



## JUST DIAGNOSED WITH DIABETES? WHY AND HOW TO FIND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

WRITTEN BY: LALA JACKSON

**Editor's Note:** People who take insulin require consistently affordable and predictable sources of insulin at all times. If you or a loved one are struggling to afford or access insulin, you can build custom plans based on your personal circumstances through our tool, [GetInsulin.org](https://www.getinsulin.org).

If you just got diagnosed with diabetes, you may be overwhelmed, exhausted, or scared of what your future looks like.

First, take a deep breath and know that—while it may not feel like it right now—you will get through this, you will learn what you need to learn to stay healthy, and this will get more manageable over time.

Second, know that you're not overreacting and you're not alone. Managing diabetes is fairly new in the history of humanity. Just a little over one-hundred years ago, we hadn't yet discovered and isolated insulin. Just a little over forty years ago, we had no way of accurately checking our blood sugar at home. Everything you're currently learning to do to take care of your health is new, not only for yourself, but for humans as a whole. (Which makes you superhuman, it's just a fact, we don't make the rules.)

But since you're on a steep learning curve, it's a good idea to get support to help you manage. Remember—Beyonce? LeBron? Oprah? Nick (Jonas)? They have teams. You don't need to do this alone.

### WHY MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IS A GOOD IDEA FOR FOLKS WITH DIABETES

Modern life has created a bit of an odd story around people who are facing something hard—people who get diagnosed with a disease are strong and brave! People going through a hard season in their lives are resilient! That can feel supportive and motivating, but it can also feel isolating and scary.

What if you don't feel strong, or brave, or resilient? Here's the thing—you don't have to be. And it is important to truly process what's going on so you don't suppress the feelings now but have to deal with them later. In the words of the imitable Emma Thompson's character in *Love Actually*, "Listen, it was always going to be a shit time."

You're facing something different than most people have ever faced. Overnight, you have become your own doctor, nurse, dietitian, chef, teacher, coach, health insurance expert, economist, researcher and mathematician, just to name a few. Very few health conditions are like diabetes—the amount you learn, the amount you take on, the amount it costs and the potentially high stakes involved can feel very burdensome.

And whether you're manually checking your blood sugar or giving injections, or you've started on a continuous glucose monitor (CGM) or insulin pump, the sheer amount of data you're processing and making calculations from is a full-time job in itself.

But like with any inevitable change, two things are always true:

1. If you fight against the inevitable change, everything gets harder. You still have to change, but you're using energy toward fighting the change that could be put toward helping you feel better.
2. If you accept and work with the inevitable change, **it will still take time** to integrate all the newness. In these times, it's incredibly helpful to have an outside perspective who can objectively point out all the places you're doing far better than you think you are and who can objectively point out opportunities for improvement, with constructive ways to navigate them.

A mental health professional becomes your teammate in diabetes, helping to carry some of the burden so you're not

having to do it all alone—not because you’re weak, but because this is heavy.

A mental health provider can also keep an eye out for shifts you may not be aware are happening. **None of these are inevitable**, but if they do happen to you, being aware can arm you with the tools to deal with them before they interrupt your life and livelihood.

Did you know that fluctuating blood sugars can impact your mood? Or that having diabetes increases a person’s likelihood of experiencing anxiety or depression? Some people experience something called diabetes burnout. And because your relationship with your body just drastically changed, you may experience body dysmorphia, disordered eating, or a feeling of being unsafe in your own body.

None of these are things to tackle alone.

## HOW TO FIND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

The internet, the COVID-19 pandemic and a cultural shift acknowledging the importance of mental health care have made finding mental health support easier than it has ever been. There are even mental health providers who have expertise in diabetes management!

If you have health insurance, find your mental health or counseling appointment copay amount—the amount you will pay for each appointment. You can find this by calling the customer support number on the back of your insurance card, or logging into your insurance company’s website and looking at a document called your Explanation of Benefits (EOB). It will list in-network and out-of-network costs for mental health providers. In-network providers indicate healthcare providers that have a lower payment deal with your health insurance; mental health copayments for in-network providers typically range from \$0-\$75 per appointment, with a \$30 copay being fairly standard.

Whether you have insurance or not, to find a mental health provider, you can ask for a referral from your doctor or you can go through a variety of directories to find a mental healthcare provider you like, then double check with their office to see if they are covered by your insurance or what their self-pay rate is. Many mental health providers offer sliding scale payments, i.e. a lower payment for those with less resources to pay.

**Quick tip!** With the COVID-19 pandemic, many insurance companies bolstered their mental health support services; some offer free or very low cost virtual appointments with healthcare providers, where you can talk by video or phone. Check if this is an option for you!

- Your endocrinologist or primary care provider—whomever is helping you manage your diabetes—is a great resource to ask for a referral. They may have a mental health provider who works with their practice, which can make coordination of care much easier.
- The American Diabetes Association’s Mental Health Provider Directory lists therapists who have expertise in treating the needs of people with diabetes.
- ZocDoc is an easy directory where you can input your insurance information, your location and the kind of provider you are looking for, then check through other patient’s comments to see if a provider might be a good match for you.
- Online therapy options are abundant, and offer a variety of specializations and payment plans depending on your needs. Double check benefits, pricing and features for yourself before use, but generally highly-rated services include Amwell, BetterHelp, Faithful Counseling, Pride Counseling, ReGain, Talkspace and Teen Counseling.

If the above resources don’t work for you or if you feel like you’re having more trouble managing your mental health than is safe for you right now, don’t hesitate to reach out for help. Call or email The National Alliance on Mental Illness’ help line—you’ll be connected with appropriate local resources where you live. NAMI also provides support for family members and loved ones of anyone dealing with mental health issues.

## REMEMBER, YOU DON’T HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE

It is often said that the diabetes club is one you never want to join, but is such an amazing group of people once you find yourself in it. You can find a community of people living with type 1 or type 2 diabetes through the Beyond Type 1 and Beyond Type 2 community platforms. In-person community meetups are often posted on each community platform.

You can also find community online on social media by searching hashtags like #Type1diabetes or #Type2diabetes, or following Beyond Type 1 and Beyond Type 2 on social media.

You don’t need to do diabetes alone, and even if you tend to be independent, never underestimate the power of knowing someone who can listen and understand what you’re going through.



WRITTEN BY LALA JACKSON, POSTED 04/16/16, UPDATED 12/05/22

Lala is a communications strategist who has lived with type 1 diabetes since 1997. She worked across med-tech, business incubation, library tech and wellness before landing in the type 1 diabetes (T1D) non-profit space in 2016. A bit of a nomad, she grew up primarily bouncing between Hawaii and Washington state and graduated from the University of Miami. You can usually find her reading, preferably on a beach.

## READ MORE

**NEWLY DIAGNOSED** - Type 1 diabetes has a steep learning curve but you can do this. Here’s what you need to know—treatment methods, how to talk to your doctors...

**JUST DIAGNOSED WITH DIABETES: HERE'S WHO YOU NEED ON YOUR TEAM** [Read more](#)

**JUST DIAGNOSED WITH DIABETES? HERE'S WHO YOU NEED ON YOUR TEAM** - Just diagnosed with diabetes or feel like you need more support with an existing diagnosis? Remember - you don't have to do this alone.

**MENTAL HEALTH + DIABETES** - If you have type 1 diabetes, it is likely that you will experience any of the following: stress, diabetes distress, burnout, diabulimia and/or depression.



ABOUT  
DONATE  
PORTFOLIO  
TERMS OF USE  
CONTACT  
NEWSLETTER



400 CONCAR DR.  
SAN MATEO, CA 94402

### Explore the Community

BEYOND TYPE 1

BEYOND TYPE 1 EN ESPAÑOL

BEYOND TYPE 1 AUF DEUTSCH

BEYOND TYPE 1 IN ITALIANO

BEYOND TYPE 1 EN FRANÇAIS

BEYOND TYPE 1 IN HET  
NEDERLANDS

BEYOND TYPE 1 PÅ SVENSKA

BEYOND TYPE 1 EM PORTUGUÊS

BEYOND TYPE 1 بالعربية

BEYOND TYPE 2

BEYOND TYPE 2 EN ESPAÑOL

BEYOND TYPE 2 AUF DEUTSCH

BEYOND TYPE 2 en Français

BEYOND TYPE 2 in Italiano

BEYOND TYPE 2 Canada (French)

BEYOND TYPE 2 Canada (English)