



## Meeting 9

## Stress, Depression and Diabetes

### Welcome!



Welcome to Meeting 9 of Partners in Care! Today we are going to talk about some of the feelings that people may experience when they have diabetes, and how stress and depression affect blood sugar.

When you found out you had diabetes, your doctor or diabetes educator probably told you about changes in your lifestyle, eating habits, and daily activities that you needed to make. You may have also started taking diabetes pills or insulin and checking your blood sugar on a regular basis.

Having all this thrown at you at once can be overwhelming. Because of changes required to prevent complications, diabetes may sometimes cause feelings of isolation, anger, frustration, fear, and guilt.

We will talk more about some of these feelings, how they affect diabetes control, and some ways to deal with them.

Before we get started, let's visit with Uncle Tommy and Kaipo again.

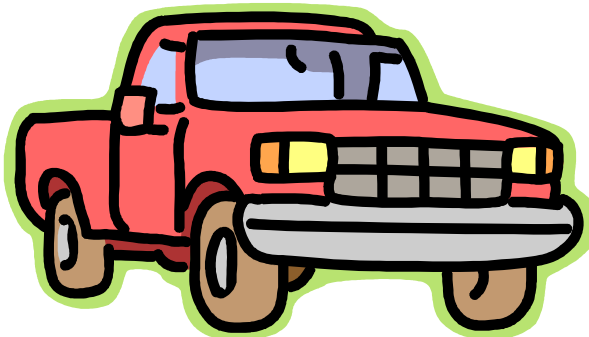
Today Uncle Tommy and Auntie Nani are going to Kaipo's soccer game. Uncle Tommy is looking forward to seeing Kaipo play because it is the final game of the season. Uncle has been rushing around all day getting the food and supplies ready for the cookout they will have for all of the players on Kaipo's team after the game.

"Nani, it's almost time to go to the game. Do you have the food ready yet?" shouted Uncle Tommy from the garage. "Almost ready!" replied Auntie Nani. "Did you check your blood sugar today?" asked Auntie.



"No, but I'll do it right now. I have my medicine in my pocket though. I know I have to take it before I eat," said Uncle.

Uncle Tommy checked his blood sugar and wrote the number in his logbook. After loading the food into the truck, he and Auntie Nani were ready to go.





Traffic was backed up getting into the parking area for the soccer field. Uncle was getting frustrated because they might be late and miss the beginning of the game. He was squeezing the steering wheel so tight his knuckles started turning white.

Auntie could tell he was getting angry. She reached over and put her hand on his shoulder and said, “Tommy, take a deep breath with me.” He looked at her as she took a big breath in through her nose, and slowing breathed out through her mouth. Uncle knew it didn’t help to get angry so he took a deep breath too.



Auntie Nani said, “We still have plenty of time before the game starts. Don’t worry. We don’t want to get stressed over something we can’t do anything about because it will only hurt us. It makes my blood pressure go up, and the doctor told us that stress can make blood sugar go up. Uncle took a few more deep breaths as they sat in the traffic.

The traffic finally started moving again and Uncle Tommy and Auntie Nani found a great parking place near the entrance to the field. They greeted the rest of the family and sat down with a cool drink to watch as Kaipo and his team mates ran onto the field. Kaipo saw Uncle and Auntie and waved.

It was going to be a g





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### Stress and diabetes



Being diagnosed with diabetes can be a major life stress for many people. It calls for many physical and mental changes. The person must learn about things that will help keep blood sugar near normal, such as eating healthy, physical activity, and medicines.

Lifestyle, work, and other events may have to be changed to better include these new activities. These changes can use up a lot of energy for both the person with diabetes and his or her family.

Even as you are trying to learn and do all of the things you need to do to manage diabetes, it is equally important to pay attention to your feelings.

Let's talk about stress first.

### What is stress?



Stress is the pressure and tension you feel when you are in a situation that's new, unpleasant, or threatening. You've probably felt some of the symptoms – sweaty palms, a pounding heart, headaches, fatigue, and muscle tightening. Good and bad events can cause stress.



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### How does stress affect me?



A lot of stress can increase the risk for high blood pressure and heart disease. Stress can also lead to depression, and lower our immunity, making it easier for a person to get an infection, such as yeast infections. Too much stress causes many people to overeat and stop being physically active.

Everyone reacts to stress differently. The effect that stress has on your health will depend on how you react to it. Your reaction depends on your:

- Outlook on life
- View of the stressful situation
- General well-being
- Support from other people
- Eating habits

Some stress is actually helpful because it can help you meet life's challenges. Without some stress, life would be boring. But too much stress is not a good thing. It can affect your mental and physical health and damage relationships with friends and family.

What are some things that cause stress for you?

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### Signs of Stress

The first step to getting back in balance is to be aware of the physical and mental signs of stress.

#### Physical Signs include:

- Faster breathing rate
- Headaches
- Sweating more than usual
- Backaches
- Faster heart rate
- Change in appetite
- Sleeping problems
- Tight muscles in neck or jaw

#### Mental Signs include:

- Fear
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anger
- Forgetting things more than usual
- Being more nervous than usual
- Feeling powerless, trapped or rejected

Once you are aware of what is causing you stress and how your mind and body react to stress, you will be better able to find healthy and satisfying ways to decrease it.

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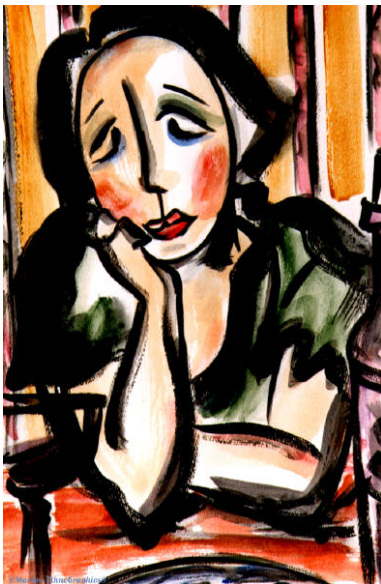


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### What is depression?



### How could depression affect me?



Sometimes stress can lead to depression. Depression is a common feeling. We have all felt ‘depressed’ about the death of a loved one, arguments with a loved one, or loss of job – sometimes we feel ‘down’ for no reason at all. But a depressive illness (“clinical” depression) is different from a depressed mood because it lasts much longer. Depression can become a problem if it is not treated.

Depression is not usually listed as a problem *caused* by diabetes, but it can be a common and dangerous problem if it is not treated.

Research has found that people with diabetes have more depression than people without diabetes. A depressed person may not have the energy or motivation to do the many things required to keep their blood sugar near normal. Stress, anxiety, and depression can also affect other conditions, such as headache, sex drive, and skin diseases.

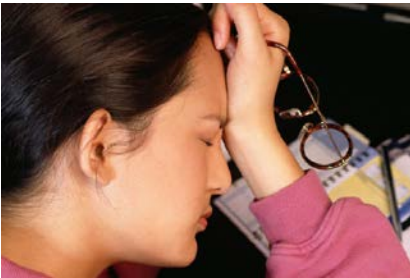
Many times, people with depression don’t realize that they are depressed. Some people may believe that it is their diabetes causing them to feel the way they do, instead of depression. For example, high blood sugar can cause a person to feel tired and weak, but so can depression.

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### Signs of depression



Our bodies and minds try to tell us things, but we don't always understand what they are saying. This is why it's important to know the signs and symptoms of depression. Some signs and symptoms a person with depression might have are:

- Low energy level
- Unusual weight loss or weight gain
- Feelings of guilt or feeling worthless
- Depressed mood for most of everyday for two weeks or longer
- Not as much pleasure in normal activities
- Difficulty sleeping or a need to sleep more than usual
- Having a hard time making decisions or concentrating

A person with depression may feel down, blue, weepy, useless, hopeless, helpless, and angry to name a few. We have all felt this way at sometime, but a person with depression will feel this way most of the time everyday for a few weeks or longer.



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### Am I depressed?

If you are depressed you may feel that you just can't be bothered to look for help. You may think, "What's the use". A person with depression may feel that they are not worth the effort. These feelings will make it hard to cope with things at home and at work.



Sometimes a family member or close friend can give you feedback about what they are seeing in you, or if you are acting differently.

### Talk to your provider



However, the most important starting point is an accurate diagnosis. A medical professional may be the best one to find out if what you are feeling is because of diabetes, or if it is depression. Be sure to talk with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about stress and depression.

There have been major advances in the treatment of depression. Be sure that your doctor is willing to take the time to talk with you and your diabetes team about your needs.

Since stress can sometimes lead to depression, let's talk about ways to lower stress.

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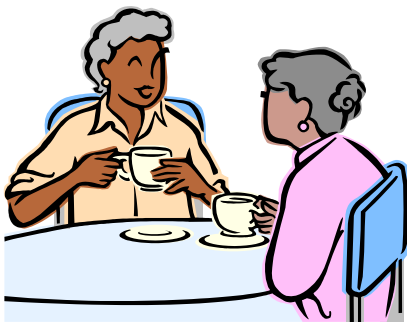
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### What can I do about stress?

There's good news about lowering stress. A recent study has shown that people with type 2 diabetes who did stress lowering activities could reduce their average blood sugar level (also called A1c).

Everyone handles stress in their own way. Some ways of coping can give you even more problems, though they may seem to help at the time. Eating too much, smoking, alcohol, drugs, or not taking care of a problem are not helpful ways to cope with stress.

There are ways to cope with stress that will help. These can cause you to feel in control, informed, and supported by other people. Here are some ways that may help you to deal with stress each day:



Talk to a friend

Join a support group

Look positively at change

Realize that it is OK to cry

Become more physically active

Don't try to do everything for everyone

Plan your day and set goals you can reach

Remind yourself of your accomplishments

Talk with others about things that make you feel stressed



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### More tips for reducing



It's important to learn healthy ways to cope with stress. Knowing how to cope with stress can help improve your blood glucose levels and your overall health. Here are a few more ways to cope:

- ❖ Look back on crisis as a learning opportunity. This will help you respond better to similar problems in the future.
- ❖ Be here now. Don't waste energy worrying about the past. Keep your mind positively set on the present and future.
- ❖ Try to do something you enjoy everyday. Pick an activity or hobby you've always wanted to try.
- ❖ Treat yourself properly with adequate sleep and nutritious food.
- ❖ Avoid stressful situations when possible. If you can't avoid the stressful situation, try to plan ahead how you will handle the stress.
- ❖ Accept what you cannot change and take action to change things you have control over.

### Many ways to cope with stress

It is helpful to have several ways to handle different kinds of stress. You can learn how to do things that are proven ways of coping. Changing the way we react to stressful events, deep breathing, guided imagery, muscle relaxation, physical activity, and healthy eating are ways we can reduce feelings of stress. We'll talk about each of these methods on the next few pages.

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### Change the way we react to stress



Whether you're aware of it or not, you probably talk to yourself silently every day. This mental conversation is called self-talk. Unfortunately, we often criticize ourselves during these mental conversations. These negative conversations can also add to our stress – it is our self-talk that helps determine how we will respond to any situation.

Every time you hear a negative message play in your mind, erase it and record a new positive one in its place! For example, instead of saying, "I'll never be able to exercise everyday," try saying, "I'll set a small goal at first and do my best to increase the number of days I exercise every week."

Let's practice by recording a new message for this thought: "I don't have time for physical activity."  
What could we say instead?

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One way to replace this thought would be to say, "I can find ways to include physical activity into my everyday activities by parking farther away and walking a little extra, and by taking the stairs instead of the elevator."

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### Breathing to reduce stress

The hardest part of using exercises to lower stress is making them a habit. Many times you may say to yourself, “I can’t stop what I’m doing now. There isn’t time.” But the truth is, once you start to feel stress in your neck, your shoulders, or your lower back, it’s time to take a breather. Your body is trying to tell you that it needs more oxygen.

Breathing exercises to lower stress can be done at home, in your car, at work, and anywhere you have a few minutes for yourself. Let’s try this deep breathing exercise now:

#### The Cleansing Breath

1. Get comfortable in your chair.
2. Exhale all of the air out of your body.
3. Inhale deeply until your lungs are full, then exhale through your nose slowly.
4. When your lungs are really full, pull your stomach muscles in and exhale through your nose.
5. Let your stomach muscles relax as the air comes back in through your nose.
6. Fill your lungs again and pull your stomach muscles in as you exhale quickly through your nose again.



At home, you can do this inhale-exhale pattern four to six times.

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### Guided Imagery

Since ancient times, storytellers have used words to paint pictures in the minds of their listeners. In guided imagery, words and music are used to take the listener on an inner journey to lower stress. Guided imagery can be used to lower tension, anxiety, and stress.

Let's try a sample of guided imagery. While sitting in your chair, close your eyes and listen to my voice:



- Imagine that you are a feather floating in the air.
- You float slowly back and forth.
- You become more and more relaxed as you drift down toward the soft ground.
- You finally glide to the ground, gently and softly touching down.
- As you're lying there, all stress has left your body, and you feel totally and completely relaxed.
- Slowly open your eyes now.

Here is another imagery exercise you can try when you go for a walk:

Imagine that your stress has turned to liquid. It is running out of your body through your feet. With each step, you leave a colored footprint on the ground that is your stress. As you continue to walk, the footprints become lighter in color. Finally there is no color at all. Any stress that you felt when you started walking has left your body.



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### Muscle relaxation

### How will it help me?



### Ask your doctor!

Many times when we are stressed, our muscles become tense. Muscle relaxation helps to relax your whole body from head to toe by first tensing, then relaxing different groups of muscles. After some practice, you can do muscle relaxation exercises in about 15 minutes.

Muscle relaxation is helpful because you may notice when your muscles are tense sooner. By using muscle relaxation sooner, you might prevent a headache or other body aches.

Usually the best time to practice muscle relaxation is either in the morning before breakfast or in the evening before dinner - never right after you eat! Try to practice in a quiet place and wear loose, comfortable clothing. Do the muscle relaxation movements one time a day at first. After some practice, you will be able to do all of the muscle groups in about 10 minutes. You will also be able to relax the muscles that tense up during the day.

If you have a history of serious injuries, muscle spasms, or back problems, you should first talk to your doctor to make sure that it is okay to do muscle relaxation exercises.

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### Here are some ways to practice muscle relaxation:

1. Sit up straight in a chair with both feet flat on the ground.
2. For the right hand and arm – make a fist and bend your right arm like you are showing someone your muscle (the muscle must feel very tight). Hold the tension about 5 seconds, then let go quickly and relax for about 30 seconds. Repeat one more time.
3. Left hand and arm - make a fist and bend your left arm like you are showing someone your muscle (the muscle must feel very tight). Hold the tension about 5 seconds, then let go quickly and relax for about 30 seconds. Repeat one more time.
4. Face – close your eyes, lift your eyebrows, clench your teeth, and pull back the corners of your mouth. Hold about 5 seconds, then let go quickly and relax for about 30 seconds. Repeat one more time.
5. Shoulders and neck – Pull your shoulders up and press your head back against them (do not bend your neck). Hold about 5 seconds, then let go quickly and relax for about 30 seconds. Repeat one more time.
6. Chest and back – Breathe in deeply and hold your breath while you press your shoulders together at the back at the same time. Hold 5 seconds and relax your shoulders and breathe normally. Repeat one more time.
7. Stomach – Pull in your stomach at the same time you breathe in and fill your lungs with air. Hold 5 seconds. Let the air out and relax your stomach. Repeat one more time.
8. Right leg – Pull up your right heel keeping the front part of your foot on the ground. Press your leg forward and down at the same time. Hold for 5 seconds and relax. Repeat one more time.
9. Left leg - Pull up your left heel keeping the front part of your foot on the ground. Press your leg forward and down at the same time. Hold for 5 seconds and relax. Repeat one more time.



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### Physical Activity, Stress and Blood Sugar



Physical activity can make you feel great right away. When people exercise, they do not worry because they are resting the nerve cells in the brain that worry. Physical activity gives those cells time to renew so that they can function normally the next time they are needed. Physical activity will also help get blood sugar closer to normal.

It's important to choose something that you like to do and will be able to do most days of the week for at least 30 minutes on each day. Walking is a great way to get started.

### Nutrition, Stress and Blood Sugar



People who are stressed sometimes eat foods high in sugar because they think it will help them feel less stressed. The sugar causes their blood glucose to go up and down wildly. This may make them feel worse than they did before they ate the sugary foods.

If you find yourself reaching for food high in sugar when you are stressed or bored – STOP! – and ask yourself, “Is there something else I could do, or eat, to reduce my stress?” Going for a walk or talking to a friend might be a better choice.

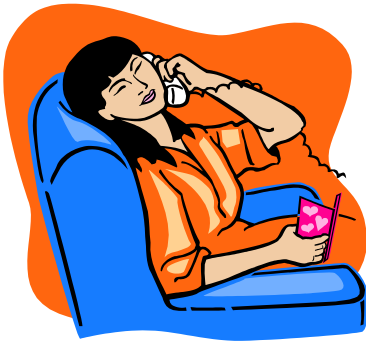
Eating more nutritious foods can help bring blood sugar closer to normal so that you are better able to cope with stressful events.



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#### Reflections on our journey

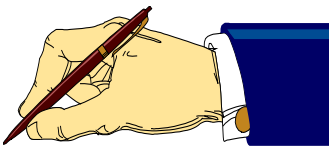


Be realistic in your pursuit of balance. Some days you'll be able to handle stress better than on other days. The goal is progress, not perfection!

Let's review some of the things that we talked about today:

- Stress and depression affect blood sugar,
- There are many ways to lower stress,
- Choose one of the stress lowering activities we learned today and practice it,
- Talk to a friend or family member if it helps,
- If you are feeling depressed, talk to your doctor to find out if it is diabetes or depression,
- Get treatment if you are depressed.

#### Set a Goal!



Take a few minutes now to write down one goal that you plan to work on this week to lower stress. Remember all that we talked about today.

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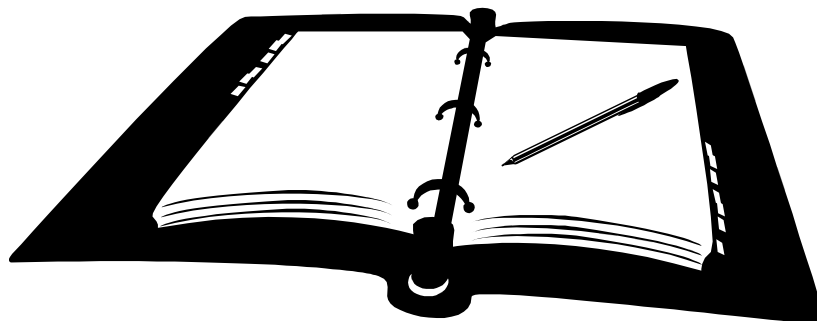
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**Thank you!**

Thank you for coming today and I look forward to seeing you at our next meeting when we will talk about how to prevent diabetes complications. Don't forget to bring your notebook.







**Meeting 9**  
**Review of Meetings 1-8**