SWEET Success

California Diabetes and Pregnancy Program

Tip of the Month
~ # 7 ~

STRESS Buster
Figure out "Where it Hurts"

Stress levels can be proportional to how much significance we assign to an issue. Sometimes we are not even sure what that "issue" is. And how significant something becomes can be proportional to the amount of emotional energy we give it.

When a patient gets upset about a large amorphous pile of things ("I am so frustrated with my diabetes care"), her emotional investment can distort perception; then her actions and reactions can become magnified. Is she spending her precious energy creating self-doubt and working herself into emotional turmoil over something she does not even fully understand?

Here's a hint: Try to figure out with your patient "where it hurts." Once you and she realize the **specific** source of her stress, you can work together on the problem.

Let's say your patient feels she is doing "everything wrong" with her diabetes care. Can you help her identify exactly what is not working? Is it her breakfast high blood sugars? Her evening snack? Her lack of exercise after a meal? Her two-year old who interrupts her blood sugar testing? Figuring out exactly "where it hurts" (specifically) can be a big relief.

Lots of stress may be coming from one source, so doing something about that one stressor is better than fretting about everything else. Pinpointing what the issue is can bring the stress level down to an appropriate size for the issue at hand. And that "shrinking of the problem" also leaves more room for looking at what is working and including that as well. (Don't forget to **support** her feelings, especially before you ask her to shrink anything!)

We can all learn to conserve our emotional energy for the things that really do require it. Next time your patient's energy is being drained, offer to her that she can neutralize some of her emotional charge by being specific. Having a realistic idea of what the specific issue is means you and your patient can then decide how much energy and attention the situation truly merits.

(These ideas originated from articles in HeartMath.com and dLife.com)

And thank you for all you do for your Sweet Success moms.