

Together, a Healthier Body and Mind

*Improving Psychosocial health of
Adolescents with Diabetes
(I-PAD)*

Brought to you by KKH Diabetes, Patient Experience &
Psychology Service teams



Content Page

This booklet focuses on the importance of the body, mind, spirit and heart - a holistic approach to a well-balanced and meaningful life. It also seeks to create an increased awareness about the importance of mental health and provides some shared activities for both parent and child.

- 07** **Body**
 - Improving daily habits
 - Having a good night's rest
 - Journal Exercise for Your Body
 - *Sleep Cycle Journal*

- 10** **Mind**
 - A healthier mind
 - Coping with teasing or bullying
 - *Parent-child activity*
 - Journal Exercise for Your Mind
 - *Goal Setting*

- 14** **Spirit**
 - Improving our spiritual health
 - Journal Exercise for Your Spirit
 - *Uplifting activities*

- 16** **Heart**
 - Building a stronger heart
 - Journal Exercise for Your Heart
 - *How do you feel?*



Insights Into My Diabetes Journey

It is not easy living with diabetes. It often feels like people may not understand what you are going through and you may feel alone in this journey.

You may feel diabetes is a burden which makes you feel insecure. You may feel embarrassed especially in front of your friends and frustrated with all the medical routines you have to go through.



You are not alone. Just because you have diabetes, it does not mean that you should go through it alone. You also do not need to feel like you should shoulder everything alone. Have faith that things will get better, make space for the changes in life and the obstacles will become easier to manage or overcome.



Foreword

More than two decades have passed since I began looking after children and adolescents with diabetes. I have personally witnessed the struggles that many children and their families have endured, and their anguish at having to deal with a condition that is lifelong. Over the years, our diabetes team at KKH worked hard to better the glucose control and diabetes management for our patients, through skills-based diabetes education and incorporating the latest advances that medical technology offered. But there was a clear gap, one that hard science could not resolve.

The KKH Diabetes and Psychology Workgroup was formed with the aim of helping our patients navigate the many psychosocial challenges that accompany diabetes. Helmed by a team comprising a specialist in patient excellence, a clinical psychologist, an advanced practice nurse (APN) in diabetes and a paediatric endocrinologist, the workgroup came up with two excellent proposals. The first proposal was implemented in mid 2020. A joint diabetes APN – Psychology clinic was started, which pays close attention to the psychological needs of children who are flagged for attention with a high diabetes distress score.

I am extremely honoured to present the second solution, which is a booklet of materials that focuses on the importance of mental health and the need to manage relationships, even as one is managing one's metabolic health. There are many good things about this manual that I like, which fills a clear gap in our approach towards children with diabetes. As a parent, I found particularly useful the strategies I could adopt to help my child deal with distress. I am sure you will find your favourite. This manual contains a treasure trove of tips, tools and teaching materials, put together by a team that truly cares. I am confident it can help both individuals and families cope with the challenges of living with diabetes.

A/Prof Fabian Yap

*Head and Senior Consultant,
Paediatric Endocrinology,
Department of Paediatrics,
KK Women's and Children's Hospital*

Foreword

Young people face many challenges as they journey through school. Diabetes in their life experience increases the amount of stress they face by at least one-fold. This affects their mental health and well-being, as they lack the awareness to recognize the signs and the knowledge to help them work their way through these incomprehensible negative emotions.

This guide comes on time in creating awareness about mental health. Even in the education landscape, the curriculum is being reviewed to include more focus on mental wellness and peer support starting in 2021.

I hope this guide will be useful for both the user and/or their parents to have conversation about living with diabetes as a young person, positively with people around them, and how they can cope with diabetes distress together.

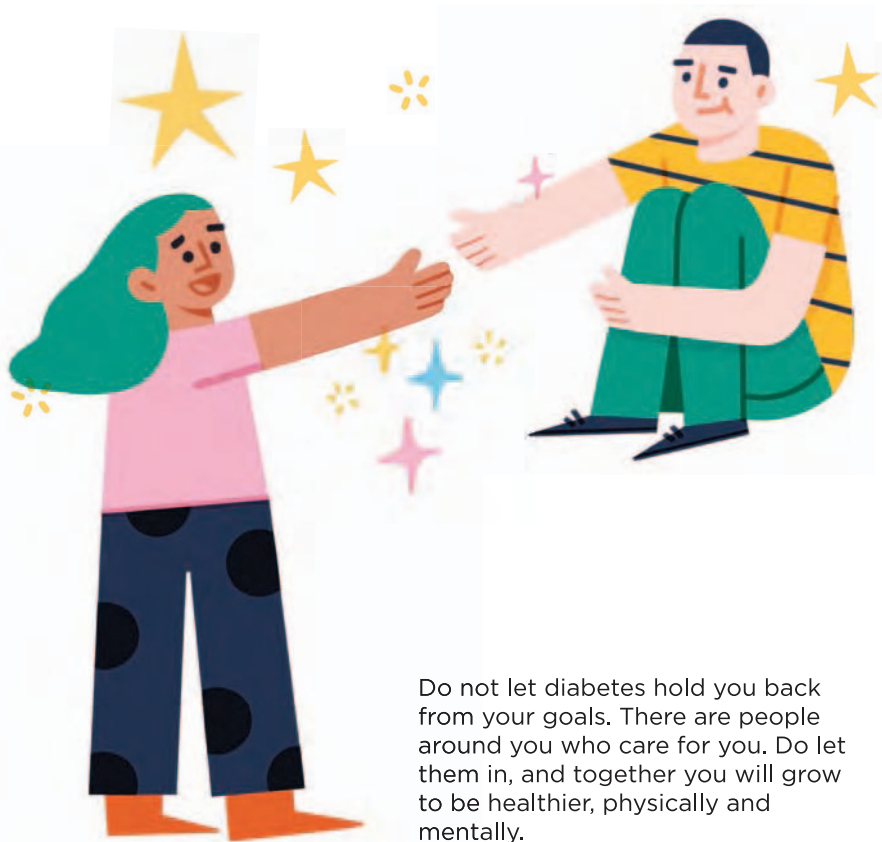
Regards,
Heng Pei Yan

*(Previous Singapore Youth Leader representative for the
International Diabetes Federation)*

Sharing Their Diabetes Journey

“Sometimes I think how vulnerable dealing with diabetes make me feel. I have to carry around my blood sugar monitor and check my blood sugar level in the toilet during lunch break in school. I wish I was normal like everyone else. But I realise that dealing with diabetes has also made me stronger and more appreciative.”

SYK, 16 years old male with 6 years of diabetes.



During your journey with diabetes, there may be moments where you may feel fearful or worried about your future; or may feel tired with how things are currently presenting. Do not worry and rest assure that this is not a psychiatric condition. Rather, this is an emotional response arising from diabetes management, commonly known as Diabetes Distress. This may manifest itself differently from difficulty in coping with lifestyle changes to severe mental distress needing clinical attention.

This booklet provides an awareness of mental health in diabetes (*body and heart*) and resources to assess and address possible psychosocial health issues (*mind and spirit*) in supporting you and your parents.

Whilst 1 in 3 youths report feeling depressed about diabetes, many have chosen to face and overcome this.

It is not easy, but you are not alone. Together, we can take steps towards managing our difficulties and emerge stronger and more resilient.

For Parents

Here are some strategies to help your child deal with diabetes distress:

Be a Role Model	Be an Active Listener	Empathise	Ask, Guide & Be Flexible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow your child to express his/ her feelings without judgement - Set practical expectations for diabetes self care - Understand that there is no perfect diabetes management control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paraphrase what your child says to show you understand - Provide positive reinforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not analyse his/ her feelings - Acknowledge his/ her pains and discomfort - Build your child's self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask how you can help - Choose wisely when to be firm and when to provide flexibility

BODY

Dealing with diabetes at a young age is really difficult and may seem like an uphill battle.



Let us look at some simple daily habits we can try to take:



1. Attend your planned medical appointments and take your medication as advised by your doctor or nurse



2. Aim for at least 8 hours of sleep every night



3. Stay up to date on reliable information



4. Include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fiber and lots of water in your diet



5. Set realistic health and fitness goals. Try new flexibility, strength training and cardiovascular endurance exercises. It might be fun!



6. List and prioritise your tasks. Learn stress management tips!



7. Take 5-10 minute breaks (to unwind) every 90 to 120 minutes at school

Journal Exercise for Your Body

Getting ample rest is important to keep your body healthy. Problems with sleeping are common for people with diabetes. It is important that you practice good sleep hygiene to improve diabetes control. Sleep deprivation causes fluctuations in your blood glucose level which leads to irritability commonly confused with hypoglycemia. This can be compounded when you consume alcohol that causes memory loss or miss your insulin administration and other diabetes self-care measures.

Proper rest every night, preferably 8 to 10 hours will help you gain control of diabetes. Keep a sleep journal or use an app to keep track of sleep cycles.

Here are some tips to help you get a good night's rest:



1. Fix a bedtime and a waking up time



2. Use your bed for sleep, not as a study table



3. Avoid naps throughout the day



4. Be mindful of the use of electronic devices and TV in your bedroom



5. Wind down your activities before bedtime so you can feel relaxed when in bed



6. If you cannot fall asleep, do not toss and turn in bed. Go to another room and engage in another activity until you feel tired (e.g. flip through magazines)



7. Take deep breaths, don't worry if you are unable to fall asleep



8. Make sure your bedroom is comfortable and free from disturbing light & noise



9. Do not 'clock watch'. It might lead to frustration. Place clock away from facing you



10. Eat regular meals and avoid excessive liquids in the evening



11. Do not take your worries to bed.





12. Avoid using alcohol as a sleep aid




13. Avoid caffeine up to 10 hours before bedtime



14. Exercise regularly, but not right before bedtime



WRITE SOMETHING HERE!

Sleep cycle Journal:
 (Try listing 3 ways you can improve your sleep)



“Throughout my 8 years of living with diabetes, I have seen many ups and downs. During my first 1-2 years, it was an emotional rollercoaster for my family members and me because everything was new and there were many times we would argue. Opening up to my parents and friends about how I felt helped me get through these trying times. I told my parents how involved I want them to be and I set goals for myself to work towards.”

KLR, 20 years old female with 8 years of diabetes.

MIND

Here are some tips to keep our minds healthy:



1. Share your thoughts and feelings in helpful ways. (eg. sharing with a trusted adult or friend; writing or journaling)



2. Learn new skills eg. mindfulness stress management; effective communication; problem solving skills



3. Find out which activities help you relax best



4. Collect quotations that are meaningful to you, because the sentiments of great people stimulate the mind



Tips on Coping with Teasing or Bullying

People around you may not understand how you feel or what you are going through, and might react inappropriately. This may make you feel depressed or angry but reacting negatively towards them may not help or even cause more harm for yourself. Here are some ways you can respond and outsmart the bullies:

Strategies	Challenge your negative and worrying thoughts	How parents can help your child
1. Explain	<p>Explain to yourself why something may happen to you. Consider alternative reasons and engage in positive self-talk.</p> <p><i>E.g. I might feel embarrassed, but people will not necessarily notice as everyone is busy with their own things. Besides, no one is perfect!</i></p>	<p>Teach your child how to explain his/her medical condition for others to understand easily. You may not need to tell them all the details. Practice responding and role playing situations with your child.</p> <p><i>E.g. I have a medical condition called diabetes, my body may be different but I am just the same as anyone else.</i></p>
2. Reassure	<p>Reassure yourself. Look at the facts, not feelings.</p> <p><i>E.g. X does not intend to hurt me by asking these questions. I'm ok.</i></p>	<p>Encourage your child to reassure others.</p> <p><i>E.g. It isn't painful, I'm fine with it.</i></p>
3. Distract	<p>Distract yourself by thinking of other more helpful thoughts.</p> <p><i>E.g. Sing a song in your head; counting backwards from 100 in 3s (e.g. 100, 97, 94...)</i></p>	<p>Teach your child problem solving skills and social skills. For example, changing the conversation topic or how to respond in such situations.</p> <p><i>E.g. Thank you for your concern, how are you doing today?</i></p>
4. Assert	<p>Assert yourself and appear calm, confident, and in control. Walk away calmly or make a short statement.</p> <p><i>E.g. "Please stop, stop talking about that. I do not like it."</i></p>	<p>Build your child's self-esteem and resilience. Encourage your child to assert himself/herself to show that he/she appears calm, confident and in control. Teach your child to be assertive without being aggressive in standing up for themselves.</p>
5. Humor	<p>If you feel confident to do so, use humor or a clever response to weaken the effect of the mean comment or behaviour.</p> <p><i>E.g. "Thank you, I didn't know I am so popular!"</i></p>	<p>Teach your child to use humor effectively, so others may feel more comfortable to ask questions to genuinely know his/her condition better. Some others may however be embarrassed or surprised with the comeback statement in response to their comments and stop their mean behaviours.</p>



PARENT-CHILD Activity

Now it's your turn! Note down tips that you tried and have been effective.

Strategies to teach your child	Challenge your negative and worrying thoughts	How parents can help your child
1. Explain		
2. Reassure		
3. Distract		
4. Assert		
5. Humor		

Your tips will help others too, do share it with your diabetes nurses and doctors as well.

Journal Exercise for Your Mind - Goal Settings

Set clear goals to keep track of your progress. Goal setting is the first step in the journey towards success.

Specific: Make your goals as clear as possible and well-defined

Measurable: Ensure you have specific criteria that will measure your progress and accomplishment of goal

Attainable: Choose goals that are not too difficult or too easy to achieve

Realistic: Your goal needs to be something that is within reach and relevant to your life purpose

Time-Bound: Choose a time by which you would have achieved your goal and try your best to keep to it

SPIRIT

Here are some tips to keep ourselves spiritually healthy:



1. Be patient and embrace positive changes



2. Help each other, every small act matters



3. Self-reflection. Negativity is temporary and will pass, learn to let it go



6. Cope via religious and spiritual beliefs



4. Learn to forgive others who might have hurt you, including yourself



5. Build healthy relationships and learn to identify less helpful or toxic relationships



Journal Exercise for Your Spirit

Here is a suggestion pad on spiritually uplifting things you can indulge in. Tick the options which you identify with and write down some notes on what you did:

Reflect and renew positively

Watch, listen and enjoy the world of nature or any place you find calming

Read inspirational materials, in particular quotes or biographies of people who inspire you

Listen to soothing, uplifting music

Sign up for volunteering activities (Giving back to community will allow you to gain a lot more!)



"I have had countless low moments, from being diagnosed to having high readings for the whole day. Especially at the start, it was really disheartening to see high readings even though I followed all the instructions the doctors gave me. Thankfully, I had faith that things will get better and the bad days became more bearable. It helped me see that there are many amazing things in life that can happen."

NT, 17 years old male with 4 years of diabetes.

HEART

Our heart is seemingly vulnerable, but can also be strengthened with love and care by ourselves and others. Faith and trust are the first steps towards building a stronger heart.



1. Practice empathetic listening regularly with the people who are important to you



2. Practice flexibility, step out of your comfort zone and widen your circle of friends



3. Forgive yourself and others who may have hurt you



4. Make time for your family members – both immediate and extended. Build positive family relationships



5. Let go of angry or damaging competitive feelings you may have towards others



6. Value the differences in others and focus on opportunities to embrace them

Journal Exercise for Your Heart

Learn to open up to others by first being open and honest with yourself. Do write down how you feel and who you are thankful for:

What am I feeling

Who can I reach out to about this

What I appreciate about _____ (Family member/ Friend)

What I can do for him/her

My Holistic Plan of Action

Holistic commitment comprises of:



1. Making a plan and the steps to take



2. Listing the people I will involve in this process



3. Tracking my progress and sharing it with them

Do write down what behavior or habit you want to change and the statements that will help:



1. Making a plan and the steps to take



1. Making a plan and the steps to take



2. Listing the people I will involve in this process



3. Tracking my progress and sharing it with them



3. Tracking my progress and sharing it with them

Resources

For more information and support, do reach out to your doctor, Diabetes Nurse Educators or school counsellors. Below is a list of some services also available to offer support, information and help.

No.	Name of Organization	Details	Operating Hours	Contact Numbers
1.	Helpline Limitless	Provides emotional and practical support for youths aged 12-25 years old who are facing issues with their mental health, social exclusion or poverty.	Able to submit an online form to schedule a call with the available social workers and volunteers. Free and subsidized counselling sessions are also available.	Helpline: https://www.limitless.sg/talk
2.	Assistline-Brahm Centre	Free helpline available to provide confidential emotional support for youths, as well as parents who needs support in better parenting and communication strategies. Free and subsidized counselling sessions are also available. Visit http://brahmcentre.com/assistline/ for more information.	Mon to Fri: 9.00am - 6.00pm	Weekdays: 6655 0000 After hours: 88230000 (WhatsApp available) Email: assistme@brahmcentre.com
3.	eCounseling Centre (eC2) -Fei Yue Project 180-	An online facility offering free counselling to youths aged 13-25 years old. Visit www.ec2.sg for more information.	Mon to Fri: 10.00am - 12.00pm 2.00pm - 5.00pm (excluding public holidays)	Fei Yue Community Services admin@ec2.sg
4.	WINGS Counselling Centre	Provides affordable counselling services for individuals of all ages with socio-emotional, personal or family-related problems. Visit https://www.wingscounselling.org.sg/ for more information.	Mon to Fri: 8.30am - 5.30pm Sat: 9.00am - 1.00pm <i>Closed on Sundays and Public Holidays</i>	Office Number: 6383 5745 Email: admin@wingscounselling.org.sg
5.	Eagles Mediation and Counselling Centre (EMCC)	For individuals, couples and families experiencing emotional and/or relational problems. The Centre provides mediation and psychotherapy, with a special focus for helping those who seek to rebuild their lives.	Mon, Tues & Fri: 9.00am - 6.00pm Wed and Thu: 9.00am - 9.00pm Sat: 9.00am - 1.00pm <i>Closed on the 5th Saturdays of the month, and Public Holidays.</i>	Tel: 6788 8220 Mediation and Counselling enquiries: services@emcc.org.sg
6.	Counselling and Care Centre	Provides subsidized online and phone counselling services for those facing emotional, psychological, relationship and marital problems.	Mon to Fri: 8.30am - 6.00pm Afterhours Mon and Wed: 5.30pm - 9.00pm	Tel: 6536 6366 Fax: 6536 6356 Email: info@counsel.org.sg
7.	Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)	For people in crisis, thinking of suicide or affected by suicide. Visit http://www.sos.org.sg/ for more information.	24-hour hotline	Hotline: 1800-221 4444 Email: pat@sos.org.sg
8.	Mindline.sg	An online platform providing tools, tips and resources to support youths' wellbeing and manage life's challenges.	Online resources and AI chat available.	Visit https://www.mindline.sg/ for more information.

NOTE: Please note that therapists/organizations/hotlines on this list are not officially endorsed by KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) and readers should not presume that this list is exhaustive. They are listed as materials for information and reference. Also, the points of view or opinions expressed by these organizations on this list do not necessarily represent the views of the staff from KKH.

Acknowledgements

Advisor:

Department of Pediatric Medicine, Endocrinology Service

Assoc Prof Yap Kok Peng Fabian
Head and Senior Consultant

Contributors:

Department of Pediatric Medicine, Endocrinology Service

Dr Rashida Farhad Vasanwala
Senior Consultant

Allied Health Specialties Division, Psychology Service

Dr Lois Teo Ling'en
Head and Senior Principal Psychologist

Allied Health Specialties Division, Child Life, Art and Music Therapy Program (CHAMPS)

Tanuja Nair
Head and Principal Child Life Therapist

Division of Nursing, Nursing Clinical Services

Lim Soo Ting Joyce
Senior Nurse Clinician
Advanced Practice Nurse

Lim Pei Kwee
Nurse Clinician
Diabetes Nurse Educator

Hui Yuen Ching Angela
Nurse Clinician
Diabetes Nurse Educator

Office of Patient Experience

Amos Lim Kok Ann
Assistant Manager

Tan Xiang Feng
Executive

Improving Psychosocial health of Adolescents with Diabetes (I-PAD) Project Team

Chen Jia Hui (Wendy)
Student Intern

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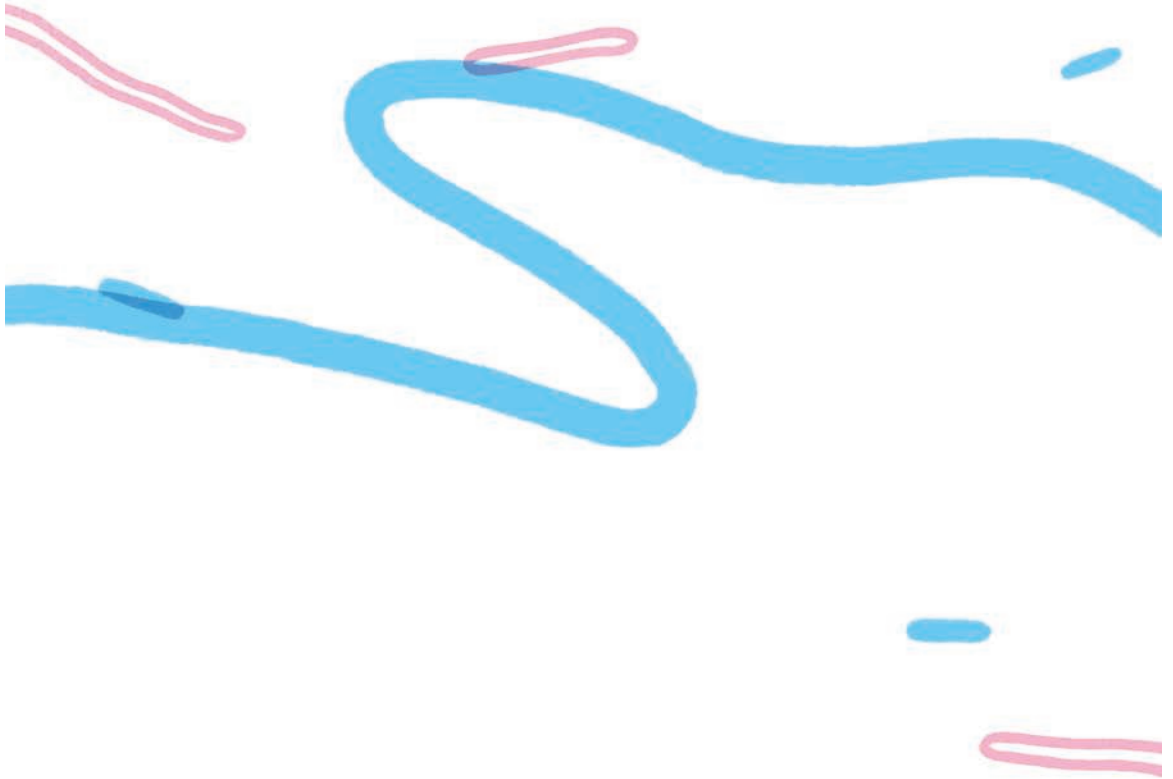
The information provided in this booklet is for general information purposes and is provided on the understanding that no medical advice or recommendation is being rendered. Medical treatment has to be individualised and can only be rendered after adequate assessment of your condition through appropriate clinical examination.

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Request for permission should be addressed to:
Department of Paediatric Medicine, Endocrinology Service
KK Women's and Children's Hospital
100 Bukit Timah Road
Singapore 229899

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KK Women's and
Children's Hospital
SingHealth

100 Bukit Timah Road
Singapore 229899
Tel: 6-CALL KKH (6-2255 554)
Fax: 6293-7933
Website: www.kkh.com.sg
Facebook: www.facebook.com/kkh.sg

Reg No 198904227G

