

DIABETES DISTRESS

An extraordinary amount of effort is required to manage all types of diabetes.

Yet the amount of effort someone puts into diabetes management does not always mean they get the results they intended or wanted. Many people living with diabetes experience diabetes distress, AKA frustration, worry, or stress from dealing with diabetes.

Diabetes distress can affect many aspects of life. It can stem from unwanted or erratic changes in blood sugar levels, constantly thinking about the many factors affecting blood sugar (food, exercise, sleep, illness, etc.), dealing with insurance companies, financial hardship, extra planning required to travel or exercise, and/or additional medical appointments. It can lead to a variety of emotions.

Diabetes distress and clinical depression are related, they show up differently. Clinical depression diagnosis is based on sadness or depressed mood for at least 14 consecutive days, and includes symptoms such as changes in sleep and appetite, thinking about death, loss of energy, feelings of guilt, difficulty concentrating, and low self-esteem. Either way, a mental health professional can be helpful.

Set Yourself Up for Success

- **Peer support** from others with similar experiences and emotions
- **Support from loved ones** who truly appreciate that life with diabetes is not easy, and we are doing our best.
- **Spiritual or religious support** that is positive, an outlet for stress, and/or a time to find peace.
- **Remember that diabetes distress will pass**; it is not permanent. This may be difficult to remember as the feelings can be emotionally consuming. We are unable to control everything, including our bodies, all the time. What we can do is our best to manage diabetes.
- **Small, realistic, achievable goals** are more manageable. Goals like eating vegetables 1-2 more times per week or exercising 20 minutes, 3 days per week are more doable, and we are less likely to resist or simply give up.