

THE CHALLENGE OF DIABETES SELF-CARE

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Having diabetes means you now have to take control of your health in order to avoid long-term complications, like heart disease, eye disease, kidney disease and amputation.

To do this, you'll need to make changes in several areas of your life, including: making healthy food choices; getting regular physical activity; taking medications, if necessary; monitoring your blood glucose, and finding support in each of these areas. But just following a management plan day after day can be a challenge.

"I was so just overwhelmed. I'm thinking, 'You know, I've got a job, I've got a wife, I've got all these other things that I need to do, and now I've got to adjust my whole life. Like this.'"

Thinking you need to change everything you do, together with the fear of complications, can take its toll. It can drive some people to just give up altogether, or it can drive some people to try to follow their management plan perfectly. These two different extreme reactions can result in the same feelings – disappointment and frustration.

First, do not give up. Even the small changes you make can have a positive impact on your diabetes management. And second, diabetes cannot be managed perfectly – because no one is perfect.

"I do everything possible to keep my blood sugar in control. It's difficult and I am not perfect. I don't think any diabetic is. I do have good days and bad days."

Even though you may not be perfect – and no one is expecting you to be – you can still be a successful diabetes manager. As you focus on gaining control of the physical ups and downs of diabetes, you cannot ignore how you feel emotionally. Your emotions have a direct impact on your actions, which in turn, affect your ability to manage your diabetes each day.

For example, if you deny you have diabetes, you may not feel like you need to take your medication. If you don't take your medication, your blood glucose will go up.

Without change, this negative cycle will continue. You check your blood glucose and see that it is high. This can make you angry, frustrated and depressed. These feelings lead you to eat a pint of ice cream to comfort yourself, which again leads to high blood glucose. And the cycle starts all over again.

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Instead, you can break this cycle by finding ways to overcome your negative emotions. Positive emotions can lead to positive actions, which will help you reach your self-management goals.