

# Overcoming Healthy Lifestyle Burnout

**PARENTS ASK:**

## 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 anymore.

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

WHY KEEP TRYING SO HARD?



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 or your child, you may be burned-out. Many people with diabetes feel like this. So do people who work hard to lose weight and be healthy. Some get stuck in it for years, and their health suffers for it.

Children can get burned-out. So can parents. Keep this in mind as you read this module. What's true for your child may also apply to you.

**PARENTS ASK:**

## What causes burnout?

Several factors can cause burnout:

### The demands of living with a chronic disease

Living with diabetes is hard. Sometimes your child does all the right things to take care of herself. But it just doesn't

**KEY GOALS**

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

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

work. Her blood sugar levels just won't stay in the target range. She can't seem to control her weight. Who wouldn't feel discouraged? Who wouldn't wonder whether it's possible to have a normal life?

## Causes of Burnout

- ▶ The demands of living with diabetes on a daily basis
- ▶ Your environment—all the other demands on your time and energy
- ▶ Lack of support
- ▶ Personal attitudes and feelings

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

- ▶ Causes of healthy lifestyle burnout
- ▶ Recognizing burnout in yourself or your child
- ▶ Defeating burnout



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

The truth is that you can't take away diabetes. Your daughter can't pretend it away. What she can do is try to have a positive outlook. She can keep trying to meet the challenge. Of course, she has to set realistic goals for herself. It will take time and hard work.

#### Your child's environment

Your child's environment matters. She has a lot of demands on her time and energy. Living in a home with too many RED foods or not enough structure can make it hard to take care of herself. So can stress at school or in her social life. An unpredictable schedule or too many demands on her time can also make it hard.

#### Your child's support network

Making healthy lifestyle changes is tough. Dealing with diabetes is tough. Losing weight takes time and effort. Even if your child gets the support she needs from family and friends every day, it's hard work. But it's much harder if she doesn't get the support she needs.

#### Your child's personal attitudes and feelings

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

Diabetes is a chronic, lifelong illness. It doesn't go away. You know that. Your daughter can do her best to keep it in check. But she 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 her body. Diabetes is with her for the rest of her life. If she doesn't take care of it, diabetes will take over. Facing up to this is enough to get anyone down. It may get your child depressed.

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 make it harder to take care of yourself. Depression and diabetes interact with one another. They reinforce one another. They make one another more powerful. Everything spirals downward. Unmanaged diabetes makes you depressed. Depression makes it

harder to manage diabetes. This is burnout at its worst.

#### How can I tell if my son is feeling burned-out?

PARENTS ASK:

Encourage your child to be honest with himself and with you. Facing up to burnout will help him defeat it. He can't fool his body. If he isn't doing what he needs to on a daily basis to manage his diabetes, his eating and physical activity behaviors, he is heading for burnout. The first step is to be honest about his own behavior and his feelings.

#### What should I do if my son is burned-out?

PARENTS ASK:

Help your child move through a recovery process. It's a process with 5 stages. Start at the beginning. He can't start using problem-solving skills if he isn't motivated. He's got to take it step-by-step.

- ▶ **Motivate your child** to get back on track. Even if he is depressed, you can't let him stay down. Remind him of how important it is to

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

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 being 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."

overcome burnout. He will have more energy, be in a better mood, sleep better, and be able to do more of the things he enjoys. Ask him to list other reasons to try. What other positive benefits can you add to the list?

► **Encourage positive thinking.** Burnout may have caused negative thinking. Ask your child about his negative thoughts. Ask him to list them. Encourage him to change them. He can turn them into positive thoughts.

How did Alicia's mother help her?

---

---

---

---

How have you tried to help your child deal with issues like this?

---

---

---

---

**Burnout and depression interact with one another. This makes it harder to take care of yourself.**

Tell him not to be too hard on himself. You, your family, and the PAL are there to help. So is his diabetes health care team. With help, he can turn it around.

► **Help your child pin down the causes of his burnout.** Is his attitude about having diabetes getting in the way? His attitude about his weight? Is it

the way he is reacting to his environment? Is he getting the support he needs? Which barriers are most powerful? Which ones can he change most easily? Which ones will take longer? Help him set realistic goals. List priorities. What will he tackle 1st? 2nd? 3rd?



- ▶ **Help your child problem-solve.** Remember the 6 steps in problem-solving? Identify the barrier. Brainstorm for resources and possible solutions. Compare solutions. Make a plan. Put it in action. Then evaluate the plan.
- ▶ **Back the plan.** Do all you can to help out. Do all you can to support your child.

### Reasons to help you and your child fight burnout

Ask yourself:

- ▶ How could being burned-out affect my or my child's...
  - ▶ weight?
  - ▶ blood sugar levels?
  - ▶ mood?
  - ▶ relationships?
- ▶ How could being burned-out affect my child's health in...
  - ▶ 6 months?
  - ▶ a year?
  - ▶ his lifetime?

Praise and support his efforts. Remind him that it takes time. He can't expect everything to be perfect right away. Defeating diabetes and losing weight take time and effort.

### Can parents get burned-out? What can I do if I feel burned-out?

Adults can feel burned-out. Trying to take care of your own health could burn you out. You could feel overwhelmed by trying to help your child manage diabetes. There can be a lot of reasons you may feel burned-out.

- ▶ Ask yourself if you have some of the feelings and behaviors you read about in this module. Write them down. Ask your friends and family if they see any other signs of 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.
  - ▶ Put your plan into action.

### How to help yourself

- ▶ Ask questions that will help you identify burnout.
- ▶ Pin down the cause of your burnout.
- ▶ Make a plan to deal with it.
- ▶ Put your plan in action.

### How to help your child overcome burnout

- ▶ Ask questions that will help your child identify burnout.
- ▶ Help your child pin down the cause of his burnout.
- ▶ Help your child make a plan to deal with it.



# Overcoming Healthy Lifestyle Burnout

## Is Your Child Suffering From Healthy Lifestyle Burnout?

*Your child has a chart of questions about burnout. Go over it with her. Talk about negative attitudes. Talk about unhealthy behaviors. Pay special attention to negative things that happen often. Stay positive. This means not criticizing your child for feeling bad. It means not criticizing her for not trying as hard as you would like. Paraphrase the feeling you hear. Say back to her what she seems to be saying to you. Encourage. Praise her for trying.*

### Possible Causes of Your Child's Burnout and How to Defeat Them

*Here are some examples of things that can cause burnout:*

LIVING WITH DIABETES	Having to check blood sugars regularly
ENVIRONMENT	Too many RED foods in the house
LACK OF SUPPORT	Friends don't seem to understand or care
ATTITUDES AND FEELINGS	Not believing she can do it. So why try?

*Your child is asked to list causes of burnout in these four areas. Be sure to talk about each of them with her. Pinning down the causes of burnout will help you make a better plan to deal with them.*

*Your child also has an activity to help her defeat burnout. Tell her to be careful listing strengths and resources. She should be as specific as she can. That will help make a more effective plan. Go over this plan with the PAL.*

## Are you Suffering From Healthy Lifestyle Burnout?

*List some of the things that show you are feeling burned-out. List both feelings and behaviors. Then mark how often you feel that way. Be honest with yourself.*

Sign of Burnout	3/Day	1/Day	1/Week	1/Month	Never
Feeling depressed and hopeless					
Thinking I can't do it					

## Pin Down Your Reasons For Fighting Back

*Think about what will happen if you or your child gives in to burnout. Think about will happen if you don't fight back. Write it down. How could being burned-out affect you or your child's:*

Behaviors?	
Blood-sugar levels?	
Energy level?	
Moods?	
Relationships?	
Weight?	

*How could being burned-out now affect your child's overall health in:*

6 months?	
1 year?	
Her lifetime?	

*How will you feel if you let this happen to your child?*

*What are your most important reasons for helping your child fight back?*

*What do you want to do about this?*

## Identify the Causes of Your Burnout

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

LIVING WITH DIABETES (YOUR OWN OR YOUR CHILD'S)–
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:





# Overcoming Healthy Lifestyle Burnout

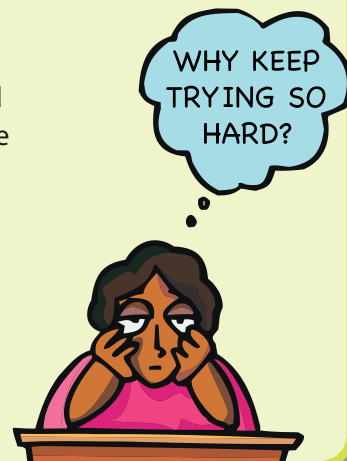
## What is healthy lifestyle burnout?

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 anymore.

You may be angry about it. You may worry that you aren't doing a good enough job of taking care of yourself. You get discouraged. It seems like 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.

All these feelings can be part of burnout.



## Who gets burned-out?

- ▶ People trying to be healthy
- ▶ People trying to lose weight
- ▶ People trying to deal with diabetes
- ▶ Parents trying to help a child deal with diabetes or lose weight

## What causes burnout?

- ▶ The demands of living with diabetes on a daily basis
- ▶ Your environment -- all the other demands on your time and energy
- ▶ Lack of support
- ▶ Your personal attitudes and feelings

## What can you do to help your child overcome burnout?

- ▶ Ask questions that will help your child identify burnout.
- ▶ Help your child pin down the cause of his burnout.
- ▶ Try to help your child get motivated to overcome burnout.
- ▶ Help your child make a plan to deal with it.
- ▶ Give your child lots of support, including:
  - ▶ Praise
  - ▶ Encouragement
  - ▶ Practical help

## What can you do to help yourself?

- ▶ Ask questions that will help you identify burnout.
- ▶ Pin down the causes of your burnout.
- ▶ Make a plan to deal with burnout.
- ▶ Put your plan in action.