



The Three Ds: Diabetes + Denial + Depression

By Amy Tenderich

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This is kind of the flipside of yesterday's post (*Dining on Strength* by Amy Tenderich, *DiabetesMine*, 10/23/2008), if you will. As much as I enjoyed hearing the personal stories of so many women living with Type 1 diabetes, I was amazed — a bit shocked, even — to hear so many of these strong, beautiful ladies talk about denial and depression.

A few of them even said they had a hard time getting out of bed that morning to make their way to Saturday's motivational luncheon: "*Depression had me flat on my ass this morning.*" That brought giggles, but there were also a lot of tears in the room.

One woman got up and said she'd been suffering from depression for nearly a decade, and had no idea it was even related to her diabetes, until she found the **Behavioral Diabetes Institute (BDI)**.

Another lady explained how she was in "total denial that I had diabetes" for the first four years after diagnosis, until she became so depressed that she was suicidal, and landed in the hospital with an A1c of 21% and a BG level of 1200.

At least a dozen other women talked about living in "complete denial" for a number of years. I had no idea how many people simply deal with their diabetes by rejecting it, until some major health event rears its ugly head.

These are all stellar examples of the quiet suffering that's gone hidden and unaddressed for far too long.

You should have heard the outpouring of gratitude for Dr. Polonsky and Dr. Guzman for their work at the BDI! What seems to help a great deal is simply the recognition that depression and diabetes are a documented pair — that suffering from this doesn't make you neurotic or "ungrateful." Recognizing that anti-depressant drugs don't always work well for people with diabetes, the BDI focuses on "down-to-earth strategies for intervention."

God knows we need to help expand or replicate a program like this around the rest of the country. Because when people contact me here at *DiabetesMine*, or over at the [DiabeticConnect](#) community, crying out for help with their emotional stress and depression, I have nowhere else to send them. And right now, the BDI is San-Diego-based only, with very little reach outside that region. There's nothing else quite like it anywhere in the country, as far as I know.

They're starting a wonderful mentorship program called DiaBuddies, which could be a terrific template for similar programs nationwide.

btw, if the exasperating things that other people say about your diabetes is getting you down, you'll be glad to know that the BDI's little pocket Diabetes Etiquette Card is now available for downloading online.