5 Tips for Living a Fulfilling Life With Type 1 Diabetes

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Living With Type 1 Diabetes

Living with type 1 diabetes can be overwhelming at times. It never goes away, and there are never breaks or days off; it is always there and will not stand to be ignored.

Many clinics will explain when diagnosed that you can live the same lifestyle as before you had type 1 diabetes. While that idea holds some truth, the transition to getting back to feeling in control or your life and your diabetes will take a lot of effort and can take lots of time as well.

Not only will you have to do research, but it is also important to try things with your body and record how it reacts to build your diabetes tool kit. That way when problems or new situations present themselves, you are ready!

Personally, it has taken me a long time to get to a place where I feel genuinely free and in control of my life, and how it is now intertwined with living with a chronic illness. That being said, during the first four years of living with type 1 diabetes, I was completely in denial and was resistant to accept my new reality.

I wish at the time there were more resources given to me in terms of the mental aspect of living with diabetes, but unfortunately, that was not the case. After I finally accepted my diabetes, I became extremely hungry for more knowledge and advice on better ways to live with the disease. I've experimented with lots of different diets, exercises, worked on my mental health a ton and have seen multiple diabetes doctor and clinics.

Here are my top five tips to help you live and thrive with type 1 diabetes that I wish I had been given at the beginning of my diagnosis.

1. Accept Your Diagnosis

Fully accept your diagnosis – it will set you free. The mental work type 1 diabetes requires is just as intense as the physical. They are completely intertwined, and it is impossible to be in good physical health if your mental health is not in a good place.

Having type 1 diabetes will seem terrible, awful and depressing, and you will most likely be mourning the life you once had the privilege to live for a little while after first getting diagnosed. This is completely normal and healthy. It's okay to be sad. Eventually, the clouds will clear, and it will be time for you to get back up and learn to coexist with your new life peacefully. Meditate on your diabetes, find mantras to help you, see a therapist or counselor, reach out to friends and family — whatever you need to do to get your brain to a good place do it. Then, you can move on to truly figuring out a healthy way of eating and exercising that will allow you to live your happiest life.

2. Eat a Healthy, Balanced Diet

Find a way of eating that serves your needs and fits your lifestyle. When it comes to the physical aspect of

managing type 1 diabetes, how you choose to eat is extremely important.

Learning about food and how it affects your blood sugar will be imminent to having good control. If you know which foods increase your blood sugar levels, you will know how to mindfully approach eating them – if you do choose to eat them.

There are always ways to enjoy the foods we used to have before type 1 diabetes — it just takes a little more mindfulness, knowing when to pre-bolus, how to food combine and learning about insulin timing. This will allow indulging without sacrificing your health.

Treating yourself without being mindful is also okay, but it is important to be prepared for a potential increase in blood sugar levels or crash in blood sugar, which will then lead you to feel physically tired or unwell. In my opinion, choosing the unmindful route is allowing the disease to get the best of us.

3. Discover an Exercise Routine

Exercising can be helpful when it comes to diabetes management. It can significantly reduce your insulin needs and increase insulin sensitivity (how responsive your body is to the effects of insulin) by a lot!

It can be tricky to manage blood sugar while doing exercise and can take a lot of trial-and-error to figure out how certain activities affect your blood sugar.

Once you find something that works for you, it will significantly improve your physical and mental health! Your body will start to feel better than it ever has.

4. Build Your Support System

Meeting other type 1 diabetics will seriously make you feel amazing. It can help alleviate the feeling of isolation that comes with having the disease.

Since meeting more type 1 diabetics – in person and online – I have gained more new knowledge, friendship and a new sense of connection and community I thought I would never have. My first interaction with a lot of other diabetics was through a monthly meet up set up by a diabetes organization that took place near where I lived.

It was an intense and fantastic feeling being surrounded by all these other humans who understood the reality I lived so far. For example, we could chat about anything because we had something in common – seeing the world through a type 1 diabetes lens.

5. Don't Let Diabetes Hold You Back From Life

You can do anything. You really can. If you have put in the work to figure out how to manage your blood sugar on a day-to-day basis, then you are well equipped to take on the world.

Don’t be afraid, and just go for things. Be mindful and prepared but do not be scared. The universe dealt your cards to include type 1 diabetes for a reason. Maybe it is to make you stronger, to connect with a particular person, to make you more down to earth, or perhaps there is no reason. At the end of the day, everyone is dealt a different set of cards and it is what we do with those cards that make our lives bloom in the spring and shimmer like the sun on the great big sea.