

How I Get My Daily Dose of Joy

By Barbara Mora, Paiute/Diné

I've had diabetes for almost 20 years. I've been prescribed pills, and now insulin, to help me. But there is one thing that I have never been prescribed, and I use it every day to be well with diabetes. That thing is joy.

When I first found out I had diabetes, I was devastated. Joy was not one of my daily experiences. I kept having a helpless thought, "Oh great, I'm just like my mother." She suffered from diabetes. But this thought of my mother actually helped me.

I remembered the incident that caused my mother's health to go downhill. It was a horrible tragedy, the untimely death of my older sister. My parents never got over it. They were consumed with sadness. They were rarely joyful. Soon after the tragedy, my mother was diagnosed with diabetes.

I honor my mother's journey and have learned much from it. Although I've had sad experiences in my life, I decided I would not let them define my life. I decided to choose to find reasons and ways to be joyful every day.

I think I received my insights about joy from a few sources: the Sweat Lodge, walking in nature, and visiting sacred sites. I pray every day and ask the Creator and my ancestors for help. Friends and family give me support and love. I am not doing this alone.

This is what I have learned to do to find joy every day:

- **When I wake up in the morning, I give thanks** that I am breathing and alive. Then I give thanks for the roof over my head, the bed under me,



and my husband, Bob, beside me. I think, "Oh, my gosh! This is mine!" Our home may seem humble to many, but to me it's luxurious.

- **First thing after I get out of bed, I think of my routine.** Having a daily routine helps me get the things I don't really want to do out of the way. Every morning, I test my blood sugar, have a small snack, then take my medications. After I do this, I have a clean slate to think more about what I *want* to do and less about what I *have* to do.
- **I always have a creative project going on.** I bead, make moccasins, and make small dolls. A creative project is always on my mind. Making something is one of the few situations in my life where I have total control and freedom. I get to make all the decisions. When I finish a project, I feel so satisfied.
- **Reading brings me joy.** I try to read books by authors who have different ideas than me. I want to know about as many ways of thinking as possible. Reading about other people's lives helps me see my own life in a broad way. I realize I am part of a big picture.

- **I do something physically active every day** and make it joyful. When I walk, I pick a route that I really want to take, like walking downtown and window shopping. Sometimes Bob and I walk in the desert looking for glass. We bring the glass home and make mosaics.
- **Cook with love.** When I cook, I try to put love into the food. Sometimes I sing while I'm cooking. I imagine the love in my heart and my hands going into the food. This makes me happy.
- **Give.** Native people have always been givers. It makes me feel good to give to other people. I try to find a need of family, friends, and community members and fill the need. By giving we become richer.

Discovering the importance of joy and ways to have it in my daily life did not happen quickly. I worked at it and prayed for it. I got help from the Creator, family, and friends. I observed people who had diabetes who were living well, with joy and laughter. I thought, "I want to be that person!"

Thank you to the Creator and all the people who are helping me on my journey. Thank you to all the people with diabetes who show me the way.

Barbara Mora is the author of *Using Our Wit and Wisdom to Live Well with Diabetes*. A free audio CD of her book can be ordered at www.diabetes.ihs.gov, click Online Catalog. Barbara can be reached at dine49@earthlink.net



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