

Chapter F

Emotional Well-being and the Diabetes Psychology Service

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F1: Living well with Diabetes

A diagnosis of diabetes is a big change in most people's lives and it takes time to find the best ways of fitting diabetes into life.

Children and young people with diabetes live very fulfilling lives.

People with diabetes perform at the highest levels in sport, education, performing arts.

Visit the celebrities page on Diabetes UK website and explore their experiences at <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/Guide-to-diabetes/Teens/Fun-stuff/Celebrities/>

F2: Emotional impact following diagnosis

There is no such thing as 'normal' following diagnosis, and you may even notice that everyone responds differently in your family. It is common to feel shock, fear, sadness, anger, frustration, fed-up, guilt, relief and many other feelings. We expect that these feelings will gradually reduce over time.

Living with diabetes has its ups and downs, which are not the same for everyone. We know that making a good start and having support (from family, friends, school/college, and diabetes team) are really important.

Changing glucose levels can have a big impact on how people feel and behave. It is important that diabetes is not used as a reason for young people not being able to do things as this can build resentment. Think about what you would allow a child or young person to do if they did not have diabetes, and then find a way for diabetes to fit into this - the diabetes team can often have ideas about ways of managing different situations so always get in touch to ask.

F3: Promoting emotional wellbeing for children and young people with diabetes

There are several ways that we can promote emotional wellbeing for children, young people and their families with diabetes. The way we (as family, friends, teachers, professionals) talk to young people about diabetes impacts how they think and feel about it.

How to support children and young people to build resilience:

- Talk about diabetes in a way that makes space for thoughts and feelings listening to how children and young people feel is so important to them and you do not need to have all the answers: listening is not doing nothing).
- Pay attention to the child or young person as well as diabetes.
- Help children and young people to build confidence in diabetes care gradually over time, by letting them get involved in parts of diabetes care that are appropriate for their age
- Make space for mistakes, this is how we learn.
- Practise how to share about diabetes with new people can help with new situations (e.g. moving to a new school, starting a new club)

Team working

Caring for diabetes can be demanding and teamwork between children, young people and their families is important. Team working can be more difficult to negotiate during teenage years. It can be hard to achieve a balance between care for diabetes and supporting the development of independence, which is a very important developmental task. Young people tend to be focused on the present, friends and activities they enjoy - which can mean that diabetes care struggles to be prioritised. Think about how you can best work together as a family to care for diabetes. This includes negotiating about reminders, checking in and managing if glucose checks or insulin has been missed.

Siblings can also be impacted by a diagnosis of diabetes, they may feel their needs come second, so include siblings in understanding about diabetes. Provide opportunities for support as needed.

F4: Emotional support for children, young people and their families living with diabetes

Living with diabetes has ups and downs and this means sometimes it can feel more difficult to live with. Struggling emotionally can make it harder to care for diabetes and living with diabetes can contribute to emotional difficulties. Support is available at these times either via the diabetes team or your GP.

Within the diabetes team there will be clinical psychologists. Some of the reasons that children, young people or their families come and talk to psychologists are:

- Feeling sad or down
- Feeling that diabetes has taken over life
- Feeling "stuck" in relation to diabetes.
- Arguments and relationship problems caused by diabetes at home
- Worries about weight or body image
- Stress around living with diabetes
- Fears or anxieties about diabetes
- Difficulties managing the treatment regime
- Feeling different
- Difficulties with diabetes in school/college or work
- ... many other reasons

We work together with families to understand what you are struggling with and to help things to move forward.