

Behavioral Health Interventions for Pediatric Diabetes

Stress Resilience and Social Support

One common behavioral health goal focuses on promoting stress resilience. This includes identifying and processing the impact of stressors to improve awareness as well as:

- Psychoeducation regarding physiological impacts of stress, particularly impacts on blood glucose
- Promoting resilience in stress management
- Learning and integrating relaxation strategies (diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, imagery/guided imagery)
- Improving self-care practices

Pediatric patients recently diagnosed with diabetes or patients with established diabetes experience varying degrees of social stress that not only have an impact on their social functioning and well-being but may also impact glycemic control and management over time.

- Anger may be present at diagnosis or following the “honeymoon phase,” which can turn to grief that life will never be the same again and that specific ambitions will never be achievable.
- Anger may also present through diabetes burnout or fatigue with management.
- There may be stigma with youth not wanting friends to know that they have diabetes.
- They may be concerned that their friends will see them differently or that they will not be attractive to future partners.

Social stressors can contribute to non-cooperation, a form of denial. Behavioral health can offer a space to explore these factors and support the development of adaptive coping strategies and improve social supports.

Interventions utilizing Social Learning:

- Conflict resolution in friendships and in family relationships
- Social problem solving and improve social learning skills (e.g. resisting peer pressure)
- Improving and increasing assertive communication
- Increasing social supports

Peer supports also hold value in terms of increasing social supports and reducing feelings of isolation. Ongoing peer supports generally have a positive impact on self-care and glycemic control. There are many online forums that offer ongoing supports, as well as peer and family groups through UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh available by age on rotating schedule. Talk to your doctor to learn more.

