

Introduction

Teenage years are a time of transition in all areas of the child's life. They have to negotiate many physical changes, cope with emotional up's and downs, try to identify their place in their social milieu, deal with their raging sexuality, stretch their minds to absorb huge amounts of information academically and make decisions about their spiritual beliefs. Given all this, teenagers do pretty well. If you imagine yourself as an adult trying to negotiating those same changes, you would probably not do as well as they do.

If we add to these transitional changes, the need to adjust to and manage a chronic condition like diabetes, then we have to be in awe of these teens. They cope remarkably! They make some mistakes, but given the big picture, they must be forgiven for these lapses.

If parents, teachers and health-care workers can keep in touch with how teens are feeling, even though they are trying very hard to cope without the support of others, it helps them feel supported through the bad times. Keeping in touch means: Listen to what they are saying without interrupting, without judging and without all your wisdom. Help the teen to reach their own wisdom in the situation they are dealing with, by asking questions to see if you understand their situation accurately. Try most of all to understand whatever the dilemma, frustration, anxiety is that the teen is facing. Remember they have to live in their world, which is different from the one we experience and then enter into the equation that they are dealing with their diabetes. You will be amazed at how good they are, given the right sounding board, in resolving their problems. Sometimes they may need some direction and alternative thinking.

Over the next few months, I will be discussing some emotions that adolescents with diabetes experience, and offer some ideas on how teens can be helped to cope with these feelings. If difficult emotions can be understood and dealt with in a suitable way, adolescents have a better chance of coming to terms with their diabetes and managing it effectively. These articles will endeavour to give some insight into some of the emotions that teens with diabetes encounter.

In alphabetical order, these will include:

Alienation	Complications	Encouragement	School
Anxiety	Depression	Fears (Diabetes specific)	Suicide
Anger	Defiance	Hospitalisation	Self Confidence
Apathy	Drugs, alcohol and smoking	Humiliation	Sexuality
Body Image	Defence Mechanisms	Inferiority	Stress
Burn out	Eating	Manipulation	
Communication skills	Eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia & obesity)	Rejection	

I would value your comments, stories, and ideas in response to these articles, and if there are other topics or emotions you would like to hear about or discuss, please contact me via the CDE [webmaster](#).

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