



PAT YOURSELF ON THE BACK

By Martha Funnell, MS, RN, CDE

Along with anger, fear and frustration, guilt is a common feeling among people with diabetes. No matter how much you do to care for yourself, it seems as if there is always more you could have done. After all, if you walked for 10 minutes, maybe you could have walked for 20. If you skipped dessert at dinner, maybe you should have skipped the bread, as well.

If you feel guilty, it can add to the stress you feel living with diabetes. It can also cause you to have very negative feelings about diabetes in general. Here are some ideas to help get off the guilt trip and feel better about your efforts and yourself.

1 TAKE TIME TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT WHAT YOU DID.

Don't focus on what you did wrong. Instead, take time every day to think about what you did right. After all, no one is perfect. It's what you do most of the time that matters. At the end of every day, mentally list or write down on paper all you did to care for your diabetes. Focus on the positives to help inspire you to keep working on your diabetes.

2 THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS FAILURE.

Don't think about whether you were a success or a failure, think of what you learned. Ask yourself what you tried and how it worked. If it worked, ask yourself why. If it did not work, ask yourself what got in the way and what you might do differently tomorrow.

3 USE YOUR GUILT.

Don't feel bad: turn your negative feelings into positive energy. It may sound odd, but some people use guilt as an excuse for the choices they make. It's as if they say, "Well, I didn't do what I wanted to do, but I feel bad about it so it's OK." Feeling guilty does not change your results. And if it doesn't change what you do the next time, then it is not helping you. Don't use guilt as an excuse: use it to motivate yourself as you make choices throughout the day.

4 FOCUS ON TOMORROW.

Guilt is about what you did in the past. No matter how much guilt you feel, you cannot change what already happened. Don't waste your time feeling guilty on what you can no longer change. Focus instead on what you can do tomorrow.

5 CHOOSE ONE THING YOU KNOW YOU CAN DO.

Don't try to do it all and then feel bad when you can't get everything done. Pick one thing to work on each day. A good place to start is with your biggest struggle or the thing that causes you the most guilt. Take another step toward your goal every few days.

6 FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF.

Diabetes care is hard work. Find someone (or several people) who can give you support and cheer you on. Take time to reward yourself for all of the effort you make. Pat yourself on the back for all you do. You've earned it.

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