How to Own Your Diabetes Diagnosis

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Owning Your Diabetes Diagnosis and Condition

There are numerous industries devoted to helping people cope with their chronic illness and of these industries focus on exercise, diet, holistic health, publications, or pharmaceutical goods. There is a public demand for anything that will make us feel better. Chronic illness is lifelong, which makes you a perfect consumer. So, how do you go about owning your diabetes diagnosis?

Learning to rely on your coping skills and educating yourself about your disease can save you a ton of money, and put the reins back in your hands.

Educating Yourself About Your Condition

When I was diagnosed with diabetes in the 1980s, my doctor sent me home with advice and a prescription for Prozac.

Prozac was new and popular at the time, and drug representatives were unloading it by the case in her office. She told me she was not implying I was mentally ill; rather, she was using the drug in a preventative manner.

“Nearly half of all people with a chronic illness suffer from depression and or anxiety,” she said. “Given your family history, I think we should be prepared.”

That was the extent of my diabetes education. I cried the rest of the weekend, but by the time I had driven back to my university I had my student ID in hand and was determined to hit the library to learn more about diabetes.

When it comes to owning your diabetes diagnosis, there is so much to learn about how to live with your new diabetic lifestyle.

I started with reading books about type 1 and type 2 diabetes, then moved onto the role of the pancreas and kidneys, once I finished that I learned how hormones affect blood sugar levels, and I ended with diabetic-friendly recipes.

I read book after book, seeking answers to my questions:

- Is it curable?
- Why me?
- What should I eat?
- What can I eat?
- Will I lose the left leg or the right leg?

Every piece of information brought up more questions, and I checked out as many books as I could carry to learn

more.

For the next ten weeks, I read books about diabetes, protein and carbohydrates. Little did I know but I was participating in the coping mechanism that both sociologists and scientists put at the top of their list of ways to cope with chronic illness — self-education.

Learning to Adapt To Your New Lifestyle

Robin Madell, a writer for Healthline, acknowledges that people with chronic conditions must cope with an overwhelming number of problems including, but not limited to, pain, finances, limitations and loss.

In her article about dealing with chronic illness, Madell suggests that the most important skill we might master is our ability to avoid stress, as stress aggravates many chronic conditions and also leaves us feeling perpetually uncomfortable.

Madell offers a list of actions that might help, but you can make your list just by asking yourself: What are my best coping skills that do not involve food?

Here is one of my favorites:

1. Type your list, print it and cut each item into a strip of paper that you fold and put into a jar.
2. Pull out one of the pieces of paper and follow through with it.

The action itself is empowering and can help you in owning your diabetes diagnosis. Also, it can add variety to life in which you must continually cope.

As I continued to self-educate myself, I came across new sources from my favorite chronic illness author, Toni Bernhard. Through her shared experience, I reached a point of being able to work on my attitude. I learned that I could not change being sick, but I can change my perspective.

Does the thought of changing your perspective make you resentful? It sure did make me resentful at first, but since resentment accomplishes nothing and I have a limited amount of energy, I have become a proponent of perspective.

In Conclusion...

A diagnosis of any serious illness can often strip a person of their power, confidence, or even identity, leaving one fearful and confused. You do not have to become prey to the many industries playing on your fear. Educate yourself, and create your unique coping skills. Owning your diabetes diagnosis is important.

Research is something you can do, and free advice is limitless. Find information open to the public through your local library or the internet; read and absorb as much knowledge as possible.

As they say, knowledge is power. By researching and adopting what works, you can own your disease. When you use coping mechanisms, you suddenly become a scholar, not a victim.