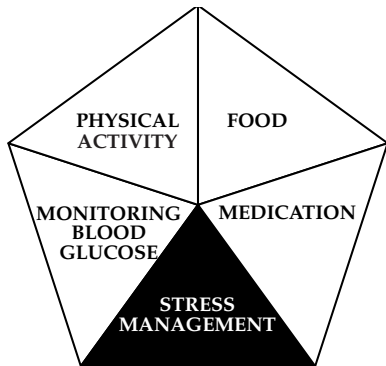


Chapter 7: Diabetes and Emotional Health

Stress and Ways of Coping With It



Everyone has stress in his or her life. Too much stress can cause your blood glucose to go up.

When you are under stress, you may not follow your usual healthy habits. Some people may not eat properly. Some might forget to exercise. Others don't check their blood glucose levels.

Most people know what causes stress in their lives. Many people do not think about how to handle stress. Even positive things such as a new job, a birth and celebrations may be stressful and affect your blood glucose.

Sometimes it's helpful to make a list of what causes stress in your life. Then think about ways to make these things less stressful.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a technique that can help to manage your anxiety by calming your mind. You can learn to recognize thoughts just as thoughts, not as facts, and learn to let them go.

For example, your work might cause you stress. You know that taking a short walk at break time usually calms you down. Or your children might stress you out. You know that taking a warm bath helps you unwind at the end of the day.

You can use the worksheet in this chapter to list your stressful situations and possible ways of coping with them.

How to Manage Your Stress

To manage stress, start by learning about yourself. What do you like? What frustrates you? What calms you down? What stresses you out? Know that, and you're on your way to managing stress.

Here are some tips to help you manage stress.

- **Maintain good health habits.**
Eat healthful foods and avoid caffeine, alcohol and nicotine. A healthy body tolerates stress more effectively.
- **Be physically active.**
Physical activities often relieve the body of unnecessary tensions. Strenuous exercise is not necessary because even moderate exercise has health benefits.
- **Get plenty of rest.**
Your body and mind need to “re-energize” each night. Most adults do not get enough sleep each night.
- **Structure daily activities.**
Plan out your activities to make the best use of your time. Make sure to include personal time for yourself and do something you enjoy.
- **Set realistic goals.**
Ask for help if you need it.
- **Do not worry about things you cannot change.**
Let it go. Focus on what you can do.
- **Identify what causes you stress.**
Avoid those situations if possible.
- **Talk about stress.**
Talking with a close friend, spouse or health care provider may help you relax.

How to Relax

- Find a comfortable position on the floor.
Use pillows to support your head and legs.
- Keep all of your joints flexed and supported.
Do not rest one body part on another.
- Take a deep breath and relax.
- Contract the muscles of your forehead. Release.
- Focus your eyes. Release.
- Clench your teeth. Release.
- Contract your jaw. Release.
- Draw your shoulders up toward your ears. Release.
- Make fists and straighten your elbows. Release
- Take a deep breath, expand your chest and hold.
Release.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles. Release.
- Squeeze your buttocks together. Release.
- Tighten your pelvic muscles. Release.
- Tighten your thighs. Release.
- Tighten your calves. Release.
- Point your toes toward your nose. Release.
- Contract everything. Release.
- Let your entire body relax.
- Breathe deeply in a rhythm.
- Rest this way for a few minutes.
- Get up slowly and gently.

Diabetes and Depression

People who have diabetes are more likely to become depressed than those who do not have diabetes. The exact cause is not known. It could be a chemical imbalance in the brain or the feelings of helplessness, frustration and unpredictability of diabetes that can cause depression.

It takes energy, motivation and drive for life to manage diabetes well. Taking your medicines, testing your blood glucose, eating healthy and being physically active can be hard if you are depressed.

Symptoms of depression are:

- feeling sad or empty most of the time
- decreased interest in most activities
- change in weight, appetite or both
- trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- feeling agitated or sluggish
- fatigue or loss of energy
- feeling worthless or guilty
- problems concentrating or making decisions
- thoughts of death or suicide.

Talk to your health care provider if you have any, some or all of the above symptoms nearly every day. Professional counseling, antidepressant medicines or both are effective in treating depression.

Tip

Live your life!
Don't live for diabetes.

Another idea for helping to deal with depression is to answer the following questions for yourself:

- What have I lost?
(Example: I can't eat anything I want.)
- What is left?
(Example: I can still eat.)
- What is possible?
(Example: I can have great meals, get better nutrition and have treats in smaller servings.)

You may find out that the "what is possible" list is longer than the "what have I lost" list. Use the chart on the next page to assess how diabetes is affecting your life.

The Effects of Diabetes on Your Life

What's Lost	What's Left	What's Possible
Example: <i>I can't eat anything I want.</i>	Example: <i>I can still eat. I can still have treats in smaller servings.</i>	Example: <i>I can make or eat great meals and get better nutrition.</i>