

The Diabetes Manifesto: All the Resolution You Need

By Amy Tenderich

In case you're looking for a fresh approach to making diabetes-related New Year's Resolutions for 2011, look no further. A brand new book called "The Diabetes Manifesto" has all the direction you'll need to turn over a new leaf in your diabetes life, in scrupulous step-by-step detail.

The book is written by Lynn Crowe, a lifetime type 1 (diagnosed at age 12), who is a senior product manager at Sanofi-Aventis; and Julie Stachowia, a PhD in public health who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2004. In 2007, Julie was hired by About.com to write an MS guidebook, eventually called "The Multiple Sclerosis Manifesto." Now she's teamed with Lynn to re-create this "take-charge-of-your-life" methodology for people with diabetes.

The book opens with a chapter titled, "Proceed with Confidence," which promptly lays out the framework for developing your own personal mission statement. To do this, you sit down and try to define yourself, creating a sort of a personal "elevator pitch" on who you are and who you want to be — including what part diabetes plays in your life, of course. To solidify your mission statement, the authors suggest you write it down once a day for a whole week. They guide you through "eliminating self-limiting beliefs" and writing a 30-second speech that you can rattle off at will when others start asking questions.

"Self-efficacy is your best weapon against this disease," the authors write, apparently the mantra of this book.

But let me be clear: The Diabetes Manifesto offers far more concrete value than some 'self-helpy' take-off of The Secret for diabetes.

In a total of 10 chapters, the authors lay out pretty much everything you need to know — in a concise and very readable format — about:

- becoming a diabetes expert (what and how to learn)
- tackling complications
- getting the most out of working with your doctor
- understanding drug options and being as "adherent" as you can
- things you can do to improve your emotional, social, and physical health
- "re-forming relationships on your terms"
- recognising, accepting, and working with your own emotions
- engaging with the diabetes community, and
- becoming an advocate

Each chapter is peppered with pop-out boxes with headers like "Do Your Best," "Know Your Stuff," "Make It Better," and "The Real World" — the latter being my favourite since it lays some of the inalienable truths of life with diabetes on the table. One quote, for example, states:

"You can't control how people will react to your diabetes, but you can control how and what you tell them. Be thoughtful and goal-driven when talking about your diabetes."

Overall, I found the book packed full of great information and recommendations. My only criticism would be that if you set your sights on following all the advice in this book, you would have no other life. Seriously, there is a tonne of detailed ideas about keeping records and creating plans and writing up scripts here. The chapter on relationships, for example, suggests that you make a list of the important people in your life and then score them on a 1-10 scale of supportiveness. You're to do this several times, and then brainstorm ideas for ways to engage with these individuals for the best possible outcomes. The chapter on treatments provides detailed instructions on researching drug interactions, including interviewing a pharmacist and insisting on a second opinion in some cases. Lots to do, lots to do.

So here's how I'd use this book:

Modularly. Pick one area that you're committed to improving on now, and devote yourself to the ideas in that chapter. No matter which issue of life with diabetes you decide to tackle, The Diabetes Manifesto is sure to have some great suggestions and instructions for making things better.

There's some serious help to be had here for turning vague New Year's Resolutions into "actionable strategies," no doubt!

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