

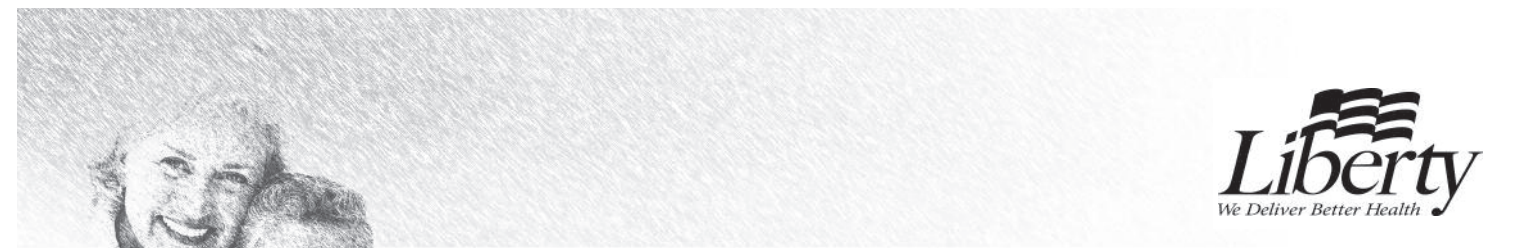

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coping with diabetes

The Emotions of Diabetes: At a Glance

Is it normal to feel so upset and angry about having diabetes?

If you have diabetes and you're feeling stressed and overwhelmed, you are not alone. Learning that you have diabetes can make you feel angry, guilty, upset and sad. You might ask yourself, "How am I going to do this?" Living with diabetes every day is challenging and can sometimes make you feel like it's "just too much" With some help and support you can feel better about yourself and your ability to manage your diabetes. The emotions that you feel when you are first diagnosed with diabetes usually get better over time.

What if I just can't accept the fact that I have diabetes?

Accepting that you will have diabetes and that you will need to take care of it for the rest of your life is difficult. Some people have more trouble than others accepting their diagnosis but this doesn't make it go away. If you are not making any positive changes in your lifestyle or following a treatment plan for your diabetes, you are at risk for having other health problems as a result. Talking to someone about how you feel can help. You may learn that living with diabetes is not as complicated as you thought. We have come a long way in developing more effective ways to treat diabetes over the years. Family, friends, clergy and your diabetes team are just some of the people available to lend an ear and give you support. You don't have to go it alone.

What else can I do?

Learning as much as you can about diabetes will help. Diabetes educators are available to help you learn the self-management skills you'll need to manage your diabetes. Your health care provider and diabetes team can answer your questions. Look for a diabetes support group in your area. Talking to others who are facing the same challenges as you can often help you to feel better.



Stress

Stress is a normal part of life but when you have diabetes, stress can have a major impact on your blood glucose control. It can make it harder to keep your blood glucose in your target range. Sometimes stress can make you feel distracted and not able to care for your diabetes as well. You don't pay as much attention to how you are eating or to making sure you are getting some activity. Stress also makes your body produce stress hormones which can raise your blood glucose. It is important that you try to develop ways to manage your stress so that you feel better and manage your blood glucose better.

Some Ways to Manage Stress

- Become aware of the things that cause you to feel stressed and try to avoid the situations that you can.
- Learn ways to relax. Use relaxation techniques like deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, yoga, massage or meditation.
- Join a support group.
- Spend time with people that you enjoy, that make you laugh and feel happy.
- Be physically active, go for a walk. Aerobic activity can reduce anxiety by 50%.
- Find a hobby that you enjoy. Perhaps look for others that enjoy the same hobby such as in a knitting club, reading group, or exercise class.
- Talk to a friend or family member. Sometimes it helps just to have someone listen.
- Make a list of the things you need to do and work on them one at a time. Don't try to complete the whole list all at once. Pace yourself and take time to relax.

Depression

People who are coping with chronic illnesses such as diabetes sometimes feel stressed, anxious or sad. Sometimes you may have feelings which are even more than just feeling sad, you may have an illness called depression. It is common for people with diabetes to be faced with depression at some point in their lives. Depression can affect you both emotionally and physically. There are ways to effectively treat depression and help you to feel better. Speak with your health care provider and explore the treatment options that might be right for you.

Here are some signs that could mean you are depressed:

- Feeling sad, empty, blue or depressed for longer than 2 weeks
- Losing the joy in things that used to make you happy
- Having difficulty with sleep, sleeping too much or not enough
- Change in your appetite, eating too much or too little
- Not having any energy
- Feeling irritable or restless
- Loss of interest in sex
- Wanting to be alone, avoiding others
- Having trouble paying attention or concentrating
- Thoughts of hurting yourself or wanting to die



Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths.

~Etty Hillesum

If you have a friend or family member with diabetes, here are ways that you can help. You can make a difference.

- **Learn more about diabetes.**

Diabetes can be difficult for the person living with it day to day. The more you know about living with diabetes, the more you can help. Perhaps you could attend a class or diabetes health fair together. Ask if your friend or loved one would like you to attend a medical visit with them.

- **Understand how diabetes affects them**

Not everyone with diabetes is the same. Some people find it easier than others to take the steps necessary to help control their diabetes. Learn what things give them the most trouble and know where they have their greatest successes.

- **Be a good listener**

Listening will help you to understand how your friend or loved one feels. It may help to give you clues as to what some of their needs are. Sharing feelings and knowing there is someone willing to listen can help reduce stress and make it a little easier for your friend or family member to cope on a day-to-day basis.

- **Offer help and don't nag**

None of us likes to hear over and over what we "should be doing". If you know what causes your friend or family member the most difficulty in managing their diabetes, try offering some practical help. If they have trouble sticking to a meal plan, suggest seeing a dietitian or attending a diabetes cooking class together. Offer to walk with them a couple of times a week if activity is an issue. Ask "What can I do to help you with that?" Understand that your friend or loved one may not always make the choices that you would make for them.

- **Be supportive**

Sometimes it's just nice to know that someone is there, just a call away. No one has to do it alone - whether you have diabetes or have a friend or family member with diabetes. Look for support groups in your area and attend together. It can be a helpful experience for you both.