track their progress as they move forward. What questions might they ask themselves to measure their progress? Here are several possible questions to consider: Did this particular step in the plan go as they thought it would? Are there issues and factors they did not anticipate? Do they need to change the plan? Should they change their goals? Do they need more information? Do they need more resources?

[Narrator]

After asking any or all of these questions, they may need to make some changes in their plan. They might need to take other steps, either together or individually. As you can see, this approach to solving their problems could create a better outcome. Tom and Mary feel involved throughout the process. They feel they have regained some control. In the end, Tom and Mary are happy with their results.