

Diabetes and denial don't mix: Disease management makes the difference



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A DISEASE MANAGEMENT STORY

In the fall of 2008, Deb Vickrey was at a low point in her life: in addition to struggling with physical complications from an auto accident several years prior, Deb's blood sugar had skyrocketed to 500 – so high that she also began to battle chronic headaches and an achey, tired body. She truly felt something was constantly going wrong.

During this time, her husband had been using a health management service offered through his company that enabled him to speak to a Nationwide Better HealthSM nurse health coach. When his nurse health coach called one day, Deb answered the phone and began to ask questions. She decided she, too, wanted to participate in the company program.

Deb learned that she had diabetes in September 2008 and began working with Nationwide Better Health disease management nurse health coach Denise D'Adamo in October. Because Deb was in denial about having diabetes, she would listen to Denise during their initial sessions, but wouldn't make any promises to act upon her recommendations. Even so, Denise persisted and promised Deb that "We're going to get through this together."

Deb reluctantly continued her phone sessions with Denise, while Denise remained upbeat. Denise would gently encourage Deb to read about diabetes, familiarize herself with reading labels for sugar and fat content and, of course, exercise. As a result of Denise's patience, Deb began to have a change of heart and finally decided to take action. "I felt like I was talking to my girlfriend," said Deb. "Denise was so nice, I didn't want to hurt her feelings."

Her newly found motivation to get and stay healthy helped Deb to better prepare for her phone sessions and doctor's visits. In fact, Deb's doctor even commented that she was "one of (his) best patients, a true honor student!"

With further guidance and education from Denise, as well as her doctor, Deb lowered her blood sugar to below 200 in just two months. She began to better monitor her diet and, most recently, started exercising (which she just doesn't like!). "Denise helped me change my attitude and my life," says Deb. "She was a constant and never gave up on me."

Today, Deb continues to learn how to adjust her lifestyle as it relates to her diabetes. She realizes it isn't as invasive as she first thought, and it's still very easy to dine out, go on vacation and continue her everyday life with her husband, mom and friends. For Deb, it's all about attitude and how she chooses to accept and approach this challenge. She's thankful for her fantastic family support and her new friend and nurse health coach, Denise.

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-Deb Vickrey