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Raising Happy Diabetic Kids Part II Help Yor Child Develop Self–Reliance

By Russell Turner

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This is the second article in a series I am writing about how to raise happy diabetic children. You can find the first article titled Help Your Child Develope Self–Confidence in our article archives.

Sometimes the phrase "happy diabetic kids" seems to be an oxymoron. Often it seems all of the dark powers of the diabetes universe are aligned against you. You wonder if there isn't some evil house elf behind the scenes just making everyone's life miserable on purpose. Not being graduates of Hogwarts School Of Magic we can't just wave a magic wand and make it all better. We must prepare for life with diabetes and we must prepare our children. Self–Reliance is a critical skill for diabetic children to master. Think of all of the responsibilities that go into daily diabetes care. We all realize that we must keep the responsibilities we put upon our children age appropriate. Non the less, in most school aged children the ability to take some responsibility for their own care goes a long way in giving them some feelings of control over their diabetes. Last month I mentioned there are three components to raising happy children. Self–Confidence, Self–Reliance and Self–Control. No I still haven't forgotten Self–Esteem we'll get there. I'm still of the opinion that with these first three components your child can't help but develope Self–Esteem.

What is Self–Reliance?

Self–Reliance is the ability to manage on your own: to know how to manage your time, to function and think independently, combined with the ability to solve problems. With self–reliance, there is no need for other people's approval before moving forward or doing something new. It's also un–necessary for constant guidance on how to achieve a goal. you can rely on yourself. Self–reliance is about tasks and skills -- knowing how to do things, how to achieve things or how to manage things. It also includes the ability to be alone and to think things through on your own.

Self–reliance is broader than self–confidence. Self–confidence relates to what we can do, to specific skills. Self–reliance is about being independent, creative and self–sufficient; having confidence in our inner–selvs to enable us to adapt and manage on our own.

Self–Reliance helps us become:

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Self-reliance is also having confidence in your own ideas. It is about being able to see things through to completion. It is about not being afraid of setting goals, and not being stopped by fear of failure. There is a common belief that the world is made up of three different types of people:

those who make things happen;

those who watch things happen;

those who notice nothing until after then ask, "What happened?"

Those who have good self-reliance (and self-confidence, and self-control) develop self-esteem and

make things happen. If we want our children to be able to make things happen, we don't have to think on a grand scale. It doesn't mean we all should want our children to be like Bill Gates, or Nobel Prize winners. We don't need to have our children achieve on a scale that makes a difference to others. We should aim to give our children a measure of self-reliance that allows them to keep better control of their own lives and keep choices open for them.

Self-Reliant at What?

We can encourage self-reliance in our children from a fairly early age. As soon as your child shows they can manage things for themselves, however slowly or clumsily, we should allow them to do so. Self-reliance is best introduced and experienced stage by stage, starting early and building up slowly as they become more competent and responsible. When children are very young they have this almost unstoppable drive to become independent. Before they learn adult concepts of failure, they are willing to try over and over until they master whatever they are trying to do. This is especially true if they have older brothers or sisters. They desperately want to do what the older kids can do. If we stand in the way of letting them try or show disapproval when they don't do it quite right we can damage their belief in themselves. The more we do for them the more we prevent them from developing the ability to make judgements and decisions for themselves. The stages of self-reliance are fun to watch. The first time your baby grabs a hand full of baby food and finds their own mouth with it. When they learn to "go potty" all by themselves. When they put their own shirt on, usually backwards after wrestling with it for ten minutes. When they pick up their own room. When they start to earn an allowance. When they do their homework without you holding a gun to their head. When they go off on their first baby-sitting job. When they show you their first apartment, where you should promptly go through it turning on and leaving on every light in the place, leave the refrigerator door open and put your feet up on their new furniture. These stages progress until they present you one day with a grandchild. Clearly you cannot encourage self-reliance in your child if you are not prepared to stand back and progressively let go. Doing that in the right amounts and at the right times is hard to judge. Add the dangers of their not managing daily diabetes treatment into it and you realize just how careful you need to be. Giving them responsibility and independence depends on the age and personality of your child and on your own particular circumstances. Children can become self-reliant only if we have encouraged their independence, given them practice in making decisions that concern themselves and their health, and shown them that they can be relied upon.

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We have been given a special task, raising a diabetic child. This makes us special people. If we weren't up to it we wouldn't have been entrusted with it. Self-reliance is a critical part of raising any child, diabetic or not. Diabetes just makes it more difficult and more important we help our children develop this skill.

Next month I'll talk about Self-Control.

Russell Turner is the father of a 10 year old Type 1 diabetic daughter. After diagnosis he found all kinds of medical information about diabetes on the internet. What he couldn't find was information about how to prepare his child and family to live with this disease. He started a website for parents of newly diagnosed diabetic children <http://mychildhasdiabetes.com>

Raising Happy Diabetic Kids Part III Help Your Child Develop Self-Control

By Russell Turner

Raising Happy Diabetic Kids Part III Help Your Child Develop Self-Control by Russell Turner

This is the third and final article in a series I wrote about raising happy diabetic kids. While Juvenile Diabetes makes this job tougher the information in these articles applies to raising any child. Diabetic children aren't any different from other children. Their pancreas just doesn't work. However, the emotional toll that diabetes takes on a child, even when blood glucose levels are under fairly good control, must be taken into account whenever we consider what is best for them. We can be very helpful in raising children who are emotionally strong and better able to avoid and overcome these stresses brought on by diabetes by making sure they are raised with a strong foundation of these three basic life skills. Self-Confidence, Self-Reliance, and Self-Control.

It All Starts With Discipline:

In order for our children to develop self-control it is our responsibility to teach them discipline. Discipline is the part of raising our children that causes us the most sleeplessness. It's probably also the part that a lot of parents don't think they get quite right. The thoughts of the "experts" have changed so much that the "old fashioned" discipline we were taught and what has become the so-called "permissive" new tradition are so far apart several things generally happen. We ignore what we were taught, or we ignore the new conventional wisdom, or we become confused and don't carry out our responsibilities properly. I'm as guilty of this confusion from time to time as anybody else is. When you think about it discipline should have three goals.

It must pave the way for our children to acquire Self-Control or self-discipline.

It must be applied in such a way as to allow our children to also develop self-confidence and self-reliance.

Parents must be comfortable with implementing it and feel it works.

The old fashioned "thou shalt not" style discipline and the new permissive style lead to two completely

different outcomes in children. With the old fashioned style we end up with children who don't learn to make choices or decisions well for themselves. They find acceptance only if they "do as they are told" and it teaches them in turn to exert power and control over others. On the other hand with a permissive style of discipline our children have too many choices and never know where they really stand. This can lead to insecurity. (and low self-esteem) Our children get used to having their own way and they learn to negotiate and manipulate. We only step in when the behavior goes too far. It always goes too far, they're kids.

How To Develop Self-Control:

By raising our children within a framework of proper discipline we encourage self-control in them. We aren't going to be the boss forever. We are teaching our children to be responsible for themselves.

There are three main components to Self-Control. They are habit (hanging up their coat when they come in or doing homework before watching TV), seeing the greater good (doing without something right now in order to get something better later), and the ability to make moral judgments (doing things

just because it's the right thing to do). We need to teach our children to think ahead about the consequences of their actions. They should also be taught to accept responsibility for what they do. They need to be taught to make proper rules and to stick to them.

Our kids need to learn to accept disappointment. And also to trust their own judgment. When children learn to see what needs to be done, stick with it until it is done, and not do it just because someone told them to or because they know it will make us happy, then we can pat ourselves on the back.

This is our goal in teaching our children good diabetes control. It will help them realize not only that they have to do it but that they should do it. We as parents of diabetic children have been entrusted with a very difficult and special task. By holding up our end of the responsibility for helping our children develop self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-control, we are preparing them to grow into adults that number one can and will take proper care of their health. And will in turn raise the next generation of happy kids, our grandchildren.

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