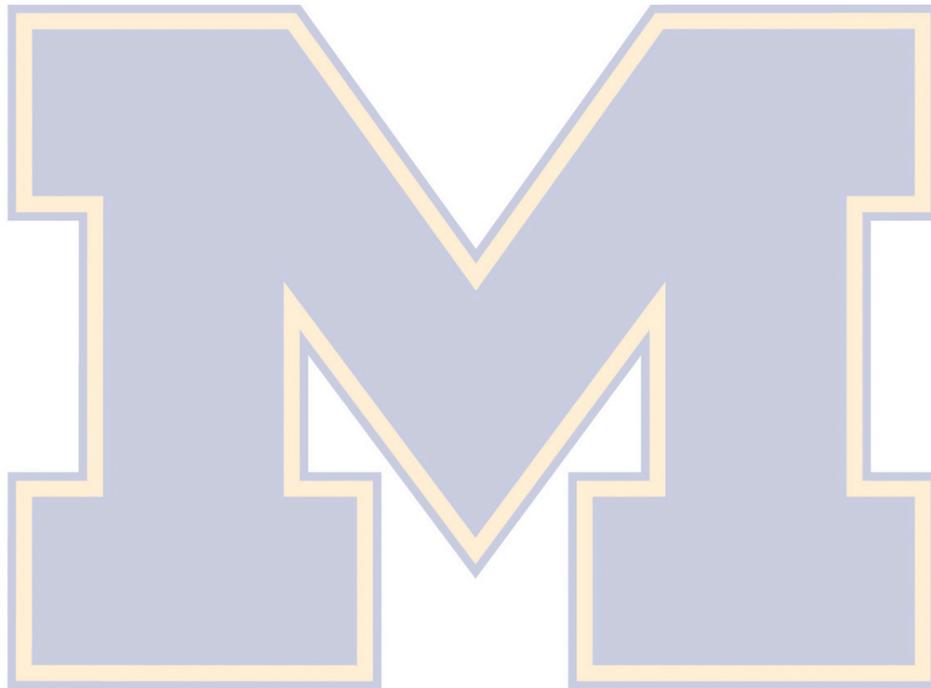


Newsletter #4



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 the people around you. An important step in learning to live with diabetes is to become aware of your feelings and how they are affecting you.

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"? As you live with diabetes, you may find that your feelings change. Some common feelings are listed below.

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

Diabetes distress: Hearing that you have diabetes and caring for it day in and day out is hard. Common feelings of distress are anger, frustration, fear, guilt and shame. Some people act angry with family, friends or health care professionals. Others hide their diabetes because they feel people might judge them.

Depression: Sometimes when people are angry or have strong feelings about having diabetes, they keep it bottled up inside. As time goes on, they begin to feel very sad and blue – even helpless and hopeless.

Acceptance: Gradually most people adjust or adapt to having diabetes. They slowly figure out how to make peace with it. They still wish they didn't

have diabetes and some days they still hate or ignore it, but are able to handle it most of the time.

These feelings do not always happen in this order. Most people find that these feelings come and go. 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 things in the past can help you find ways to deal with your feelings now.

Getting the Support You Need

Many people find that it helps to talk about their feelings. Family, friends, and health care professionals can help. Most of the time others want to help, but may offer lots of advice instead of listening. It's up to you to let them know how they can help.

Being part of a group of people with diabetes who truly understand what it is like can be a great source of support. Sometimes it helps to talk with someone who is not a friend or family member, such as a minister, rabbi, or priest, mental health counselor or social worker.

You may find that you are feeling sad, down or depressed most of the time or do not feel like doing things you enjoy. If you are depressed, tell your health care provider. Medicines and counseling each work to treat depression, however they work best together. Medicines for depression take time to start working so you need to stick with them.

Learning to live with diabetes takes time. For most people, it is a lifelong journey. The first step is to recognize how you are feeling. Think about how your feelings about diabetes are affecting your daily life, the way you cope

with the other stresses in your life, 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 or a group to talk with and support you. Take it one step and one day at a time.

Ask your doctor, nurse, or dietitian the following questions:

- Are there resources to help me cope with my diabetes?
- Is there someone I can talk with about my diabetes or a support group near-by?
- Are there safe on-line resources to help me cope with my diabetes?