

[editor's forecast]

For many years, health care professionals have struggled to determine how they might inspire their patients with diabetes to take better care of themselves. But they have also come to appreciate just how difficult good self-care, day after day after day, can be.

People can easily get overwhelmed trying to balance the many demands of diabetes, including monitoring, medication, diet, and exercise. Although some are able to manage their diabetes quite successfully, many are not. In fact, we know there are large numbers of people who are almost completely disengaged from their own diabetes care. In response to the demands of diabetes, they have all but given up.

In addition to the many tasks I've mentioned, people with diabetes also face many obstacles to good care: Health care access is often limited, diabetes education may be unavailable, and support from loved ones may be nonexistent. Add in the stresses of daily life and it's no surprise that many people react by getting angry, depressed, frustrated, or discouraged about having diabetes.

But despite all that we have learned, health care providers are still often at a loss to help.

We have mistakenly ignored an enormous source of expertise: you! In particular, I mean those of you who were disen-

gaged from your diabetes for at least a year or more and then, in an instant, decided to take control of your diabetes. *Something* happened that dramatically changed your perspective, and you suddenly realized that diabetes care was worth your effort. In other words, something "clicked."

But *what* happened? If we could find out what "clicked" for many of you, perhaps we'd be able to help others navigate their way back to good care.

I have searched for people like you over the years. Whenever I find one, I always ask the same question: "So, what clicked for you?" For some, the "click" was the onset of complications. "Diabetes wasn't real for me until my doctor told me I had proliferative retinopathy and that my vision was endangered," one fellow told me. "Then I knew it was time to get my diabetes act together. If only I had realized this years earlier!"

For others, the click had to do with the magic of social support:

■ A woman told me that her feelings about diabetes changed after she began to see a new doctor. "I remember that he called me five days after our first appointment to see how things were going with my new medications," she said. "My doctor called *me!* Well, if he was that concerned, then I guess my diabetes was impor-

tant enough for me to pay attention to as well."

■ A young man told me that everything changed for him the day he discovered that his wife was pregnant with their first child. "After years of ignoring diabetes, I suddenly *wanted* to come to grips with it."

■ Many people told me about a variety of small, kind gestures from a spouse, parent, sibling, or friend that led to a dramatic transformation.

As a diabetes psychologist, my goal is to help people get back on track with their diabetes. I suspect that love and caring are critical, powerful elements for inspiring people to gain better control over their diabetes. But I also believe that there must be other secret ingredients, or "clicks," as well.

So if you were ever off track with your diabetes, what "click" helped you to get back on track? My colleagues and I would love to hear your story. Please contact us via e-mail at BehavioralDM@aol.com. We hope to publish a summary of your responses later this year. With your help, maybe we can find some words of wisdom that will "click" for others as well.



So What Clicked For You?

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