

How to Beat Diabetes

9 Ways to Prevent or Reverse Diabetes

Overcoming **DIABESITY**

The Dangerous Diabetes-Obesity Connection

You Can Do This!

- Decrease Stress and Increase Health
- Break Bad Habits



mind • body • spirit
vibrant life
 Special Issue





**What to Ask Yourself to Ignite
a Transformation**

The **3** Questions That Lead to Change

*You know you need to make some healthy changes, but you're not sure where to begin. Lifestyle coach **Lilly Tryon** shares the three questions to ask yourself when you are ready to make a change.*

Any health scare—including a diabetes diagnosis—comes with a recommendation for various lifestyle changes in order to prevent complications. We're told to eat differently, exercise more, lose weight, check blood sugars—but where do we begin? Not only that, change is hard because it pushes us out of our comfort zones.

Meet Pat, Maria, Lynn, and Robert*—four people with diabetes who discovered that lifestyle changes don't have to be overwhelming or hard. While attending a diabetes coaching group, they learned three necessary keys for lifestyle change: information, motivation, and strategy. We can think of these keys as three simple questions to ask ourselves when considering making a change.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*

What?

The Information

ASK YOURSELF:
What needs to change?

• Before you can begin to make change, you need to know *what* to change. The more that you know about a change and the more you feel it is necessary and urgent, the more ready you will be to do whatever is required to make the change. In addition to clarifying specific behaviors that need attention, asking *What?* also creates an awareness of how our current habits and thoughts are hurting us.

Lynn, a single mother who worked two jobs, was too busy to think about her blood sugars, but her interest was piqued when she picked up a book on diabetes. “I now understand what is going on inside my body,” she says, “and the difference that simple changes can make.” Like Lynn, you can increase your diabetes IQ and better answer the question *What?* by learning more through books, videos, Web sites, classes, or health-care providers.

Why?

The Motivation

ASK YOURSELF: *Why would I want to make these changes? Why now?*

• Motivation needs to be personal.

Pat, a recent widow who had spent the last five years taking her diabetic husband to dialysis, was frightened by the possibility of developing kidney disease herself—and that motivated her. For Maria, the motivation was different: she looked forward to her grandchildren’s visits, but was frustrated that she didn’t have the energy to play with them.

List your most compelling reasons for making lifestyle change. Make the reasons very specific and personal, and then put your list where it can continue to inspire you.

Another aspect of motivation involves weighing your pros and cons. Lynn had a long list of challenges that made it difficult to change her eating habits, but after reading other people’s success stories she had an even longer list of positive things that could come from the change. There are many reasons you might be hanging on to old behaviors. Write them down, and then weigh them against the benefits and rewards you will experience by changing.



How?

The Strategy

● **ASK YOURSELF:** *How do I go about making these changes? How can I make it work for me?*

● During the *How?* stage, the change becomes real as you learn new behaviors, processes, and ways of thinking. This is also the stage in which most people struggle. To make this stage a success, here are a few helpful strategies:

Start small.

For people with diabetes, simple changes can have huge results. Pat discovered that a 10-minute walk after meals lowered her hemoglobin A1C. Robert saw a big difference in his blood sugar just by eating more regular meals. Lynn changed her snacks at night and saw morning sugars come down. Avoid trying to change everything at once. One improvement is better than none.

Experiment.

Each person's body, personality, schedule, environment, and life is unique. What works for someone else may not work for you. Approach change as an experiment and you will generate new knowledge about yourself and be better prepared for the next step.

Be prepared.

Maria made the decision to begin her change at the grocery stores: she would put only healthy food in her shopping cart. "If it isn't in the house, I won't eat it," she declares. Another way to be prepared

is to plan ahead for the next meal. Don't wait until you are hungry to think about what you are going to eat. The same strategy—plan ahead and be prepared—can be used for eating out, traveling, holidays, and other high-risk situations.

Keep record.

Keeping track of blood glucose levels, physical activity, or other factors gives you information needed to fine-tune your plan. Another way to see what is and isn't working is by doing daily or weekly check-ins: ask yourself, *How did things go? What worked? What didn't? What did I learn about diabetes? about myself?*

Minimize stress.

Robert, a 35-year-old computer specialist, discovered that focusing on regular sleep habits and a positive attitude helped him manage his stress and his blood sugars. Lynn, a caregiver for her aged mother, found that her best stress defense was to nurture her relationship with God. "God tells us to call on Him in the day of trouble and He will deliver us. He never lets me down," she affirms.

Enlist support.

"The opportunity to discuss the day-to-day issues associated with diabetes and learn different ways to deal with them is the best part of being in a diabetes support group," reports Pat. One of the best things you can do is team up with someone else on a similar journey. In addition, regularly visit your health-care provider to ensure that you're maintaining overall health.

No matter where you are in your health journey—whether you have no major health problems, have been recently diagnosed with diabetes, or have lived with it for years—you can use the questions *What? Why?* and *How?* to create a healthier life. Soon you'll see your desired lifestyle change become a new reality.

Lilly Tryon is a nurse practitioner, lifestyle coach, and assistant professor at Southern Adventist University, in Collegedale, Tennessee. She especially enjoys coaching people with diabetes as they make positive lifestyle change.