

Young Person's Information

Negotiating independence



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Introduction

For some young people, living with a health condition like diabetes whilst trying to gain independence can be frustrating.

A first great step is to demonstrate that you are responsible and capable. This will help those around you feel comfortable about you making your own healthcare decisions.

All decisions you make in life will have positive and negative parts to weigh up, but it is particularly important that you are aware of the potential risks to your health when your decisions involve risky behaviours so you can make informed choices.

It may be challenging to negotiate with your parents/carers about gaining some independence in your life. This is because they care about you and want to see the best outcome for you. Parents and carers also want to protect you and can find it hard to stop making all the decisions for you because they want to help you stay as healthy as possible. You may find this hard to accept,

especially when things don't always go the way you want them to at this stage in your life.

During adolescence you may find that your opinion differs greatly from your parents/carers and this can result in a lot of conflict. You will find it easier to work with (and not against) your parents/carers about making decisions if you state how you feel in a clear, rational and open way. You may feel that your parents/carers are overprotective or worry about you too much, but remember that they do this because they love and care for you.

Part of being a teenager is getting a stronger sense of self-identity (who you are) and beginning to establish your independence. You may already be starting to negotiate your independence with your parents/carers as well as teachers, friends and extended family. It is important for you to gain independence in your healthcare too. This will be an advantage when you get older and are expected to make your own decisions and choices about taking care of your health. It is a good idea to start practicing these skills now, while your parents/carers and other trusted adults are still readily available to help you out if things get complicated.



Here are a few tips for negotiating your independence.

1. Make sure you choose the **right time** to talk with your parents/carers about independence. Make sure you all have enough time to give one another your full attention.
2. Always aim to be **open and honest** with your parents/carers as well as your doctor and medical team. If you wish to tell your doctor/nurse something without your parent/carer being present it is OK to ask for some time alone with your doctor. As a young person you are entitled to increasing amounts of confidential time with your doctor/nurse.
3. Be clear about **what you want and why you want it**. Write down the key points you want to make. This will help you to remember everything when you start to discuss things face to face.
4. **Set small goals** for you and your parents/carers to achieve together in relation to managing your diabetes. You can also set some individual goals and discuss these with your parents/carers.
5. Try to **stay calm** and don't get angry if the discussion isn't going your way. If you can't find a happy medium, then hit the 'pause' button instead of getting into an argument and reassess the issue with your parents/ carers at a later time. You could use the phrase "I need to discuss this with you later" and then calmly walk away. You could also try and find a neutral person (someone who isn't on either side) to help guide the conversation next time – this could be any member of your healthcare team or a family friend, for example.

6. **Discuss how you are feeling** with your parents/carers. How they think you feel and how you actually feel may be different. Also discuss how your parents are feeling as well, because what you think they are feeling or worried about and what is really on their mind might also be different.
7. Discuss how you are feeling with your doctor or nurse and come up with a plan that gives you more **involvement in your healthcare**, for example attending part of your appointment on your own.
8. **Demonstrate that you're capable** and ready to act responsibly. Showing initiative before you are asked to do something and doing what is asked of you before anyone feels they have to nag you is a good way to show your parents/carers that you are capable of listening to instructions, making good decisions and acting in your own best interests.
9. **Don't push too hard.** Small steps will eventually achieve big changes. You may push your parents/carers too far which could result in taking a few steps back. Be gentle in your approach and remember it can be hard for them to let you go. Try to tell your parents/carers what they are doing well and how they can continue to support you.

Gaining independence in all parts of life, including healthcare, may require a different approach for each individual. Some young people may already be living away from home or attending appointments on their own.

Other young people may enjoy not having to make big decisions in their lives and prefer to leave certain decisions to their parents/carers. Each person is different.



Problem Solving

Making decisions about your life, health and wellbeing can be confusing. Being able to problem solve can be a good way of helping you to make decisions in lots of areas of your life, not just about your health. Using the following strategy may help you:

Step 1.

Define the problem or decision to be made and the feelings involved.

What is the problem or decision to be made
(be specific)

How do I feel

Step 2.

Brainstorm solutions: Come up with as many solutions, choices or options as possible to solve the problem. It doesn't matter how silly or unlikely they may seem.

Step 3.

Explore the pros (good bits) and cons (not so good bits) of each solution or choice.

Think through the consequences of each solution, what would happen if you carried out a particular solution?

Solution
Pros

Cons

Step 4.

Agree on one or two of the best solutions or choices and create an action plan.

Ask yourself: At this time, which would be the best solution that you would be willing to try out? Does it make you feel safe and feel good?

Create an action plan on how you are going to carry out this solution or decision. Think about situations where you might use the agreed-upon plan.

Action steps

Where

Who

When

How

Step 5.

Carry it out!

Step 6.

Evaluate outcome and congratulate yourself on your efforts!

- How did you get on, was the plan successful?
- What did you learn?
- Does the plan need to be tweaked or a new plan made?
- If the plan is not working, return to step 2 to make a new plan or step 3 to tweak the existing plan
- Praise yourself for your efforts and success.

References:

Adapted from: The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne (2012). Adolescent Transition Education Package.

NHS Scotland: Psychosocial interventions for improving adherence, self-management & adjustment to physical health conditions. Children and young people.

