

Caring for Us: Living with My Husband's Diabetes

When I married my husband, I knew exactly who I was marrying. He was kind, hardworking, funny, and humble. I knew that he was going to be an incredible life partner and an even better father. I also knew that he had some health issues that we would have to work through together. At the age of 25, my husband was diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes. I would love to say that after his diagnosis he began some health journey and took care of himself. He didn't. His battle with the disease was only the beginning. I'd like to note that diabetes ran in his family, along with poor eating habits. He loved his fried chicken, soda, and honey buns. When I met my husband, he genuinely thought that a potato was a vegetable, and that absolutely blew my mind.



I didn't know much about the disease, so I started doing my research and learning more about diabetes management and healthy living. I looked up healthier recipes, bought healthy snacks and drinks at the grocery store. I made meals that were low in refined sugars and saturated fats but rich in fiber and nutrients. I tried to encourage him to exercise with me after he got out of work. My efforts were ineffective.

I knew that these life changes were not going to happen overnight and that it takes time to break habits that you've been doing your whole life. I wanted my husband to be healthy and happy, but I started realizing I couldn't force him to do so. Because of his busy work schedule and stress, he found it easier to pick up fast food, drink several 20 oz Cokes throughout the day and snack on whatever he could get his hands on.

By the age of 30 and two children later my husband was hospitalized with pancreatitis and his triglycerides were through the roof. Doctors told me that I could have lost him. I knew at that moment that serious change needed to be made.

When we got home from the hospital and after much-needed rest, he and I had a very serious conversation about his health. I asked him how I could support him in making a change to a healthier lifestyle; I told him I wanted him to be around for our daughters and that I wanted him to be healthy and happy. We discussed making necessary dietary changes for the whole family and prioritizing exercise 3-4 times a week.



Things were looking up and I was proud of the progress my husband had made. We maintained a healthy diet together and regularly exercised as a family. He was managing his diabetes and finding positive hobbies to manage his stress.

At the age of 42 my husband lost his job and the second wave hit and this time even harder. He reverted to eating unhealthy and completely stopped exercising. He was under a lot of stress and anxiously trying to find a job to support our family. His health took a serious hit, and his diabetes was unmanageable. His doctor stressed that he needed to take control of his health, unfortunately it was too late, and my husband became insulin dependent.

His health was completely out of control, and I started feeling helpless. I was fixated on my husband's diabetes and of course my kids' health. Then I started thinking about myself and my own health; I needed to make sure I was healthy for my kids. If he wasn't going to make a change then I needed to.

My husband had a second pancreatic episode that landed him in the hospital. His primary doctor showed up and I remember him telling my husband he wasn't sure how he was still alive, ***“all of your numbers, triglycerides, blood pressure, everything is extremely high.”*** Then he told my husband something that I will never forget. I was sitting there in the hospital room with my 4 children scared, anxious and exhausted and he said, ***“when you leave here, I recommend you go straight to the funeral home and pick out your casket because that is exactly where you will end up the next time this happens.”***



My husband was speechless, and I could see how terrified he was. We left the hospital the next day and we hadn't said much to each other. As soon as we got home, he apologized for putting me and the children through that and promised that he was going to take his health seriously. He sought out a nutritionist and began completely changing his diet. He began walking at the track near our home at least 3 days a week. He monitored and tracked his food intake. With time he began controlling his diabetes, increased his energy, and lost some weight. Because of his improved health, our family dynamic also improved. We began feeling less anxious and stressed and started feeling something I had not felt in a long while... hopeful.

If you're feeling helpless when your loved one is struggling with diabetes, just know that your strength and support can make all the difference, and know that you are not alone.

Unidos Contra La Diabetes would like to highlight your story. If you or anyone you know would like to participate in our shared lived experiences blog, please reach out to info@ucdrgv.org

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