



Stress Management for Diabetes Care in Integrated Settings

Integrated care settings offer a unique opportunity to help individuals with diabetes learn coping mechanisms to help them deal with stressors in their lives. Stress can make it more difficult to control diabetes as it may alter one's daily routine and can result in wear and tear on the body. Hormones from stress increase blood pressure, raise the heart rate, and can cause blood sugar to rise. The experience of stress might lead to unhealthy behaviors such as poor eating or smoking, which can lead to a worsening of diabetes-related health problems such as obesity.

Stressors can come from the environment (housing, financial, relationships) and from the day to day stress associated with managing diabetes (blood sugar testing, adherence to diet, exercising). A third of patients with Type 2 diabetes may go on to develop a more problematic condition known as diabetes distress from the emotional burden (worry, anger, frustration, burn-out) of caring for their condition. Learning to cope with these stressors early on could help to prevent diabetes distress as well as depression and anxiety conditions.

Integrated care settings offer the opportunity for the behavioral health provider (BHP) in a primary care setting to intervene with patients with diabetes to help them learn to manage their stress. By doing this, they can help to bolster the patient's motivation, self-confidence, self-management skills and ultimately, outcomes. It is important for the BHP to recognize that each person comes with a culture which includes things such as the importance of food, of how food is cooked, the meaning of food, and the meaning of meals for example.

Culturally competent appropriate care and treatment will include things such as:

- Be highly sensitive to racial, ethnic, religious norms and experiences
- Don't assume you know what is relevant for a patient or their family. Seek to meet the person where they are in life and not where you think they should be
- Be mindful of access to care and cultural barriers
- Adapt treatments collectively with people with whom you are partnering to ensure it is culturally acceptable, resonates with them, and makes sense to them.

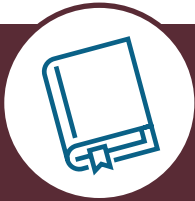
Integrated care settings provide an opportunity for a primary care provider (PCP) to do a warm hand-off to a BHP who then spends time with a patient reviewing stressors in their life that may be hampering their ability to take care of their diabetes. They can use of a variety of therapeutic techniques including:

- brief counseling such as problem solving therapy,
- utilizing motivational interviewing to increase engagement in diabetes care,
- teaching distress tolerance skills such as diaphragmatic breathing,
- educating about the importance of stress management and providing a hand-out patients can take home with them (see attached)
- providing additional resources for example [Education Materials and Resources \(Online Catalog\) | Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention \(DDTP\) \(ihs.gov\)](#)

Managing Stress When You Have Diabetes



Talk to someone (like the BHP in the clinic) about your stressors



Keep a journal about your experiences



Practice relaxation skills



Regular exercise can help reduce stress in addition to being an essential part of your daily diabetes care



Engage in traditional practices that may help reduce your stress by connecting you to your culture



Reach out to your friends or family members who help you cope in a positive way



Stick to a sleep routine, and make sure you are getting enough sleep



Avoid drinking excess caffeine such as soft drinks or coffee



Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts



Attend a diabetes education program at your clinic



Make sure you are eating healthy, regular meals