

MY HEALTH IS MY TREASURE

EMBRACING LIFE WITH DIABETES



Migrant Clinicians Network (MCN) would like to thank Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. for providing financial support for this publication. The opinions expressed in this document are those of MCN and do not necessarily reflect the views of Methodist Healthcare Ministries.

Script and content: Pamela Secada-Sayles, Jessica Calderón, Alma Galván, and Salvador Sáenz.

Illustration and artwork: Salvador Sáenz and Uriel E. Sáenz. We appreciate the reviews, suggestions and comments from Martha Alvarado, Javier Mejía, Enid Ludovic, Mercedes Sánchez, Joshi Zavala, Pedro and Laura Calderón, Joseline Islas-Castro, Mirtala Barrón, Marizza Patiño, Laszlo Madaras, Amy Liebman, Elizabeth Gonzalez Ibarra, and Claire Seda.



© MCN 2025

Everyone is happy that it's the end of the work week, except Goyo....

You look so sad, Goyo! You look like you're not getting paid! Did something happen with your paycheck?

No, Chela! Ah, I don't know what's wrong with me. There are so many things happening that I don't even know what I am feeling.

Well, what's wrong, Goyo? Is it your diabetes? You need to be very careful with that.

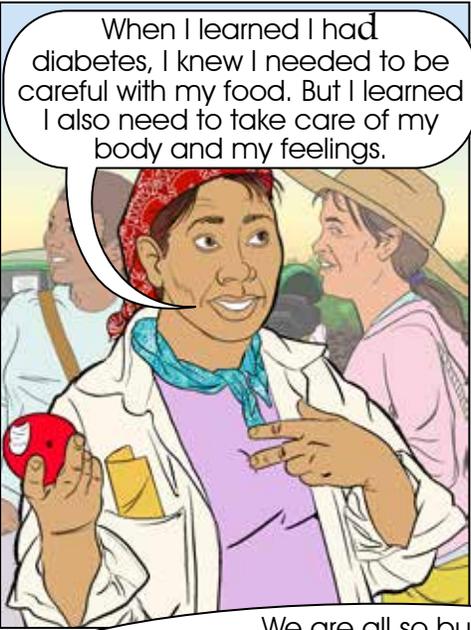
I am careful, but no matter how much I try, I'm still struggling to control my sugar. I am under so much pressure, that I feel like I'm getting sick from being so nervous!

It sounds to me like you're STRESSED, Goyo. Diabetes changes many things, but it's not the end of the world. We just need to do things a little differently to live well.

I suppose... I guess I'm starting to get used to not feeling well. I know it's not okay, but that's how I feel.



You're right, Goyo. What we feel has a lot to do with diabetes. That's why we should take care of ourselves.



When I learned I had diabetes, I knew I needed to be careful with my food. But I learned I also need to take care of my body and my feelings.



I'm all alone out here. I miss my family and everything feels so difficult.



I don't think I could have done it alone either. Starting over in a new place is hard.

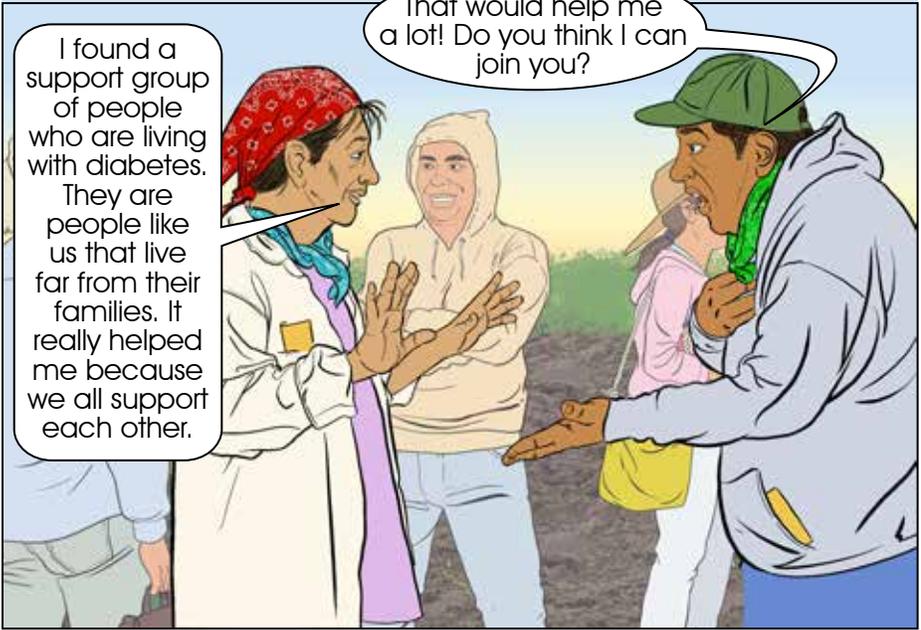


We are all so busy! Sometimes, we forget that there are support and resources in our community. We just need to pause and look for the help. We don't have to do it alone.

¿DIABETES?
Reunion/plática sin costo
Centro Comunitario
Te esperamos para que recibas consejos y recomendaciones muy útiles si tienes esta condición.
Sábado 6:30 de la tarde

VACUNACIÓN
Ven al Centro Comunitario
Main Street 2180
Viernes, sábado y domingo de 9 am a 6 pm

Ventanilla de Salud
Oportunidad para recibir atención gratuita de 12 am a 6 pm



I found a support group of people who are living with diabetes. They are people like us that live far from their families. It really helped me because we all support each other.

That would help me a lot! Do you think I can join you?



Of course! You can come whenever you'd like.

That afternoon, at the local community health center, Goyo was surprised to see so many people living with diabetes, just like him.



Hi Chela!
Well, I decided to join you...

I'm glad you came, Goyo! The meeting is about to start.



Good afternoon!
I'm Dr. Rodríguez. Today we're going to talk about how to care for our physical and mental health while living with diabetes. It's not easy, but we don't have to do it alone.



Together we can find ways to feel better!

Welcome, Goyo. Do you want to share your experience with us?



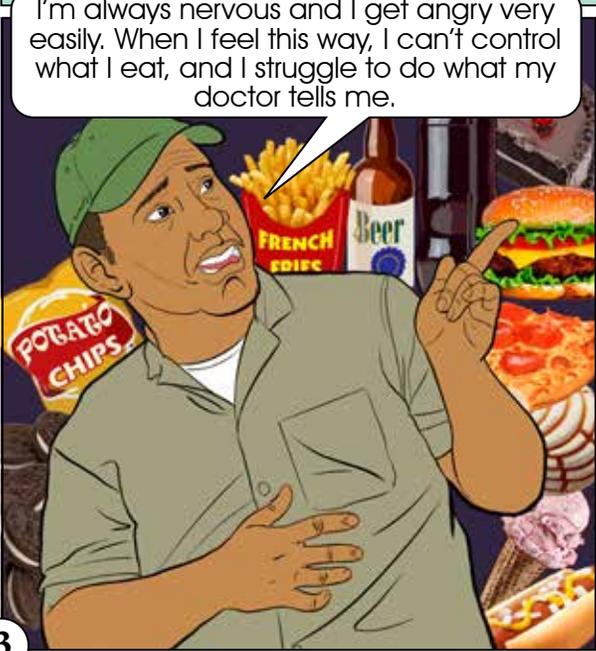
Nervous, Goyo introduces himself.

Good afternoon. My name is Gregorio, and my friends call me Goyo. I'm here because I have diabetes and I need some help.

Welcome, Goyo!

I can totally relate!

Talking about how we feel with family or in a support group, like this one, can help us a lot.



I'm always nervous and I get angry very easily. When I feel this way, I can't control what I eat, and I struggle to do what my doctor tells me.

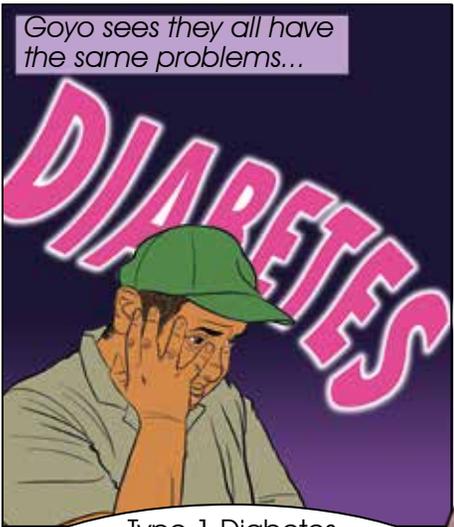


Sometimes I can follow the plan... but other times, I go back to my old habits. I don't feel like I am getting anywhere. I feel sad and always worried.

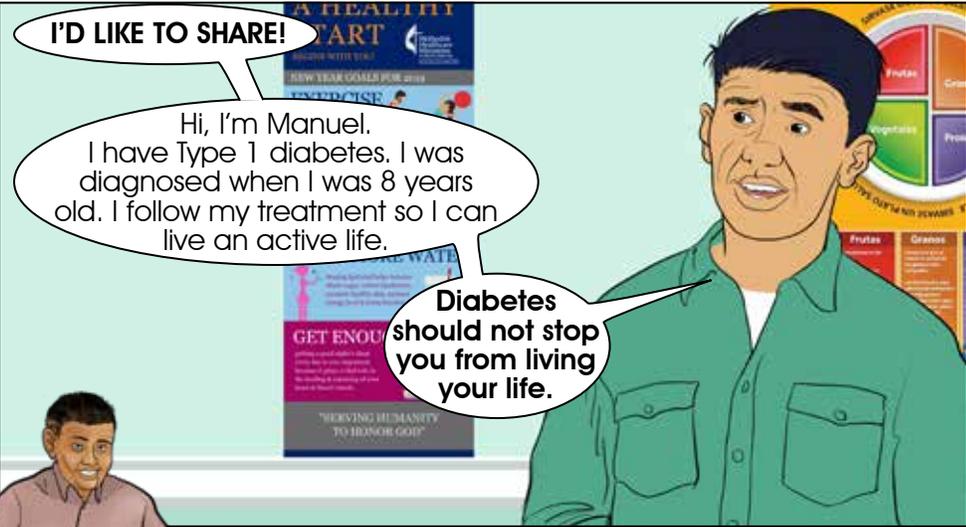
They told me that is called depression!

Yes, a lot of us have felt that way!

Diabetes increases the risk of depression or anxiety. That is why it's important to talk about it and look for help.



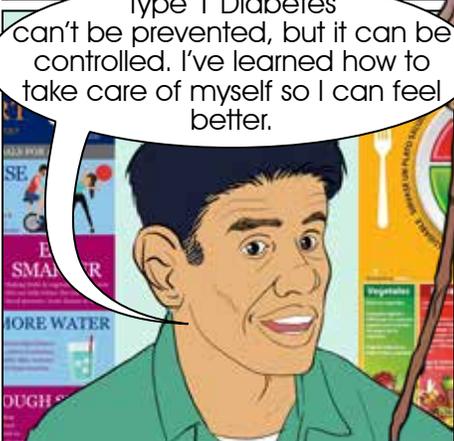
Goyo sees they all have the same problems...



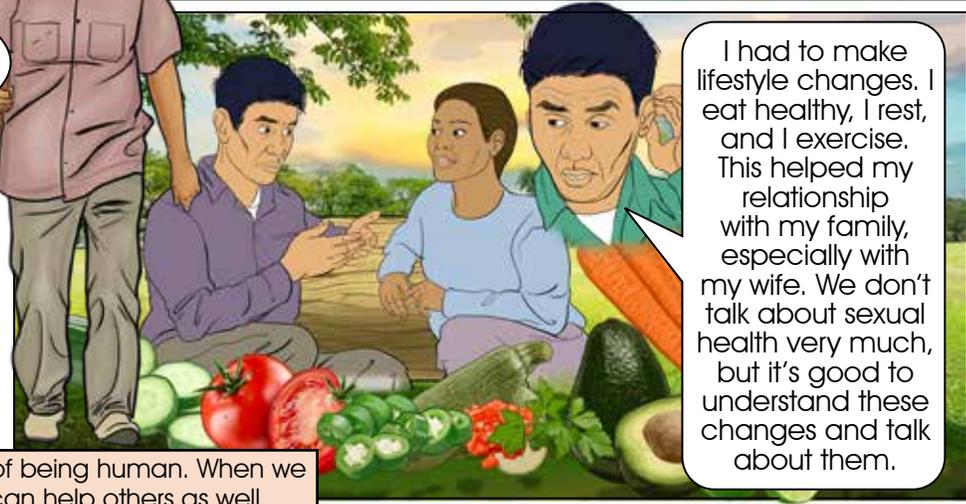
I'D LIKE TO SHARE!

Hi, I'm Manuel. I have Type 1 diabetes. I was diagnosed when I was 8 years old. I follow my treatment so I can live an active life.

Diabetes should not stop you from living your life.



Type 1 Diabetes can't be prevented, but it can be controlled. I've learned how to take care of myself so I can feel better.

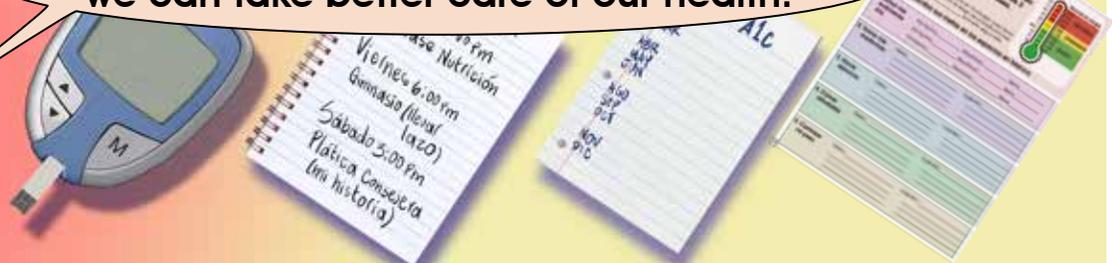


I had to make lifestyle changes. I eat healthy, I rest, and I exercise. This helped my relationship with my family, especially with my wife. We don't talk about sexual health very much, but it's good to understand these changes and talk about them.

Adapting and moving forward is part of being human. When we do, we don't just help ourselves -- we can help others as well.



When we pay attention to how we feel, we can take better care of our health.



Thank you, Manuel. Would anyone else like to share?



I would!



Good afternoon, I'm José and I'd like to share something I learned at a talk not long ago.

During that talk, I remembered that I was often alone as a child. My parents worked hard to provide for our family, so I spent a lot of time by myself. I remember feeling sad because I didn't understand why they couldn't spend more time with me.



Our neighbor, Doña Rosita, took care of me. She invited me to eat and looked after me like family. I felt cared for.



Yes, José, our childhood experiences can influence our adult lives. Experiences like fighting at home, feeling scared, or being alone.

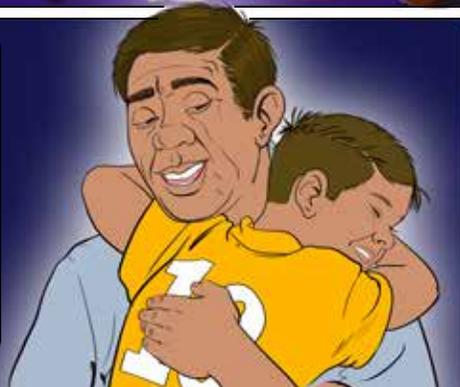
Those experiences are called Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, and they can cause toxic stress. Understanding those experiences helps us to feel better. It can help us take care of ourselves. It also helps to remember the adults who cared for us.



When I learned about ACEs, it all made sense! I didn't know I was hurting, that I was holding pain. I ate or drank to feel better.



Now, I know where it comes from. I try to take care of myself so that I don't repeat it with my kids. I teach them good habits, so they grow up healthy and confident.



What you shared is important, José. You are not alone.

We'll continue our talk next week. And don't forget to take a copy of the comic book home to share with your family!



After the meeting, Goyo doesn't feel so alone and is motivated to follow the examples of the group.

That was a great talk, Chela. I feel much better. I needed something like that!

I knew you were going to like it! What you learn will really help.

In our communities, there is strength, support, and ways to move forward. We just have to look for them.

There are ways to feel better and take care of our health. We can calm the body and mind when life feels stressful. Sometimes, small changes can make a big difference. When we take care of ourselves, our lives get better.

These are some things that help me take care of myself.

Sleep is very good for you, and it's free.

When I don't sleep, I feel tired, I have a headache, and I'm in a bad mood all day.

I feel the same way... I have to get up to go to the bathroom all the time. I don't know what to do!

To get better rest:

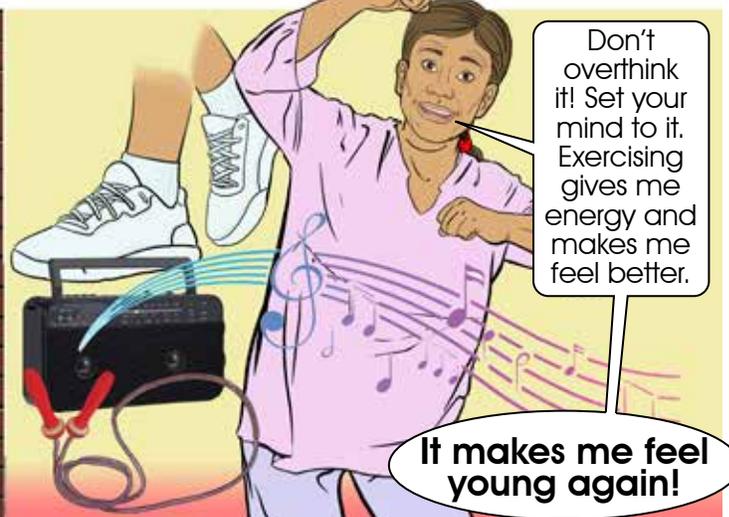
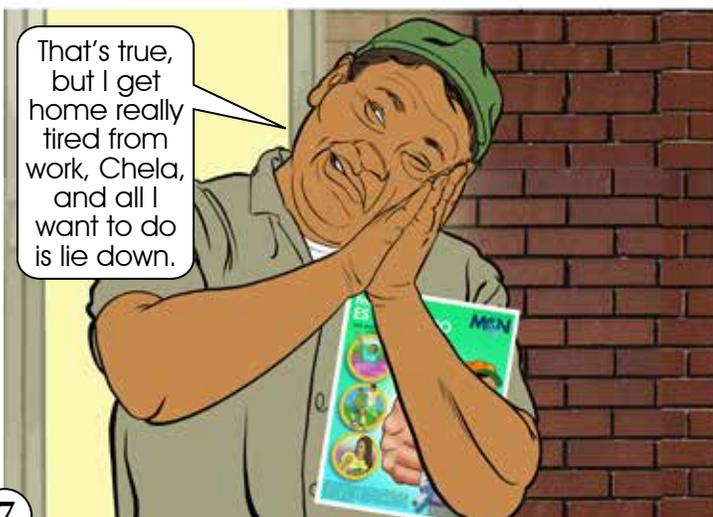
- Keep your blood sugar in control.
- Try to get 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.
- Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day.
- Relax before bed: read, listen to relaxing music, take deep breaths.
- Turn off your cell phone and TV an hour before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol and only drink coffee in the mornings.
- Exercise during the day.



Positive relationships help us feel better.

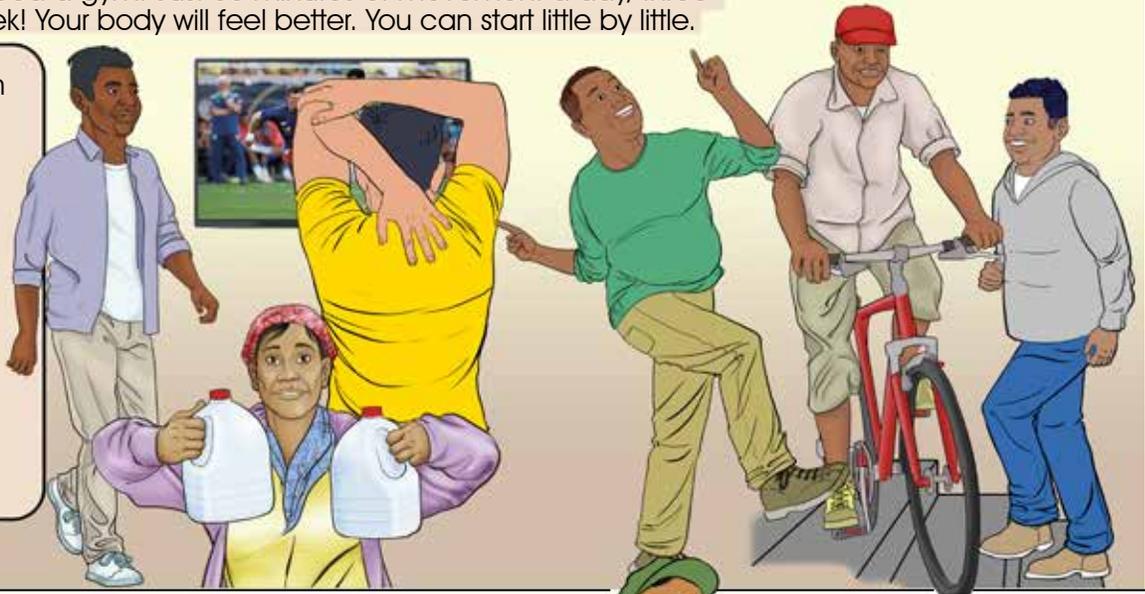


Moving your body gives you energy.



You don't need a gym. Just 30 minutes of movement a day, three times a week! Your body will feel better. You can start little by little.

- Walk when you can.
- Go up and down the stairs.
- Stretch often, even at work.
- Dance to your favorite song.
- Use 2 bottles of water as weights for 10 minutes.
- Ride your bike.



Enjoying nature helps us feel better.

Fresh air, plants, and sunshine – there's no better medicine!

When I go to the park, even if it's just for a little while, I come back in a much better mood.

It feels so good to go for a walk and see the trees. I'm always cooped up inside!



Here are some ideas:

- Visit a park or garden.
- Have a picnic with family or friends.
- Play outdoors.
- Observe the trees, listen to the birds, smell the flowers... use all your senses.

Nature helps us relax, manage our emotions, and live healthier lives. There's no need to go far or spend money.



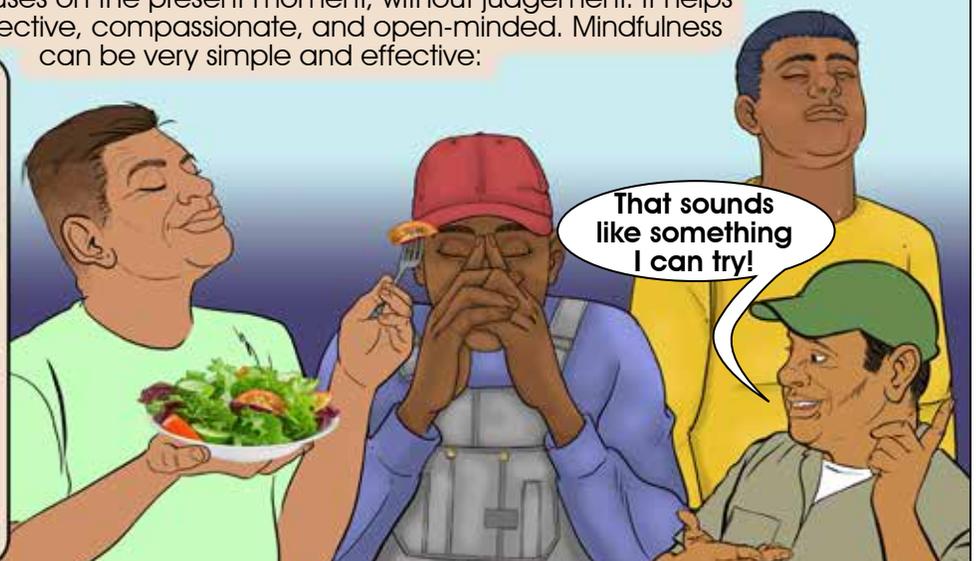
Practicing mindfulness helps us enjoy the moment.



Mindfulness focuses on the present moment, without judgement. It helps us be more reflective, compassionate, and open-minded. Mindfulness can be very simple and effective:

- Take a few minutes to think about what you enjoy.
- Breathe deeply and slowly.

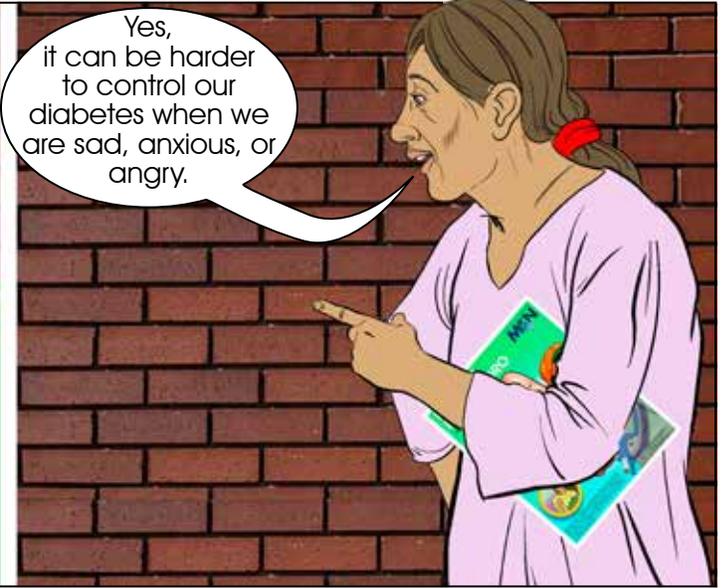
- Pay attention to what you are doing.
- Enjoy what you see and hear.
- Think about the good things you have.
- Eat slowly and savor your food.
- Feel the ground, the wind, and the sun when you are outdoors.



Caring for our mental and emotional health helps us take care of our bodies.



Sometimes I feel like I have no energy or motivation to do anything. Does that have anything to do with diabetes?



Yes, it can be harder to control our diabetes when we are sad, anxious, or angry.



I've felt that way...like everything feels heavy. Sometimes I don't even want to leave my bed.



A lot of times we ignore what we are feeling. And we're afraid people will call us crazy or lazy.



We all go through difficult moments. It's important to recognize when we need to ask for help. Talking with someone you trust, like a doctor or a counselor, can be very helpful. Remember that:

- Mental health is just as important as physical health.
- We all need someone who will listen to us.
- It's okay to see a psychologist or counselor.





Hey, Chelita. I want to talk with Manuel about how diabetes can affect our relationships with our partners.

Yes!
And how our sex lives can change. **We should be able to talk about it without shame!**



Here are some ideas to help with these changes:

- Try to have sincere and honest conversations with your partner.
- Control your diabetes to improve your sexual response.
- Talk with your doctor.



Living with diabetes can be challenging, but if we learn to take care of our bodies and understand what is good for us, we can make changes so that we can enjoy life.



And this is just the beginning, Goyo! Let's keep learning and embracing life with diabetes.

Accepting is not giving up -- it's choosing a better life.