

## Feelings about Diabetes

Diabetes affects your whole self- not just your body. It can affect your feelings about yourself and how you get along with others. An important step in learning to live with diabetes is to become aware of how you are feeling.

### How did you feel when you found out you had diabetes?

Each person has different feelings about having diabetes. When you first found out that you had diabetes, it might have been hard to believe. You may have been frightened or wondered "why me"? These are very real feelings that many people have when they first find out that they have diabetes. As you live with diabetes, you may find that your feelings change. Some common feelings are listed below. As you read the list, you may become aware that you've had some of these feelings.

**Denial:** Some people find it hard to believe they have diabetes. They may also believe that they do not really want or have to take care of their diabetes. This is called denial.

**Anger:** When people feel angry about having diabetes, they may wonder, "Why me"? They may act angry at family, friends or health care professionals. In fact, they are angry about having diabetes.

**Depression:** Sometimes when people are angry about having diabetes, they keep their feelings bottled up inside. As time goes on, they begin to feel very sad and blue- even hopeless.

**Acceptance:** Gradually people adjust or adapt to having diabetes. They still wish that they didn't have diabetes. Some days they still hate it, but they are able to handle it.

These feelings do not always happen in this order. Most people find that these feelings come and go. Also, you may have two or more of these feelings at one time or you may have none of these feelings. You may have had some of these same feelings when you had other problems in your life. Think about how you

handled your feelings then. The way you handled your feelings in the past can help you to find ways to deal with your feelings now.

### **Who gives you support?**

Many people find that it helps to talk about their feelings. Family, friends, and health care professionals can help by listening. Most of the time, other people want to help. It's up to you to let them know the best way they can be helpful. Many areas have support groups especially for people with diabetes and their families. These are groups of people who talk about what it's like to have diabetes and ways to handle problems. Your diabetes health care team can tell you about one in your area.

Other sources of support for you and your feelings about diabetes are available. Sometimes it helps to talk with someone who is not a friend or family member. It may help to talk to a social worker, mental health counselor or spiritual counselor/clergy.

You may find that you are feeling sad, down or depressed. If you feel depressed tell your health care provider. There are treatments for depression that are very effective. Learning to live with diabetes takes time. For most people, it is a lifelong journey. The first step is to learn to recognize how you are feeling. Think about how your feelings are affecting the way you cope with other stresses, get along with family and friends and take care of your diabetes. Most journeys are easier if you have some help along the way. Find someone to talk with and support you. Take one step and one day at a time and you'll reach your goal. **Ask your doctor, nurse, or dietitian the following questions:**

- 1. Can you tell me how to contact a diabetes support group in the area?**
- 2. Is there someone I can talk with, one-to-one, about my diabetes?**

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