

# Being a Better Man



When **Eldrid Martinez** (Tohono O’odham) found out he had diabetes, he never asked the doctor what using drugs and alcohol would do to his body. “I knew it was either take substances or take care of my diabetes,” he recalls. “I put diabetes aside.”

## Hard to Manage Diabetes

Substance abuse made managing diabetes almost impossible. First of all, the drugs and alcohol masked Eldrid’s feelings. “I was always in a depression,” he says.

The substances made it very difficult for him to control his blood sugar, or even have a desire to control it. “Once in awhile, I would check my blood sugar and, if it was high, I would take a pill.” Sometimes his blood sugar was so high the glucometer couldn’t read it. “Sometimes I would be real sleepy. But, I couldn’t tell if it was because of low blood sugar, or substances, or staying up all night.”

## Responsible for His Health

Now Eldrid no longer uses, and his blood sugar is much easier to manage. His fasting blood sugar is about 110. But having better blood sugar control was not the reason Eldrid quit. He wanted a better life. He wanted to stay out of jail. He wanted to set and achieve goals. But most of all, he wanted to be a better father and grandfather. “I never had a grandfather. I want to be there for my children and my future grandchildren, to live a long time.”

Eldrid knows being clean and sober and being responsible for his health is a long process. He feels the key to success lies in understanding his traditions, understanding who he is as a Native man living in an urban city.

## On the Health Track

“Growing up, I was spiritually lost. I didn’t know the traditional way. Now I’m more spiritual. It helps me find my inner self, to block out all the static of the outside world.”

He has set goals: to be better at his job as a cook, to make sure his future wife is happy, to make sure his children feel loved and cared for.

At age 43, Eldrid says he is becoming the man and father he wants to be. His future goal is to be an asset to his family. “I’d like to have my health, to be able to pick up my grandchildren and play with them. I’d like to be a wise grandfather.”

He thinks he is on the right track. “My children have told me that they appreciate me more,” says Eldrid. He adds that he has a lot more work to do, a lot more talking and being there for them.



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