

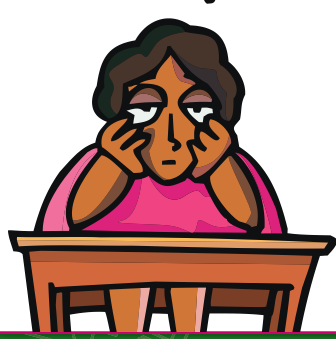
Overcoming Healthy Lifestyle Burnout

What is healthy lifestyle burnout?

It's when you get overwhelmed by working so hard to be healthy. You've had it with trying to lose weight. You've had it with diabetes. You can't take it any more.

Having diabetes can cause feelings that make it hard to keep trying. So can being overweight. You may be angry about it. You may be angry that you have to work so hard. You may worry that you aren't doing a good enough job of taking care of yourself. You get discouraged. It seems like your weight or diabetes controls your life.

You may feel defeated. Or, you may be in denial. You tell yourself that everything's



fine. You don't have to worry about diabetes. You don't have to worry about your weight. *I'll deal with that later, you tell yourself.*

If any of this sounds like you, you may be burned-out. You aren't alone. Many—perhaps most—people with diabetes have this experience at one time or other. Some get stuck in it for years, and their health suffers for it.

Causes of burnout

Several factors can bring you down:

- ▶ The demands of living with diabetes on a daily basis
- ▶ Your environment—all the other demands on your time and energy
- ▶ Support you don't get from others
- ▶ Your personal attitudes and feelings

KEY GOALS

Continuing to meet your 4 key goals will help you defeat burnout:

- ⊙ Limit RED foods
- ⊙ Increase GREEN activity
- ⊙ Hold Family Meetings
- ⊙ Keep Track of Weight

The demands of living with a chronic disease

Living with diabetes is hard. Sometimes you do all the right things to take care of yourself, but it just doesn't work. Your blood sugar levels just won't stay in your target range. You can't seem to control your weight. Who wouldn't feel discouraged? Who wouldn't

Stress can lead to more than burnout. It can also lead to higher blood sugars—or levels that are hard to control.

Here's what you'll learn about in this module:

- ▶ Causes of healthy lifestyle burnout
- ▶ Recognizing burnout
- ▶ Defeating burnout

wonder whether it's possible to have a normal life?

The truth is that you can't take away diabetes. You can't pretend it away. What you can do is try to change your attitude. You can keep trying to meet the challenge. Of course, you have to set realistic goals for yourself. It will take time and hard work.

Your environment

Your environment matters. You have a lot of demands on your time and energy. Living in a home with too many RED foods or not enough structure can make it hard to take care of yourself. So can stress at school or in your social life. An unpredictable schedule or too many demands on your time can also make it hard to keep trying.

Your support network

Making healthy lifestyle changes is tough. Dealing with diabetes is tough. Losing weight takes time and effort. It's hard work even if you get the support you need. But it's

much harder if you don't get support from family and friends.

Your personal attitudes and feelings

Negative thinking about yourself can lead to burnout. So can fear of high blood sugar levels. So can frustration about your weight. Or uncertainty about how well you are taking care of yourself. Then there's depression. Diabetes can increase your chances of having depression. Depression makes taking care of your diabetes even more difficult.

Diabetes is a chronic, lifelong illness. It doesn't go away. You know that. You can do your best to keep it in check. But you can never cure it. It's not like a broken arm that will heal. It's not like some cancers that can be cured or cut out of your body. Diabetes is with you for the rest of your life. If you don't control it, diabetes will take over. Facing up to this is enough to get anyone down.

There is another way diabetes can cause depression. When your blood sugar levels remain high, you can feel *physically tired and have no energy*. This fatigue and lack of energy makes it harder to take care of yourself. Your depression and diabetes interact with one another. They reinforce one another. They make one another more powerful. Everything spirals downward. Unmanaged

Burnout and depression interact with one another and make it harder to take care of yourself.

diabetes makes you depressed. Depression makes it hard to manage your diabetes. This is burnout at its worst.



Be honest with yourself. Identifying and facing up to the causes of burnout will help you defeat it.

Start by being honest with yourself about how well you are taking care of yourself. You may not be honest with your parent, your diabetes team, or even yourself. But you can't fool your body. If you aren't doing what you need to on a daily basis to manage your diabetes, or your eating and physical activity behaviors, you are heading for burnout. The first step to getting back on track is to be honest about your own behavior.



What should I do if I am burned-out? I can't just take a pill to cure myself.

No, you can't take a pill. There are no quick fixes. It's a process with 5 stages. How long it takes depends mostly on you.

Diabetes can increase your chances of having depression. Depression makes taking care of your diabetes even more difficult.

It's important to keep the 5 steps in mind. Don't skip a step. For example, you can't start using problem-solving skills if you haven't taken the time to get motivated and to think positively. You've got to take it step-by-step.

► **Motivate yourself** to act with determination. Even if you are depressed, you can't let yourself stay down. You have to make yourself do what you can to pull out of your slump. Refocus on how important it is to get back on track. You will

Alicia was in a slump. She wasn't checking her blood sugar levels regularly. She wasn't watching what she ate as carefully as she once had. And she was angry. She was angry that she had diabetes. It wasn't fair, and she didn't think she could keep doing it all her life. "What's the use?" she thought. "I may as well give up now and enjoy myself while I can. It will never work anyway."

She was also angry with herself for feeling this way. It was a bad cycle.

Alicia's mother noticed that Alicia was gaining weight. Alicia was not as careful about what she ate as she had been. When she asked Alicia about it, Alicia just said, "I'm okay. Just leave me alone. Nothing's wrong."

Instead of asking about how Alicia was taking care of her diabetes, her mother asked *how Alicia was feeling* about her diabetes and her weight. Being *asked about her feelings* helped Alicia open up. She told her mother how angry and discouraged she was. "Every day I have to check my blood sugar levels, watch what I eat, and get physical activity. I'm dealing with my weight and diabetes all the time. It's too hard!" she said.

"It sounds like you are very angry and discouraged about having to deal with your diabetes all the time," her mother said.

"I am," Alicia agreed. "I feel trapped. If I'm never going to succeed, why should I keep trying so hard?"

"You're so discouraged that you're about ready to quit," she said.

"I already have," Alicia said. "There are a lot of times I just don't try at all."

Alicia's mother said that Alicia could be going through burnout. "Lots of people with diabetes fall into it," she said, "especially people like you who try so hard and really want to do it right."

She told her about burnout. "But we can turn it around. I'll do all I can to help. First, we need to figure out what's causing your burnout. Then use our problem-solving skills to figure out ways to get you going again. We'll talk to your PAL next week and get his advice. We'll talk to your doctor and your diabetes educator. They'll help too."

Alicia felt a little better now that her mother knew what was going on. She knew that she really didn't want to quit, and making a plan might help her get back on track. "Thanks, Mom," she said. "I really do feel a little better already."

Reasons for fighting back

Ask yourself:

- How could being burned-out affect...
 - my weight?
 - my blood sugar levels?
 - my mood?
 - my relationships?
- How could being burned-out affect my overall health in...
 - 6 months?
 - a year?
 - my lifetime?

What would you like to say to Alicia?

If you were in Alicia's situation, what would you try to do?

have more energy, be in a better mood, sleep better, and be able to do more of the things you enjoy. What other positive benefits can you add to the list?

- ▶ **Think positively.** Burnout may have caused negative thinking. Use the skills you have learned to pin down your negative thoughts. Challenge them. Turn them into positive thoughts.

Try not to be too hard on yourself. Work with your family and your PAL. Talk to your diabetes health care team. Ask for their help. Listen to their advice.

- ▶ **Identify the causes of your burnout.** Is your attitude about having diabetes getting in the way? Is your attitude about your weight? Is it the way you are reacting to your environment? Are you getting the support you need? Which barriers are most powerful? Which can you change most easily? Which ones will take longer? Set realistic goals.

List your priorities. What will you tackle 1st? 2nd? 3rd?

- ▶ **Use your problem-solving skills** to deal with barriers. You know the 6 steps in problem-solving. Now's the time to use them to defeat burnout. Identify the barrier. Brainstorm for resources and possible solutions. Compare solutions. Make a plan. Put it in action. Then evaluate the plan.

- ▶ **Be realistic when you put your plan to work.** Don't expect everything to be perfect right away. Defeating diabetes and losing weight take time and effort.

What can help me identify and deal with burnout?



- ▶ Ask yourself if you have some of the feelings and behaviors you read about in this module. Write them down. Ask your parents if they see any other signs of burnout.

Skills and Goals to defeat healthy lifestyle burnout

- ▶ Use the Help Sheet to see if I might be suffering from burnout.
- ▶ Identify causes of my burnout.
- ▶ Plan ways to use my resources to defeat burnout.

- ▶ Put yourself through the 5 stages of recovery:
 - ▶ Motivate yourself to act with determination.
 - ▶ Think positively.
 - ▶ Identify the causes of your burnout.
 - ▶ Use your problem-solving skills to make a plan.
 - ▶ Be realistic when you put your plan to work.
- ▶ Use all your resources. Ask your parents to have family meetings every day until things turn around. Tell them you need all the advice and support they can give. Tell your PAL you want to make defeating burnout a special goal.

Notes to myself—some things I want to keep in mind this week:

Overcoming Healthy Lifestyle Burnout

Are You Suffering From Healthy Lifestyle Burnout?

Use this chart to figure it out. Look at each item and mark how often you feel that way. Be really honest with yourself. Then talk to your parents and your PAL about what they think. You may not be suffering from burnout. But if you are, they can help you make plans to overcome it.

When I think about it, I...	3/Day	1/Day	1/Week	1/Month	Never
Don't believe I can manage diabetes					
Don't care about losing weight					
Don't check my blood sugar regularly					
Don't feel supported by my family					
Don't feel supported by my friends					
Don't tell my parents how I really feel					
Don't think my friends understand how hard it is					
Don't watch my eating habits					
Fear a lifetime of diabetes					
Feel alone with my diabetes					
Feel angry about my diabetes					
Feel depressed about my diabetes					
Feel like giving up when I make a mistake					
Feel that diabetes controls my life					
Feel that my life is out of control					
Find it hard to ask for support					
Find it hard to do what's best for me					
Lack the energy to try					
Skip my physical activity					
Tell myself diabetes doesn't matter now					

Keep this chart handy even if you are not suffering from burnout. Use it the next time you notice that you start to feel like or behave in some of these ways. Sometimes burnout can sneak up on you before you know it.

Identify the Causes of Your Burnout

In the chart below, list the causes of your burnout in 4 key areas.

MY ENVIRONMENT–	<i>Too many RED foods in the house.</i>
LIVING WITH DIABETES–	
MY ENVIRONMENT–	
MY SUPPORT NETWORK–	
MY ATTITUDES AND FEELINGS–	

Identify Your Strengths and Resources

Sometimes it's easy to lose sight of your strengths and resources when you are really discouraged. Take the time now to identify your strengths and resources. Be sure to list all of them, even if you are not using them right now.

MY ENVIRONMENT–	<i>I can problem-solve about having RED foods in the house with my family and my PAL. I can use the FRG to help find new YELLOW and GREEN foods to eat. I can help make grocery lists that include my favorite GREEN foods. I also know how to avoid high-risk situations.</i>
LIVING WITH DIABETES–	
MY ENVIRONMENT–	
MY SUPPORT NETWORK–	
MY ATTITUDES AND FEELINGS–	

Overcoming Healthy Lifestyle Burnout

What Can Help You Defeat Burnout?

Now list the causes of burnout you plan to deal with first. These should be the ones that will make the most difference right away. Pick 1 or 2 of your strengths and resources to help defeat each cause of burnout. Then, write down your plan.

CAUSE OF BURNOUT:

MY STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES:

MY PLAN:

CAUSE OF BURNOUT:

MY STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES:

MY PLAN:

CAUSE OF BURNOUT:

MY STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES:

MY PLAN:

Pin Down Your Reasons For Fighting Back

Think about what will happen if you give in to burnout. Think about what will happen if you don't fight back. Write it down. How could being burned-out affect you:

Behaviors?

Blood-sugar levels?

Energy level?

Moods?

Relationships?

Weight?

How could being burned-out now affect your overall health in:

6 months?

1 year?

Your lifetime?

How will you feel if you let this happen to you?

What are your most important reasons for fighting back?

What do you want to do about this?

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You may feel defeated. Or, you may be in denial. You tell yourself that everything's fine. You don't have to worry about diabetes. You don't have to worry about your weight. *I'll deal with that later*, you tell yourself.

All these feelings can be part of burnout.



Causes of burnout

- ▶ The demands of living with the disease itself on a daily basis
- ▶ Your environment—all the other demands on your time and energy
- ▶ Support you don't get from others
- ▶ Your personal attitudes and feelings

What to do about burnout

- ▶ *Motivate yourself* to get back on track. Remind yourself of all the reasons you have to keep trying. Get support from your parents, your PAL, and your diabetes health care team.
- ▶ *Think positively*. Turn your negative thoughts around.
- ▶ *Identify the causes of your burnout*.
- ▶ *Use your problem-solving skills* to deal with barriers.
- ▶ *Be realistic when you put your plan to work*. It will take time and effort.