

Set Small Goals

Taking a step-by-step approach is the easiest way to make permanent lifestyle changes. When helping someone set a goal, help them to make it specific, realistic and doable. So, encourage them to shy away from setting goals like “I’m taking a 3 mile walk every day from now on” and move them toward something really achievable like “I’ll go out walking for 15 minutes, 3 days a week.” Once they’ve met that goal, applaud the achievement and help them review the goal and maybe increase the time or how often. Or, help them to **set another achievable goal.**

Encourage Self-Care, but Don’t Be a Nag

There’s a fine line between checking in on someone’s well-being and nagging. Nagging often causes people to do the opposite of what they should be doing. **Don’t pester**, but offer them how you can help; with food, rides, exercise, encouragement or learning about diabetes with them. Whatever it is, be supportive and ask how they would like for you to help without doing it all for them.

Work on one task at a time, take time for you both to be successful at it. As they become more comfortable to handle it you can step back and allow them to take it on themselves. Some may need more help to stay consistent with care and be ready to take some responsibilities back from them if you see them struggling with their own care.

Work With the Diabetes Care Team

If your loved one agrees, attend doctor’s appointments or diabetes education classes together. Make the effort to really listen to what both health care provider and the patient are saying, ask questions to help get the best care possible.

Often, doctors cannot know that patients are having trouble with their medications or are not able to follow a diet plan. Patients often do not share this information with the doctor or simply are too overwhelmed with their care. **Be an advocate** for your loved one. Be someone who is there to listen to the doctor but also help the doctor listen to the patient. Together, you can all create the best plan possible.

Find Support for Yourself

The best way to be a caregiver is to **take care of yourself, too.** Your loved one is not the only one who is affected by this disease. Recognizing it can help you cope with it. Attending a support group or, at least talking with someone who is dealing with a similar situation can really help. Meeting with others who are going through what you are, talking, sharing or even sharing a hug can be very healing and encouraging.

