

Coping With Diabetes

You Are Not Alone

When you have diabetes, a lot of changes have to be made. These changes may upset you, and you may also fear that diabetes will cause you serious health problems. This can make you sad, angry, or depressed. Most people grieve over what they have to change to take care of themselves. If things seem too difficult, you may even want to deny that you have diabetes. Acting like you don't have diabetes is a big mistake.

How to Cope

Everyone deals with diabetes differently. You may need time to find out what it is that helps you. Here are some ideas that have helped others:

- ▶ **Join a support group.** Many people find diabetes support groups helpful. No one understands your struggle better than someone who also has diabetes. Support groups can also expose you to new diabetes management ideas.
- ▶ **Set goals, but don't expect perfection.** Break down into small steps all the things you do to control your diabetes. Some people become discouraged when they focus too much on the final outcome. Instead, celebrate when you achieve taking even a few steps toward your final goal.
- ▶ **Learn how to relax.** Diabetes can cause stress. Good stress reducers are moderate exercise, deep breathing, thinking about pleasant places, or enjoying a hobby. Plan time to relax every day, and your diabetes control may improve.
- ▶ **Share your feelings with your medical team and family.** Don't assume that other people know how you feel. Talk about your concerns to find ways to handle them better. You may handle things better once you find an understanding person who listens.
- ▶ **Keep a journal.** Sometimes writing down your thoughts relieves some of the pressure. Just seeing your concerns in black and white may help you find new ways to deal with them.

Sometimes our family or friends do not support us as well as they could. You may have to be firm about sticking to your diabetes management plan. If you are serious about your diabetes, others will become more serious too. Remember, you cannot do a good job caring for others if you don't take care of yourself first.

Questions to Ask

1. What part of my diabetes management is causing me the most stress?
2. Whom can I talk to about this?
3. How can I break this task down into smaller steps that are easier to handle?
4. What can I do to relax today?