

# Healthy Coping

## Learning You Have Diabetes

Learning you have diabetes changes your life forever. You may feel scared, shocked, angry or overwhelmed. You may not want to believe it. These are normal reactions. Always remember that diabetes is a manageable disease. Learning how to manage your disease will ease your fear and anxiety. Many people diagnosed with type 2 diabetes become very motivated to improve their overall health and lifestyle, so they can enjoy life to its fullest. Learning coping skills and getting the support you need is very important.

## Stress

Stress is a natural part of life. Sometimes it can affect us in a good way—such as teaching us new skills, motivating and strengthening us. But other times, stress can harm our health, especially if it persists day after day. Chronic stress can raise blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol and blood glucose.

### Type of Stress

#### Psychological Stress

- Family issues or concerns
- Work challenges
- Financial worries
- Relationship issues
- Personal problems
- Caregiver responsibilities
- Worry and fatigue

#### Physical Stress

- Illness
- Infection
- Chronic pain
- Poor sleep
- Health complications
- Dental problems

## Coping Skills to Manage Stress

It is important to learn healthy ways to reduce and manage stress. Doing this can help improve your blood glucose levels and your overall health.

### Tips for Stress Management

- Take a break: relax, take a walk, slow down, have some fun.
- Take care of your body. Eat healthy, sleep well, exercise, manage pain.
- Get support through friends, family members or professional counseling.
- Calm down and let go. Try deep-breathing exercises, meditation, or yoga.
- Make priorities. Decide what is most important in your life and stay focused on that.
- Take care of yourself. Do not put everyone else's needs ahead of your own.
- Set realistic goals. Try to change only those things that you can.
- Nurture yourself spiritually, emotionally and mentally. Treat yourself like your own best friend.
- Take time to do things you love.
- Stay positive.
- Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Recognizing Depression

When you first learn that you have diabetes—or at other times in your life when your stress level remains high week after week—it is normal to feel sad and anxious. When stress worsens enough to affect your motivation, energy level and daily happiness, you could be experiencing symptoms of depression. Depression can make managing your diabetes, health and lifestyle more challenging.

Depression is treatable, but it often takes expert help and guidance, including counseling and medicine. If you have some of the symptoms below, talk to your health care provider. You deserve to enjoy life without depression.

### Symptoms of Depression

- Sadness or irritability
- Withdrawing or isolating yourself
- Fatigue and trouble sleeping
- Poor concentration, forgetting things
- Poor eating habits
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Lack of motivation
- Feeling hopeless and helpless

## Diabetes Burnout

Taking care of your diabetes is an ongoing, daily routine. This routine gets easier when it becomes a habit. On the other hand, sometimes you may get tired of doing what it takes to manage your diabetes.

### Signs of Diabetes Burnout

- Anger or resentment about having to manage your diabetes
- Feelings of being overwhelmed when thinking about the daily management routine
- Neglecting diabetes care: forgetting medicine, not checking blood glucose, not paying attention to eating and exercise
- No motivation or energy to manage your diabetes and take care of yourself
- Denying, forgetting or ignoring your diabetes

If you feel you have diabetes burnout, speak to your health care provider.

## Taking Action

To manage your diabetes, your health care provider may recommend many lifestyle changes. Remember, no one expects you to immediately change all your daily habits. Most people do best when they can work on one lifestyle change at a time. Keep in mind these important steps for success:

- Make a clear plan
- Keep it realistic
- Do it consistently
- Document your success

It is normal to make mistakes and fall back on old habits, but sticking to your plan will help you achieve successful results. With success comes a feeling of well being.

Choose one of the AADE7™ Self-Care Behaviors to create a behavior-change goal. Then work with your health care provider to develop an action plan that will help you reach your goal.

- Healthy eating
- Being active
- Monitoring
- Taking medications
- Problem solving
- Reducing risks
- Healthy coping

You can use the Take Action form on the next page.

## Take Action Plan

**SMART** goals help people with diabetes and their healthcare team track the progress of reaching your goal. When you are in a diabetes education program, you will set short term goals that can be met during the program.

**SMART** goals are:  
**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**chievable  
**R**ealistic  
**T**ime-Limited

*If you answer these questions and complete this sentence you will have a SMART goal to follow.*

By (date) \_\_\_\_\_ I will **WHAT** \_\_\_\_\_,

**WHEN** \_\_\_\_\_, **WHERE** \_\_\_\_\_,

**HOW OFTEN** (daily, weekly etc.) \_\_\_\_\_, **HOW LONG** \_\_\_\_\_

in order to **WHY** (i.e. lower blood glucose, lose weight) \_\_\_\_\_.

How will you **TRACK** your goal? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Confidence Level

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

We ask people to “Rate your confidence level” after you set a goal. Confidence means how likely you think you can finish your goal.

- A rating of 1 means you are not sure at all and a rating of 10 means you are very sure. If you choose a 6 or below, ask yourself, how you can change your goal to make it easier to reach?
- Start with something you think is doable and then add on to the goal over time.
- Small changes now help you to meet bigger goals later.

### Action Plan

An Action Plan helps you to meet your goal and to make changes to your goal when you are not able to finish what you set out to do. Ask yourself these questions:

- Who do you need support from?
- What might get in the way or make it hard for you to reach your goal?
- What is a reasonable time frame for your goal?
- What are some things you can do differently?
- Is your home or work planned to help you reach your goal?

## Keeping track of your goals

- Use a paper log or a mobile application (app) to track progress.
- Use reminders in your calendar, on your phone or with a mobile app.
- Social media and online support groups may help you find people to support you.
- A list of commonly used mobile apps and online diabetes support communities are listed in the back of the book.

## Tracking your Progress

- How successful were you in reaching your goal?
- Rate your goal on a scale of 1-10 with 1 meaning not at all, 5 meaning half of the time, 7 meaning most of the time, and 10 meaning all of the time.
- If you met your goal, that is great! Now think about a new goal to help you keep your new skill or habit for the long term.
- If you did not meet your goal, think about how you might do things differently and change activities to reach your goal.
- Maybe your goal was too hard? You may need to start over with a new goal?

Your diabetes educator can help you set SMART goals and Action Plans.