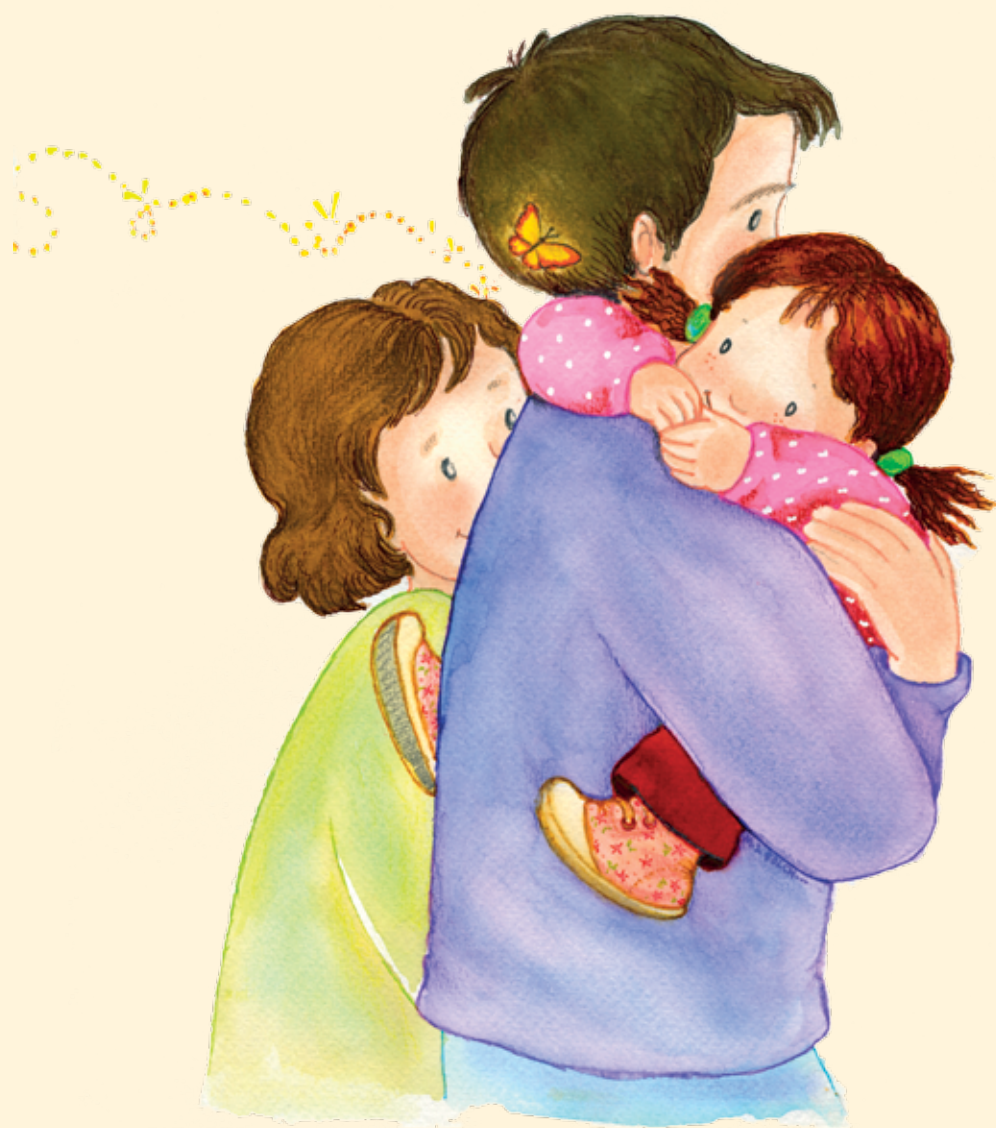


THE EMOTIONAL PROCESS OF CONFRONTING THE DIAGNOSIS

Our child has diabetes



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THE EMOTIONAL PROCESS OF CONFRONTING THE DIAGNOSIS



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Your child has diabetes.

You have just been told, and soon, you will feel as though the weight of the world rests on your shoulders.

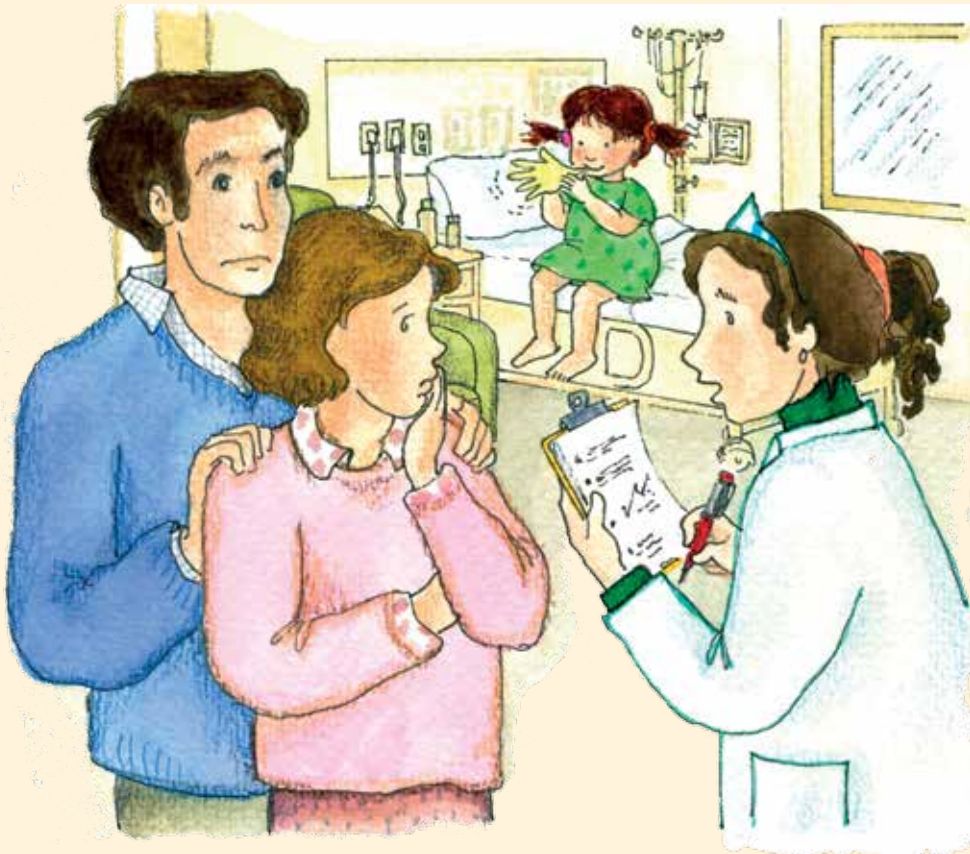
“This cannot be happening!”

This is probably one of the first feelings you will experience after learning the news that your child has diabetes.



In the midst of the flood of emotions, you will begin to notice that various people in the hospital are trying to tell you about many different aspects of diabetes. They will talk about the types of treatments and the new things you have to focus on to keep your child healthy. They will use many terms, frightening ones like “disease”, “chronic”, “injections”, and “forever”. Each word will likely increase your feelings of pain, confusion and of being overwhelmed.

Everything seems so foreign, strange and unreal, but these are absolutely normal feelings after receiving the unwelcome diagnosis.

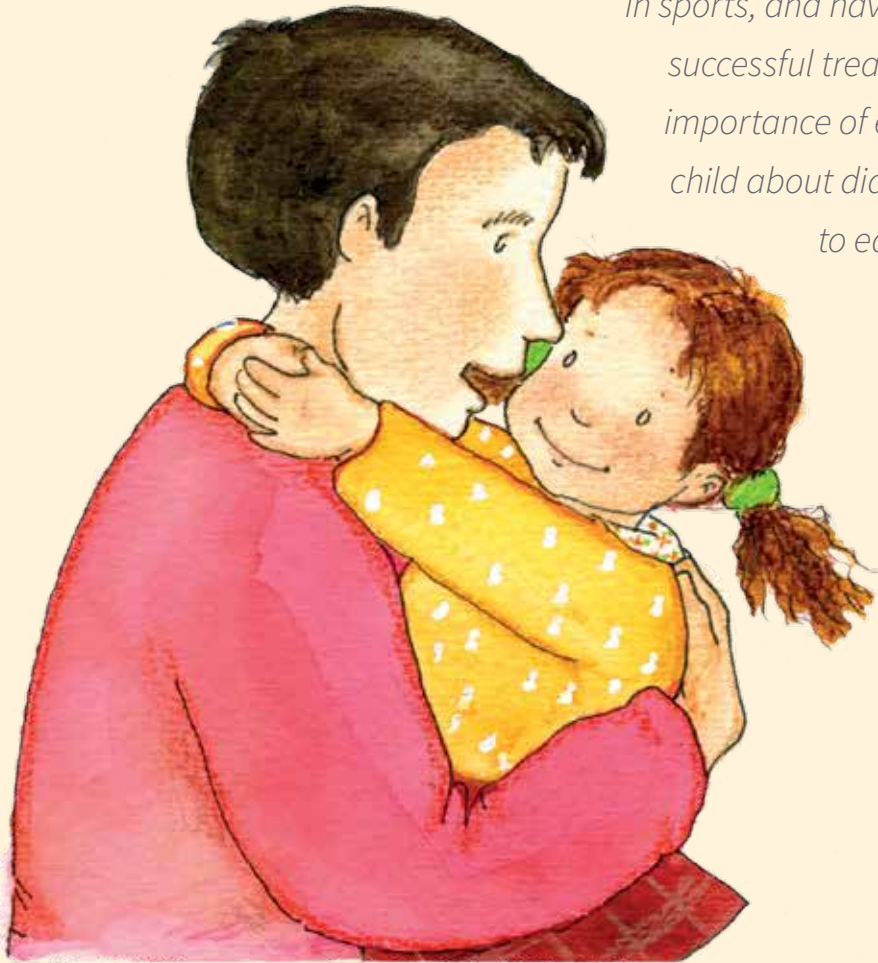


f you are holding this book, you need to know that you are not the only ones who have gone through this difficult time. You are part of a big family of parents throughout Chile, and all across the world, who just like you, have received this heartbreaking news. All have gone through the very painful process of wondering how the lives of their children have changed, now and in the future.



You must know, “nothing you have done or didn’t do”, caused your child to have diabetes. It is not something you could have avoided. No one, including you, is to blame for its unwelcome arrival. The main thing to know is that treatments exist which will allow your child to grow up just like any other child.

*B*reathe deeply and try to relax. There have been enormous changes in the treatment of diabetes in recent decades. These scientific advances allow your child to live a similar life to other children their age. You need to get rid of the myths you have heard about diabetes. People with diabetes can play games, go to birthday parties, eat pizza, have boyfriends and girlfriends, participate in sports, and have a great time. The keys to successful treatment are recognizing the importance of educating yourself and your child about diabetes and providing support to each other as you go through the learning process.





It is important understand that the way you choose to adjust to this new situation determines the relationship you and your child will have with diabetes. If you see it as a drama, it will likely be a drama. If you think of it as a difficult situation, you will probably have to get used handling it as a difficult situation. If you approach it with a positive attitude, it will likely be a positive experience.

*Since learning the news, you have been told of the many things that you need to consider **that you didn't worry about before the diagnosis.***

For example, family meals aren't as simple as they once were. You've also discovered that there are little machines that allow you to test the amount of sugar in your child's blood, and the test requires poking a finger.





When you go shopping, you no longer just look at the price, you have to also read the ingredients list for each food item. You are also beginning to realize the numerous things you need to do and purchase each month to take care of your child, such as, a set of supplies, including test strips, along with insulin and syringes. During these times, it is understandable if you feel overwhelmed at all the strange tasks you need to do, but, little by little, these will become routine and everyday activities.



*In the beginning, it's difficult to grasp so much new information. You may get the feeling that it is simply too much to learn and all that the new terminology and words that you read are. **Be patient.** Gradually, time and experience will help you overcome your doubts and concerns, and all of the different parts of diabetes treatment will begin to make sense. **Learning requires time, practice, repetition, and also errors.***

W

hile you are learning these new routines, *you will experience changes in your feelings and thoughts.* At the start, the news can have a powerful impact and be hard to believe. *It is natural to feel confused and experience a state of shock.* Often, you may have thoughts like “this can’t be happening to me”, as well as ask questions such as “why is this happening to my child rather than to me”.



It is also common to have lots of doubts and fears about what may, or may not, happen. You will ask questions about your child’s future, and whether or not they will experience complications from diabetes. It is likely that you will feel anguish when your child has a “low” or is “high”. You’ll pass through moments of doubt and worry about whether you did the right thing, or over-reacted or did a good job when handling a situation. This often occurs because, at the beginning, one feels fearful, or even paralyzed, when confronted with all the different circumstances that can occur. *Rest assured, step by step, you are going to become an expert in handling these very situations which now appear so difficult.*

*It is important that you start to recognize all the beliefs, fears, and myths that surround a diabetes diagnosis. Many times the fears come from superstitions and mistaken assumptions about life with diabetes. It is **crucial to clear up your doubts by consulting people who really know about diabetes and are competent in diabetes education.***

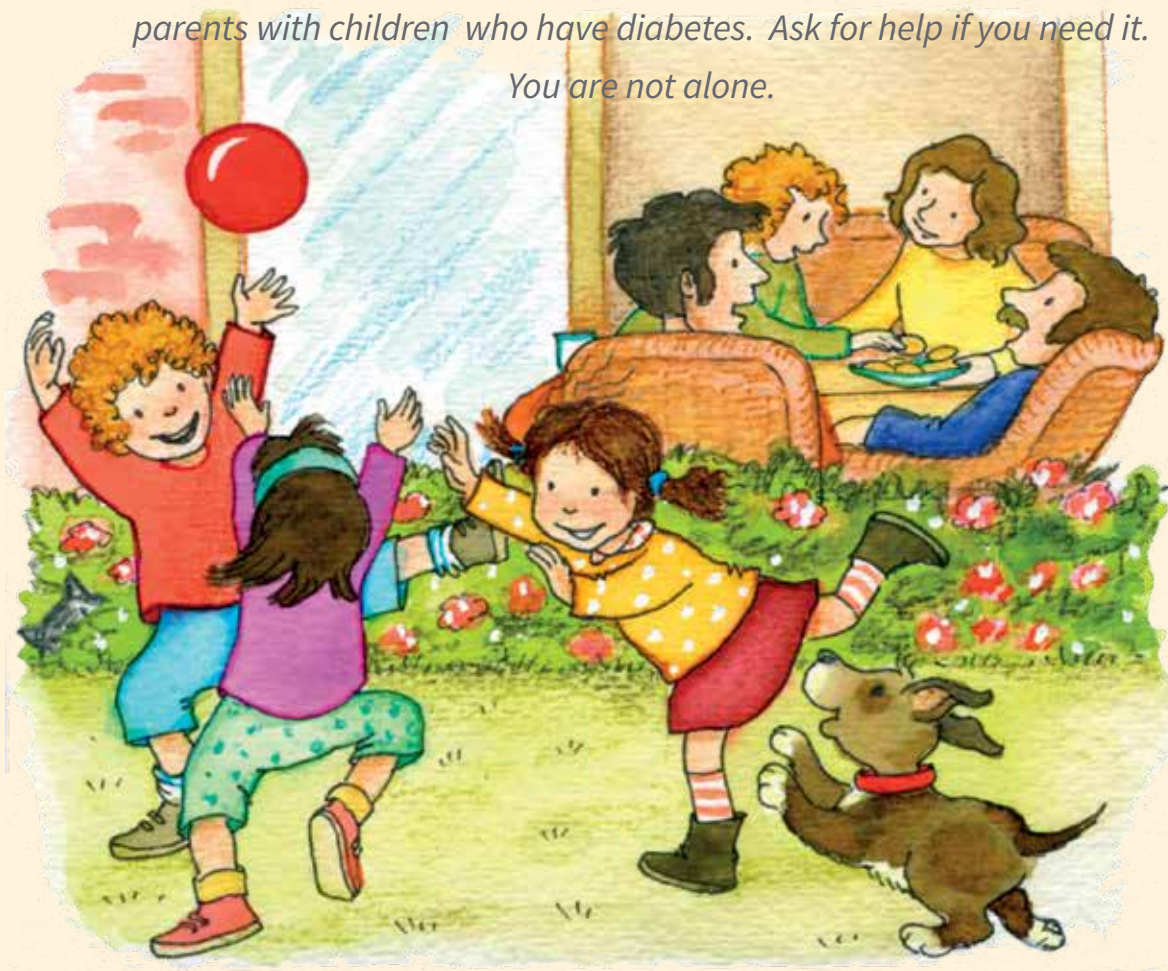
Sometimes, you will miss some sleep as you get up in the night to check that your child is doing fine. You may find that you are more irritable or sensitive than usual. Once in a while, you will feel the need to just cry. All of these emotions are understandable in the early days after the diagnosis.



*I*t is essential to give yourself time and space to process these emotions and not deny them. Experiencing sadness, bitterness, and disappointment is normal. These feelings may arise because the diagnosis sometimes makes it seem like our child is not a “healthy” person anymore. As time passes, you begin to understand and recognize that diabetes does not prevent enjoying a healthy life.

Take advantage of opportunities to gather and talk with people who really listen to you and who know what to say, particularly other parents with children who have diabetes. Ask for help if you need it.

You are not alone.



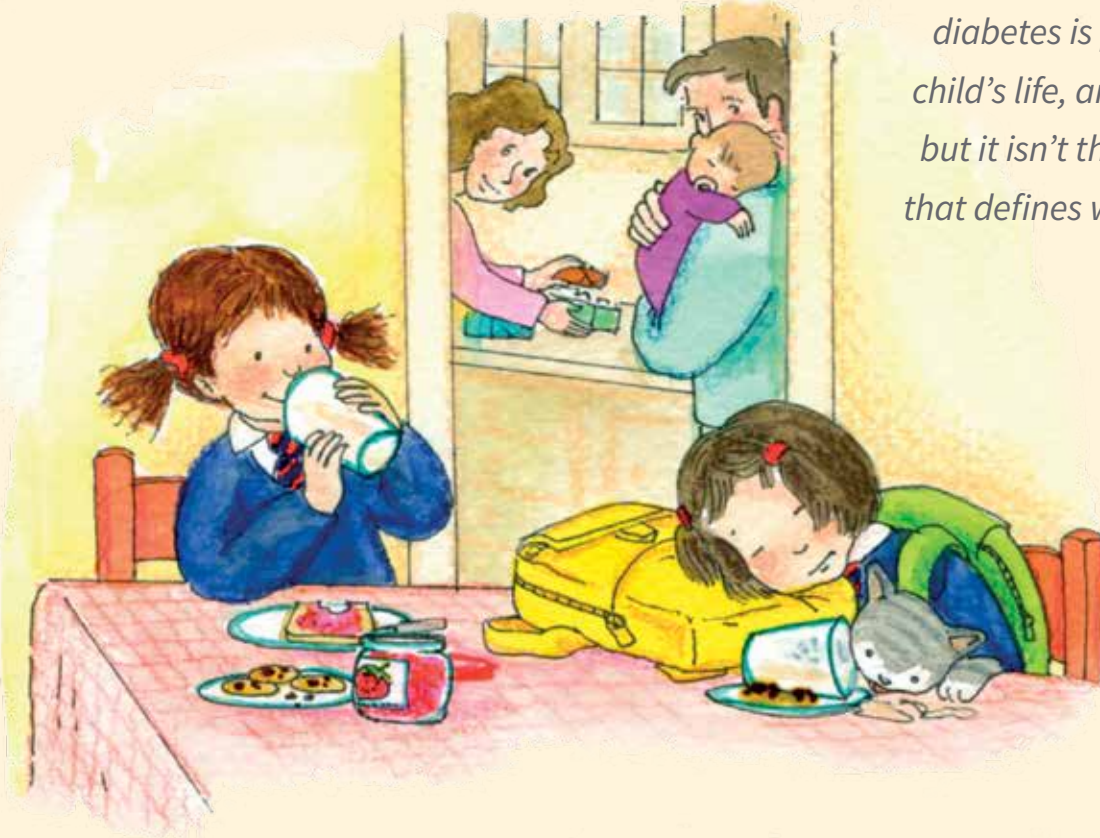
Soon, you will find out that the diagnosis requires a series of changes in your family life, including modifying roles and family habits. Some people preoccupation with diabetes becomes the center of their lives and they feel need to control every situation. Constant worry over your children's diabetes may make it difficult to go to the places where you have always gone before. Shortly after the diagnosis, concerns over how the parent or child should handle certain circumstances, **may lead many parents to be over-protective.**



Gradually you'll learn. Your concerns will start to focus on how to make the changes necessary to manage your child's diabetes. Life will return to normal even though the rules have changed.

*Usually some time during the first year, people learn to accept diabetes as a part of their day-to-day routines. The roles of family members become clear and each one will know how to help with treating the child's diabetes. The hope is that you will begin to realize **that***

diabetes is part of your child's life, and your lives, but it isn't the only thing that defines who they are.





*As we have mentioned before, you are not alone in this adjustment process. There are many, just like you, who need or have needed support in the learning process and the opportunity to share their experiences and feelings. **That is why it is important that you get to know and stay in contact with other parents that have confronted their child's diagnosis. By doing this, your child will learn that they are not the only ones who are going through this process.** You will meet and become friends with others who share the same daily routines that are needed to control diabetes.*

*I*t's possible that your child has brothers and sisters. Remember that they also need the affection of their parents. It is important to talk to them how the diagnosis has impacted them.

In the beginning, it is hard not to make the child with diabetes the center of attention. It is important not to lose sight that the other children have needs and slowly work towards returning to your normal family life.





With time and the proper support, you will realize that diabetes is a condition that imposes certain requirements on you and your child's lives, but it does not limit the development of your child's happiness.



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