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Special points of interest:

- The Emotional Effects of Diabetes
- Need Stress Relief?
- Manager's Corner

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Rocky Love 3/20

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Alive With Pride

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The Emotional Effects of Diabetes

By **Dr. Sanjay Gupta**

For people with **type 2 diabetes**, managing their emotional health can be as important as keeping their blood sugar under control. The condition requires constant attention, and that can trigger feelings of stress and **anxiety**. Studies have shown that diabetics are much more likely to have an anxiety disorder or **depression**. They may neglect their diet, stop monitoring glucose levels, or revert to unhealthy habits. Steve Sternlof, PhD, a psychologist with the Harold Hamm Diabetes Center at the University of Oklahoma, talks about the **psychological impact** type 2 diabetes can have and ways to help patients cope.

How do you know if a diabetes patient is suffering from stress

or anxiety?

There are different situations. It might be someone who is not compliant with their self-care and isn't checking their blood sugar regularly or taking their medications as prescribed. Their doctor notices this and sees their A1C [hemoglobin test] levels are up and there are problems. In that case we might get communication from their physician, and we'll help them work through their issues and come up with a game plan.

It might be a patient who is severely depressed and openly talking about their level of sadness and that they've given up hope. Their diabetes is affecting them socially and putting a strain on their relationships or marriage.

Sometimes patients are good at hiding these feelings. It's

important that doctors ask questions and probe beyond how their medical care is going. A lot of patients are reluctant to talk about their feelings unless asked. When a doctor is willing to ask questions above and beyond whether or not they're checking their blood sugar, the patient is more willing to talk.

What are some of the major mental health issues that affect diabetics?

There's a high correlation between diabetes and depression. It can come in different forms and different levels of severity. Some people just get down a few days out of the week or month, others have chronic depression. It can be difficult for them just to get out of bed and function in their daily lives.

Need stress relief? Try the 4 A's

By **Mayo Clinic Staff**

When we feel the effects of stress weighing us down, it's like lugging a backpack that's becoming heavier by the minute. Too much stress can make our journey through life difficult.

Happy events, such as a wedding, as well as unhappy events, such as overwork, can cause stress. When your

stress level exceeds your ability to cope, you need to restore the balance by reducing the stressors or increasing your ability to cope or both. Try using one of the four A's: avoid, alter, accept or adapt.

Avoid

Take control of your surroundings.

Is the traffic insane? Leave early for work or take the

longer, less traveled route. Hate waiting in line at the corporate cafeteria? Pack your lunch and eat at your desk or in a break room.

Avoid people who bother you. If you have a co-worker who causes your jaw to tense, put physical distance between the two of you.

Learn to say no.

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It can also create anxiety in that people worry about how they're going to talk about their disease to other people, and whether or not they'll understand what they have to go through.

They also worry about how diabetes will affect how long they live, they worry about **complications**, whether or not they'll go blind, if they'll need a limb amputated. It creates a lot of stress and worry. Even if their diabetes is under control, it's that "what if" factor. Diabetes also has a big effect on interpersonal relationships. People who have these depression or anxiety problems and have a chronic illness tend to withdraw from others and isolate themselves. The problem is a lot of depressed patients put loved ones off. I tell family members to not give up—the patient may

The Emotional Effects of Diabetes cont.

not respond after the first or fifth time, but maybe after the twentieth time. They at least have to leave the door open.

How do you help someone diagnosed with diabetes cope with the pressures of constant self-care?

It's a big struggle. People live their lives and have a certain way of living it and have certain habits and routines. Those things are very hard to break. When you get diagnosed with diabetes, you don't have to totally break them. But now you have to fit in something else throughout the day every day for the rest of your life. This involves checking your blood sugar, **taking your medication**, watching what you eat, doing some kind of physical

activity, following up with your doctor.

Some people decide their diabetes care either doesn't fit into their routine or it falls short on their priority list. Most people will list their job and their family and other things way above diabetes care on their priority list.

I usually have new patients reflect on why diabetes care is such a low priority when it involves taking care of their health and quality of life and how long they'll live well with the disease. It's helpful when they can make that connection on their own that if they don't take care of themselves and don't manage the disease properly, then they're not going to be around to have a job or spend time with their family.

Does there need to be more of a focus on mental health in caring for people with diabetes?

When the emphasis is just on the physical – that my body isn't performing the way that it should – that's difficult for some people. It's helping to change their thinking and have them realize that while they may not have control over the way their body uses insulin, they can at least control how they feel about it. Everyday life, even without diabetes, is tough enough. When you add diabetes that requires so much of someone every single day, it creates an extra burden of stress. Sometimes people don't feel like they have an avenue of escape. It's important they have something they can find joy or comfort in.

Respectfully ask others to change their behavior.

Communicate your feelings openly. Remember to use "I" statements, as in, "I feel frustrated by shorter deadlines and a heavier workload."

Manage your time better.

State limits in advance.

Alter

One of the most helpful

things you can do during times of stress is to take inventory, then attempt to change your situation for the better

Accept

Talk with someone

Forgive. It takes energy to be angry.

Practice positive self

talk. It's easy to lose objectivity when you're stressed. it."

Learn from your mis-

takes.

Adapt

Adjust your standards.

Practice thought stopping. Stop gloomy thoughts immediately.

Reframe the issue. Try looking at your situation from a new viewpoint. and finish a load of laundry.

Adopt a mantra. Create a saying such as, "I can handle this," and mentally repeat it in tough situations.

Create an assets column.

Look at the big picture. Ask yourself, "Will this matter in a year or in five years?" The answer is often no. Realizing this makes a stressful situation seem less overwhelming.

