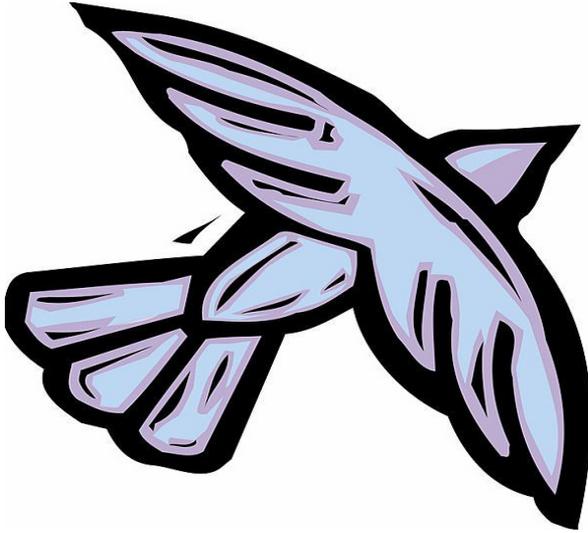




Diabetes
Now What?



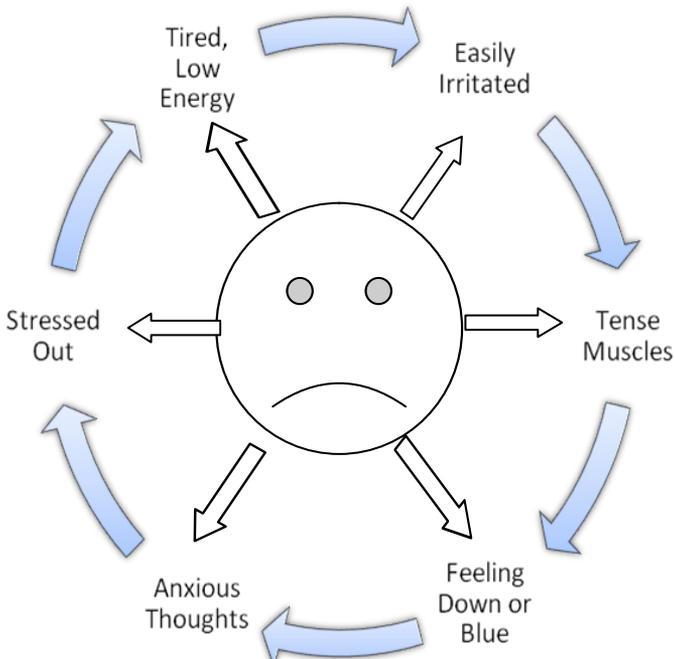
Strengthen Your Spirit

*Self Assessment and Tools
for Healthy Coping
of Negative Emotions*

Strengthen Your Spirit was created by The West Virginia Advancing Diabetes Self Management Program, a partnership of rural health centers, churches and community organizations in rural Appalachia working to promote innovative ways to help people experience the benefit of taking control of their diabetes.

When we're feeling down, or blue, it can affect many parts of our lives.

Negative emotions can feed on each other and create a vicious cycle.



**Are any of these problems in
the picture on the left
happening to you?**

Draw a circle around the ones
that are problems for you.

Many people find that they are
affected by more than one of
these problems at a time.

For example, a person can feel
stressed, get tight neck and
shoulder muscles, and then
feel irritable. It can feel like
these problems feed on each
other.

For the problems that you
circled there are things that
you can do to help yourself.

Tool Box

Here's a tool box of skills that can help you cope better when you're feeling down. They can make you a stronger person.

**Practicing these skills
can strengthen your spirit.**



You don't use a screwdriver every time you reach for tool, sometimes you need a hammer or a drill. It's the same way with this tool box.

You can use these tools at different times to break this cycle and manage symptoms. You can learn how to cope with problems that get you down.

Problem: Muscle Tension



Tool: Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is a useful way to reduce muscular tension and stress.

To relax muscles, you need to know how to scan your body, recognize where you're holding tension and release that tension.

The first step is to become familiar with the difference between the feeling of tension and the feeling of relaxation.

Here are examples of simple exercises that can be done any time of day to help ease muscle tension.

Start by sitting and taking 3 big deep breaths. Now take one hand over your head, hold it for 10 seconds. Repeat with the other hand.

Be sure to relax your shoulders.



Move your arms in circles— 10 times forwards and 10 times backwards. Make sure your shoulders are still relaxed.



Place your hands on your shoulders and roll them forward 10 times, then backwards 10 times.

Keeping your shoulders relaxed, and your hands on your shoulders, touch your elbows together 10 times.



Place both hands above your head, lean to the right and hold for 10 seconds. Then lean to the left and hold for 10 seconds.



Problem:

Feeling down, depressed or hopeless

Tool:

Positive Thinking/Self-Talk



Self-talk is those habitual things we say to ourselves.

We all do it, whether we realize it or not.

Self-talk comes in many forms, mostly negative (“I just can’t do....” “If only I could....”).

This type of self-talk represents doubts and fears we have about ourselves and our abilities.

You can learn to make self-talk work for you instead of against you. Changing negative statements to positive ones is an important tool to reduce negative emotions.

Steps for getting positive self-talk to work for you:

1. Listen carefully to what you say to or about yourself, both out loud and silently.
2. Write down all the negative self talk statements or irrational beliefs (Use the table on the next page)
3. Change them to rational and helpful self-talk
4. Rehearse mentally
5. Practice in real situations
6. Be patient...it takes time to instill new habits

Remember the little engine that could...

“I Think I can”

Here are some examples of positive spins on negative thoughts

Negative Self-Talk	Positive Statements
I feel so stupid. I can't do it.	If I try my best I can figure this out
I can't exercise. It's too hard.	I will start slow and take it one day at a time.
There's not enough time.	I will reevaluate my priorities and begin with the first step

Fill in the rest of the chart with examples of your own negative thoughts.

Then change them to rational and positive thoughts.

Problem: Feeling stressed out



Tool: Problem solving

It's common to feel stressed out and feel like we can't manage everything we have to accomplish each day. And often, we can't accomplish all of the things we would like to. This is why it's helpful to prioritize. You can break down your problems into easier to manage, smaller steps.

First, write down all of the things that are stressing you out.

Sort them into 2 categories: "must do" or "can wait".

(Use the table on the next page.)

Problem: Anxious Thoughts



Tool: Distraction

Distraction is a good coping mechanism because our mind doesn't focus well on two things at the same time. That is why it is hard to rub our head and pat our stomach at the same time. Short-term distraction is a temporary solution to eliminate anxious thoughts. Some examples of short-term distraction techniques are counting backwards by threes, thinking of a flower or bird for each letter of the alphabet, making plans for a future event in your head, or trying to think of all the words in an old song.



Tool: Prayer

Prayer can be a form of relaxation to help reduce tension and anxiety. It can also be a method of distraction to refocus your attention away from anxious thoughts. Use your prayer time to verbalize the specific things that are making you anxious. Imagine yourself taking each of your anxious thoughts and putting them in God's hand.

Problem: Easily Irritated



Tool: Communication Skills

Everyone at one time or another has experienced communication problems. Learning to communicate more effectively can help alleviate irritations. Here are some suggestions to help improve communication:

1. **Identify what is really bothering you**
2. **Express your feelings constructively**

“When this happens I feel...”

“I feel I’m not being heard”
instead of “You never listen to me”

3. **Listen attentively**
(Try waiting a few seconds after the other person has finished before responding)

4. **Clarify**
(Repeat what you think you heard using your own words, then ask for clarification)



Tool: Breathing Techniques

Breath is energy. When energy is brought into our bodies it nourishes our muscles, blood and brain, helping us to feel stronger and healthier in both our bodies and our mind.

Pursed-lip breathing can help strengthen and improve the coordination and the efficiency of the breathing muscles, as well as decrease the amount of energy needed to breathe.



Tool: Pursed-lip breathing

The pursed-lip breathing technique can be used anytime you feel tense or irritated.

1. Breathe in through your nose
2. Hold your breath briefly
3. With your lips pursed (as if you were going to whistle), breathe out slowly through your lips. Exhaling should take twice as long as inhaling.
4. Practice this technique for 5-10 minutes, 2-4 times a day.

Problem: Always Tired/Low Energy



Tool: Walking

Being physically active can actually give you more energy. Walking is one of the easiest ways to be physically active. You can do it almost anywhere and at any time.

Steps to begin a walking program:

1. Find a buddy to walk with you.

My walking buddy is: _____

2. Choose a safe place to walk.

My safe walking location is : _____

3. Decide on a good time to walk.

A good day _____ *and time:* _____

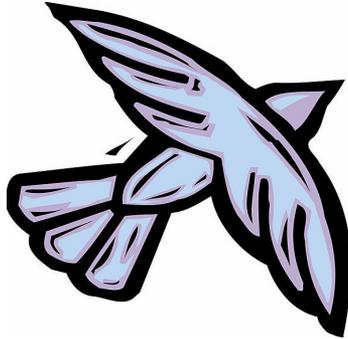
4. Wear shoes with thick flexible soles and socks that will cushion your feet.

Do I need to shop for comfortable shoes and socks ? _____

Other walking tips:

- Wear clothes that will keep you dry and comfortable.
- For extra warmth in winter, wear a knit cap. To stay cool in summer, wear a baseball cap or visor.
- Do light stretching before and after you walk.
- Think of your walk in three parts. Walk slowly for 5 minutes. Increase your speed for the next 5 minutes. Finally, to cool down, walk slowly again for 5 minutes.
- Try to walk at least three times per week. Add 2 to 3 minutes per week to the fast walk. If you walk less than three times per week, increase the fast walk more slowly.
- To avoid stiff or sore muscles or joints, start gradually. Over several weeks, begin walking faster, going further, and walking for longer periods of time.

How do I begin to Strengthen My Spirit?



Pick a self management tool from this book to begin develop that skill.

Like any skill, active self-management must be learned and practiced.

Make a weekly ACTION PLAN to help you work on making small changes that you can live with.

And share your action plan with someone who can encourage you and be supportive.

ACTION PLAN

Weekly Steps



Decide what you would like to accomplish.

Start by taking small steps. Make an action plan for what you will accomplish this week.

Do your best to carry out your action plan.

Check the results. Think about how you can problem solve any barriers that keep you from accomplishing your action plan.

Make changes as needed -**Focus on your progress** and repeat each week.

Make a ACTION PLAN!

This week I will:

(What?)

(How much?)

(When?)

(How Many?)

How confident are you? _____

On a confidence scale of 1-10

1= not confident

10= totally confident

DIABETES INITIATIVE

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