Benefits of Mindfulness for Diabetes

If you have diabetes, you may find yourself feeling overwhelmed by the burden of the everyday tasks you must do to control your blood sugar. These tasks include testing your blood sugar, planning what you eat, taking medications and/or insulin injections on time, and balancing your activities to prevent low blood sugar reactions or high blood sugars that may last for several hours or even several days. Thoughts and feelings about having diabetes may lead to stressful interactions with your spouse and family members, friends and coworkers, or your health care providers.

Although mindfulness won’t make your diabetes go away, over time it can shift how you manage stress and reduce the degree to which stressful situations get to you and disrupt the way you take care of your diabetes.

For example, when you encounter a stressful family situation, problems at work, or even a traffic jam, your automatic reaction may be to lose your temper. You may lash out at others, or you may “zone-out” in front of the TV, or overeat to help escape these feelings . You might forget to take your medications or insulin on time. When you realize that your blood sugar has gotten out of control, you may stop testing it. If your spouse or a friend says something to you about your diabetes control, you may feel resentful.

Mindfulness allows you to take a step back and notice your thoughts and feelings instead of getting caught up in them and automatically reacting to them in the usual ways. With mindfulness, you can start to become more aware of your stress reactions – for example, maybe you notice earlier on that when you’re stressed your chest or stomach tightens and your heart begins to pound. Rather than lashing out or becoming distracted, you can begin to respond in a more healthy way that feels better and helps keep your diabetes on track.