

Over the past 15 years, I have asked “What bugs you about diabetes?” to every patient and family member I’ve seen and every group I’ve ever spoken to. Almost everybody has an answer, and they usually have not one, not two, but a long list of hassles and frustrations to put forward. Of the thousands of people I’ve met all over America, I hardly ever meet anyone who can say, “Gee, I can’t think of a thing. This disease has never been a problem at all.”

Sure, diabetes can sometimes drive you crazy. After all, it’s a tough disease. It is easy to feel angry, frustrated, confused, depressed, frightened, or even guilt-ridden about diabetes at times. Managing diabetes every day requires much effort and vigilance, and vacations from the disease aren’t a good idea.

Sometimes it can seem like your best efforts don’t lead to the results you might expect. Probably the most common complaint I hear is, “Even when I do everything I’m supposed to, I still get these wacky blood sugar results. What’s the use of trying?” It’s clear that diabetes can exhaust even the most motivated among us.

My colleagues and I have examined patients’ feelings about diabetes in research studies and we have found a common thread. Negative feelings about diabetes are usually rooted in a sense of powerlessness,

the deeply held conviction that your own actions cannot help you to manage diabetes successfully. It’s easy to see how this might happen.

Maybe you had a close family member who suffered terrible complications because of diabetes. It’s true, your loved one may not have benefited from the tremendous gains in diabetes knowledge and technology that have occurred over the past decades—advances that are now available to you. Still, it can be difficult not to believe that you will share that person’s fate and that there is nothing you can do about it.

Or maybe, despite your careful attention, you are still having frequent, unexplained high or low blood sugars. Or maybe you’ve been watching what you eat carefully, but you just can’t seem to shed even a pound. When it seems that your own efforts to manage diabetes aren’t accomplishing anything, when following the recommended treatment doesn’t lead to positive outcomes, how could you not get discouraged?

But wait; there is good news. You don’t have to let diabetes keep you down. The secret is to rediscover the truth that you are *not* helpless in the face of diabetes. With some diseases, you are powerless to effect any change—but not diabetes! The actions of you and your health care team can make a powerful, positive difference. With the powerful medications and tech-

nology now available to us, we now know that it is possible for most people to live a long and healthy life with diabetes. With knowledge, support from your loved ones, and good care from a competent health care team, you are far from helpless.

This is the secret, unstated message of every *Diabetes Forecast* article you will ever read: *You don’t have to be powerless in the face of diabetes.* Whether the article is on diet, exercise, new medications, the latest research, or our readers’ personal stories, if you look carefully, you will find these critical reminders. Remember that there is no need to stay discouraged. Yes, diabetes can be frustrating—and aggravating—at times, but your thoughtful actions can make a big difference.

Search for these messages as you read through this issue, and every issue that follows. Talk about it with your loved ones and your health care providers. Don’t ever stop looking for new, more effective, and more powerful ways to handle your diabetes management and to feel more at ease with this tough disease. And if I ever get a chance to ask you, “So what bugs you about diabetes?”, I hope you’ll be able to tell me, “Not much!”

[guest editorial]



“So What Bugs You About Diabetes?”

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