



The Emotional Side of Diabetes

Many observers feel that if a person has diabetes that they have learned over the years how to handle their disease. "Oh she's had diabetes for 30 years, she knows how to deal with it." Diabetes is much more than learning how to eat 3 consistent meals or knowing how to draw up insulin or schedule their oral medications. In managing diabetes, there is a personal, social, and a behavioral side. It is not just a disease that once you master the skills everything will be fine.

For the person with diabetes here are three aspects of the emotional side of diabetes that should be recognized by the caretaker, friend/family and the person with diabetes.

The Personal Side- How might your fears, beliefs and stories effect your actions in management? Feelings of anger, fear or sadness should be first identified and then discussed if they are creating obstacles. Feeling overwhelmed, guilty or in denial is an obstacle many people don't realize that a person with diabetes is feeling. Just being asked in a caring attentive way "How's it going?" goes a really long way to validate feelings.

The Social Side- Feeling a lack of support from family, friends or

physicians can be very lonely and isolating. Feeling that you are being sabotaged at family meals or you are not being recognized or supported in your efforts is a significant obstacle for diabetes management. Hearing "You're A1c didn't come down enough!" can be very defeating. Having validation of efforts, feelings and tasks go a very long way towards success. Give your family and friends permission to be part of your team to ask how you are and to assist in a non-judgmental way.

The Behavioral Side-Diabetes management is an important part of life but doesn't have to run your life. The behaviors for glucose control have a place as part of your daily plan. Some days those tools work perfectly and other days they just don't. Management is very fluid and should be realistic in what your plan is and what your expectations should be. It will give you the best perspective on your motivation as well as feelings of being overwhelmed. Creating a healthy environment, creating a plan that is realistic for you personally, and being willing to critique the successes and failures can mold your behavioral side of diabetes management.

Some helpful tools to keep the balance of the emotional side of diabetes are: Keeping your knowledge of diabetes management up to date, being part of a support group either in person or on line, having a partner that shares your ups and downs of this part of your life can all be helpful. It's all part of treating yourself well.

**Created: May 2018 by
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