

Help Me

Understanding My Type 2 Diabetes

A Sample

I have Type 2 Diabetes

Everyday I ask myself one simple question about my diabetes. It's always the same question. I ask myself – *How am I doing?*

Such a straight forward sounding question is difficult to answer. At this point, all I can say is that I'm doing okay. I'm coping.

The sad thing is that I've come to realize that no matter how much effort I put into it, the best I can say is just that. I'm coping.

Introduction

I was diagnosed with diabetes in 1995. Since then I have gone through a long, slow learning process as I discovered what I needed to do to fight my diabetes.

My learning process began having to undo the memories of my Grandmother and her diabetes. I watched her giving herself insulin shots to help with her – “Sugar Diabetes.” Because of that, I grew up assuming diabetes was a problem with sugar, not with food in general or with lifestyle.

When I was in my teens, I heard stories of the terrible things diabetes did to people – blindness, amputations and death. While those stories scared me, I brushed them aside. At that age, bad things always happened to someone else. I was a teenager and felt immortal.

Why me?

During my teen years my weight had not yet become a problem. In fact, being overweight was among the least of my concerns. During my senior year in high school, I was skinny – 6' 4" tall and 165 pounds. I was very active with sports, playing basketball most days after school, on weekends and all Summer long.

That was at a time when most families had one car, unlike now when many families have one car per person. So when I went to the

park to play basketball, I rode my bike. In fact, I rode my bike everywhere. Even more exercise.

With the combination of my physical activity and my thin body frame, I could eat whatever I wanted and I would burn it off within a few minutes. Back then, without knowing it, I was doing almost everything I had to do to fight diabetes.

Then I reached my early twenties. Either my metabolism had changed or my life style had changed. Whichever it was, my weight suddenly became a problem. From my twenties until I was in my early fifties, I averaged gaining three to four pounds a year. While three or four pounds may not sound like a lot, over a span of thirty years, it added up to a gain of almost 100 pounds.

Off and on, I'd go on a diet. I'd normally pick whatever diet was currently in the headlines. Each diet seemed to work for a short time. I would lose weight, but as soon as I stopped, the weight came back, and then a few extra pounds.

My self Image

One of the problems that lead to not only my gaining weight, but also to my inability to fight it, was the fact that I had been skinny for such a long time. I knew I was putting on weight. I could read the scales and knew that my pants didn't fit like they used to fit. However, after being skinny for so long, I still saw myself as skinny. Even at 230 pounds, the man looking back at me from the mirror was skinny.

Not only did I see myself as skinny, my eating habit was still the same as when I was skinny. I was still used to eating whatever I wanted. Someone once called me a volume eater – which I was.

Those two demons – my skinny self image and my skinny eating habit were tough to overcome. In fact, I didn't overcome them. By my late twenties, I was over-weight. By my fifties I was fat.

When I was in my mid-forties, I began lifting weights, but that did not help me lose weight. In some ways, it hurt because my added muscle tended to mask my fat. I have broad shoulders and I simply didn't look as heavy as I actually was.

Reality Hit

Then three things happened, almost simultaneously, to bring reality into a sharp focus.

The first was the dial on my scales topping 270 pounds for the

first time. 270 pounds! When I saw that, I could no longer kid myself. Despite people telling me that I looked like a Linebacker, I had to admit that I weighed too much.

The second thing happened when I went shopping for new clothes. As I tried on pants, I found I had to go to a 40 inch waist. I had managed to find an excuse for my 38 inch waist, but 40 was different. 40 inches was a threshold. First it was the 270 pounds. Then a 40 inch waist. The evidence was building.

The third part of my reality slap-in-the-face came that same month when my doctor told me that I had diabetes.

By that time, I had picked up enough bits-and-pieces of information to recognize that because of my diet, my weight and my life style, I'd brought my diabetes on myself. I had no one to blame than myself. Suddenly, all the horror stories of blindness, amputated feet and legs, kidney dialysis and early death came rushing back.

And, I'd done it to myself.

I was afraid I had lived my last normal day.

That's how I got here. I'm diabetic, I'm angry at myself for letting it happen and I'm terrified of what may happen.

But, all in all, I'm getting by. I'm coping.

After I was diagnosed.

My initial reaction to my diagnosis was fear and confusion. I didn't know what to do or where to turn for help. I needed to talk to someone, to know what others have done after they got the news. I wanted someone to tell me that my worst fears were unfounded and that I'd be okay. It took a long time to get the information I needed.

The word I chose for the title of the book, "*Coping*" really is what I'm doing. Until science comes up with a cure for Type 2 diabetes, I cannot beat diabetes. I've accept that I must begin the fight anew everyday. At best, if I do everything right, I can stay even.

Beginning my Fight

In the first months, as I was learning the What and How of diabetes, I read numerous magazine articles with headlines declaring that if I did what the author recommended, I could beat diabetes. The articles made it appear almost simple – do A, B and then C and I would be better. In three or four pages, my diabetes was solved.

None of those articles helped. In fact, they actually discouraged

me because as I struggled to get my blood sugar down, I didn't have an easy time. It wasn't until I realized there was *One Hard Truth* about diabetes that I wasn't getting from any of the magazine articles. That truth is – "It never lets up."

I now realize that every minute or every day, I have to fight diabetes. I also realize that even if I fight every day, because there are aspects of diabetes I don't know about, I could still lose.

Why am I writing this book?

First and most importantly, I'm not a doctor. In fact, I haven't even played one on television. Since I'm not a doctor, this book should not be considered a recommendation of any form of either a treatment or a course of action. This book is simply my description of what I have learned and what I am doing to cope with my diabetes.

After I was diagnosed, like most people who hear news like that, I didn't know what to do. I went through a long period of sorting through what had happened and what I should do about it. The doctor I had at that time was good, but he didn't give me guidance. Essentially, he told me to watch my weight, to keep exercising and to eat better.

Initially, I didn't know anyone else who had diabetes, so I struggled. With time, I began to get answers. I met other people who had the same problem. I found a clinic that gave classes on dealing with diabetes. It also had a Diabetic Help Group. Talking to other people, sharing both ideas and concerns helped a lot. The internet became a good source of information.

It took a while but I learned what I would have to do. I learned that I'm not alone. Other people have gone through the same thing I was going through. I found comfort in my shared problem.

In this book, I'm trying to condense my fumbling to learn about diabetes and how to fight it. For someone who has been recently diagnosed, this book might help shorten their struggle. For someone who has some of the precursors of diabetes, this book can help with ways to avoid full blown diabetes.