

# HEALTHY COPING SKILLS

## Essential for Self Management

[www.diabetesinitiative.org](http://www.diabetesinitiative.org)

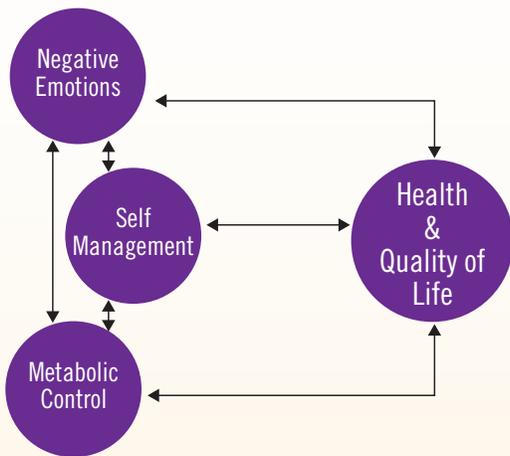
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## HEALTHY COPING AND LIVING WITH DIABETES

Skills for healthy coping are an important part of self management programs. Providing support or just listening to problems has its place, as does screening for depression and referral to psychotherapy and medical treatment. Diabetes Initiative projects have developed a variety of strategies for making these kinds of services available to those they serve.

## RELATIONSHIP AMONG EMOTIONS, SELF MANAGEMENT, DIABETES, AND HEALTH

Healthy coping and managing negative emotions are central to diabetes self management, all of which influence health and quality of life. As shown in the diagram, they affect each other reciprocally.



Depression and other negative emotions can make diabetes worse, and problems with diabetes can worsen emotional health. Mediating both of these is self management. Problem-solving skills that are central to diabetes self management are also central to managing emotions. For example, if people set a goal to increase their physical activity — maybe something as simple as walking five days a week — and they meet that goal, the achievement helps their emotions, and the physical activity helps both their emotions and their diabetes!

## THE RANGE OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONS AND WAYS TO HELP

The range of negative emotions falls along a continuum from daily stressors and hassles to psychological problems like depression or anxiety disorders. For problems harder to treat, specialty care such as psychology or psychiatry may be needed. The support and problem-solving skills characteristic of self management programs can still be very helpful. Self management classes, support groups, nurses, patient educators, and community health workers provide emotional support and teach problem-solving, healthy coping, and social skills that can help all of those coping with negative emotions. Family and friends also provide critical support.

## KEY SKILLS FOR HEALTHY COPING

- Problem-solving and goal setting — appraising problems and challenges, generating alternatives for dealing with them, testing those alternatives, and assessing results
- Social skills, including how to express one's feelings and choices effectively
- Cognitive skills for avoiding “making mountains out of molehills”
- Stress management skills like relaxation and meditation

The **Diabetes Initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation** includes 14 projects around the United States, all demonstrating that self management of diabetes is feasible and effective in diverse, real-world settings. Specific lessons learned from the Initiative include:

- The importance of Community Health Workers in diabetes self management
- Approaches to depression, negative emotions and healthy coping in diabetes self management
- Approaches to providing ongoing follow up and support for self management, since diabetes is “for the rest of your life”
- How to develop effective partnerships between clinical and community organizations
- System and organizational factors to support self management programs in primary care settings

For more information, protocols, publications, and other materials, visit: [www.diabetesinitiative.org](http://www.diabetesinitiative.org)

## STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS OFFER CHOICE

Community Health Center, Inc. in Middletown, Conn., found that nearly 60 percent of the patients in their diabetes program had PHQ9 scores in the moderately to severely depressed range. To address this, they offer two nonmedical healthy coping approaches: the Stress Reduction Program and Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT). The Stress Reduction Program is a series of group classes in which patients learn a variety of relaxation and meditation techniques.

The second approach, SFBT, is different from other types of therapy in that it subtly shifts patients away from past, problem-oriented thinking toward a strength-based, solution-focused perspective. During individual sessions, patients are asked questions such as, "Can you tell me about a time when things were going right for you? What were you doing to make that happen?" This helps patients focus on solutions and capacities. Together patients and providers establish realistic goals and a plan for action. Both approaches enhance skills for healthy coping. Contact: Community Health Center, Inc. at 860-347-6971



Participants in a stress reduction program

## ROLE OF PROMOTORAS IN HEALTHY COPING

Campeños Sin Fronteras (CSF), a nonprofit community-based organization, promotes social and economic stability and empowerment among farm workers and their families in Yuma County, Ariz. CSF's diabetes program, Campeños Diabetes Management Program, uses promotoras, or community health workers, to provide advocacy, support, and diabetes education to community members with diabetes. They have established sustainable community support services to promote diabetes self management and coping skills.

Harsh working conditions, a lack of insurance and resources to buy medications, and a lack of Spanish-speaking providers who understand the culture of people in the area are some stressors that attribute to the need for coping skills.

Promotora-led support groups help participants learn and practice coping skills for the complex emotional and social issues related to diabetes. Promotoras make home

visits and conduct outreach at field work sites and other community locations. The emotional support they provide has a significant positive impact on this population's ability to cope with diabetes and life situations.

Contact: Campeños Sin Fronteras at 928-627-1060

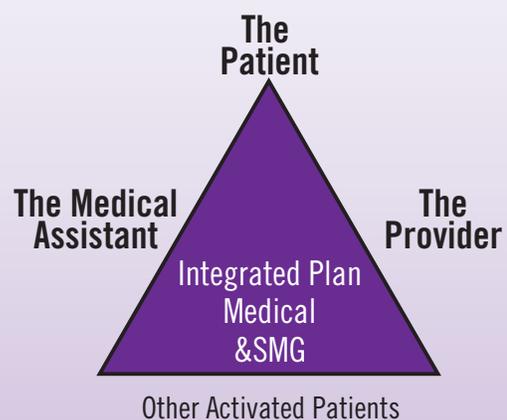


A promotoras provides outreach in a field work site

## CHANGING MEDICAL CARE TO INCORPORATE HEALTHY COPING

The Providence St. Peter Family Medicine Residency Program in Olympia, Wash., uses traditional medical visits, open office group visits, and minivisits to create a system that integrates healthy coping and self management. The system includes an enhanced role for the medical assistant. Benefits of the system include:

- Better patient engagement in behavior change
- Integration of the medical plan and a patient-oriented self management action plan
- More efficient sharing of responsibilities
- More effective use of doctor-patient time during visits



Patient depression levels are assessed using the PHQ9 depression scale. Providers assess patient needs and barriers to self management. Together they develop a customized action plan. Contact: St. Peter Family Medicine Residency Program at 360-493-7230