



THE DIABETES LEARNING CENTER AT ELMHURST MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

A PATIENT'S STORY

:: BY DIANE LIPPMAN, AS TOLD TO CHRISTINE DOUCET
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It was a hot July day in 2006. I was 67 years old, 272 pounds and had a cholesterol level of 235. I was diagnosed with diabetes. At that moment, I told myself either you're going to do this all the way or not at all. I decided to jump in with two feet and I've never looked back.

Fast forward to December 2008. I am 70 years old, 140 pounds and my cholesterol is now 72. Most importantly, my A1C test, which measures your blood sugar level over the past two to three months, showed that I am now in the normal range. This test really gauges how well you are managing your diabetes, and the fact that my level is now that of a non-diabetic is quite a victory.

I have more energy than I've ever had in my entire life. In 14 months I lost 130 pounds and have now maintained that weight for more than a year. It has been an amazing journey and it continues every day.

I had struggled with my weight my entire life, and like most overweight people I went on diet after diet with little results. I hate the word "diet." I don't want to eat cottage cheese and asparagus every day. So, when my doctor referred me to see a dietitian after my diabetes diagnosis, I was skeptical. Then I met the staff at the Elmhurst Memorial Hospital Diabetes Learning Center. They saved my life.

We didn't use the word diet, instead they taught me about meal planning. This was eye-opening, and to this day, it is the greatest tool they could have given me. I can eat what I want but with portion control. Instead of starving myself and then eating a bag of potato chips and half of a pie, I eat three meals and have healthy snacks ready to go ... it is a way of life for me now.

Along with meal planning was exercise — another foreign term to me. The dietitian in the Learning Center told me to dust off my exercise bike and aim for seven minutes a day the first week. So I took out the bike, but when I tried to get on, I couldn't. I thought to myself, "You cannot report back next week that you couldn't even get on the bike." So, I went and got a ladder and that's how I got on the bike. I started those first days with maybe a minute and a half. I didn't think this was much, but when I told the staff at the Learning Center they were so proud of me.

That's what kept me going. I could not disappoint them. I truly felt that they cared about me and I could not let them down. Each week as I stepped on the scale, their excitement grew and so did mine.

Fourteen months later I sat in my room surrounded by eighteen bags of clothes that were too big for me. I don't need a ladder to get on the bike anymore — I get on it nearly every day and ride with ease. I love to garden, travel, take long walks and mow the lawn. These are things I thought I'd never do again. The Learning Center staff didn't just give me my life back, they gave me a life that's better than ever before.

On my refrigerator is a photo of me at 272 pounds; every time I walk by it I say to myself, "Never again."

Successfully managing diabetes requires an individual to be knowledgeable and actively involved in their treatment plan.

That's why the staff at the Diabetes Learning Center works closely with the patients and their families to develop practical, real-life solutions to meal planning, exercise and medication management.

The Learning Center staff believes that a team approach achieves the best results. Nurses and dietitians work together with patients and their physicians to provide a complete and personalized plan of care.

The Center, which is certified by the American Diabetes Association, helps people control their diabetes rather than allow their diabetes to control them. The Center offers outpatient classes, individual counseling, insulin pump services, support groups and community education programs for people living with diabetes.

CALL 630.993.5108 FOR MORE INFORMATION.