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Getting the News: Now What?

The author of Your First Year with Diabetes offers some tips and insight for handling your diagnosis.

Take a deep breath.

Preparing your mind for your journey with diabetes is one of the best first steps to take.

Being told you have diabetes, or that there is a problem with your blood sugar level can cause quite a bit of stress — and rightly so.

Diabetes is scary.

Denial, Guilt, Anger

You may have read headlines about what can go wrong or witnessed firsthand the negative effects of uncontrolled diabetes.

Maybe you have been in **denial** that anything is wrong. That's OK. Denial protects and buffers you from difficult or shocking information.

Do you feel **guilty**? Like you caused diabetes?

If so, your first assignment is to stop the blame game and get on your own side.

Anger, too, is a common reaction and is often the first sign that you acknowledge that something is wrong. It is never too late to jumpstart your diabetes self-management program.

The key is to be gentle with yourself because you are your best resource for managing your diabetes.

Diabetes is never convenient, but with some effort and help from the experts, it is manageable. It is important that you acknowledge this. How you perceive this diagnosis will greatly effect how successfully your diabetes is managed.

Learn to Laugh

As strange as it sounds, learning to laugh can help.

Your thoughts and feelings have an enormous impact on your body. Positive thoughts do have positive physical effects.

Humor is a useful tool in helping manage diabetes by adding perspective—not that there is anything funny about having diabetes. But a little humor may help you see from a different perspective. Humor can help you build the confidence to know that you can deal with diabetes. Plus, laughing lowers glucose levels!

Focus on Positives

Let's focus on something positive about your diabetes diagnosis. Feel free to repeat the following to yourself:

- "I can follow my dreams and passions."
- "Diabetes stinks, but I can manage it."
- "I am not alone. Millions of people are dealing with diabetes and thousands of health care professionals are fighting to make a difference in my life and the lives of others."
- "The feelings I have about diabetes—be it anger, depression, fear, eagerness to learn, or relief at finding out—are typical. I have the strength to do something about my diabetes."

You Are More Than Diabetes

Diabetes does not define you; it's just a small part of your complex being. When it comes to diabetes, your treatment plan starts with being mentally prepared.

This article adapted from Your First Year with Diabetes: What to do, month by month, written by Theresa Garner, APRN, BC_ADM, MSN, CDE, and published by the American Diabetes Association, ©2008.

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