

Managing diabetes is not about perfection but about making small, sustainable changes


Liam was just 24 years old when he was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes.

In 2013, he was hospitalised with pneumonia due to a weakened immune system, leading to an initial misdiagnosis of Type 1 diabetes. After 48 hours of blood-sugar testing, doctors corrected the mistake and informed him that he had Type 2 diabetes.

Liam said: “Hearing the diagnosis was frightening, particularly as my mother had always feared I’d develop the condition due to my lifestyle. Although relieved to learn that I had Type 2 rather than Type 1 – as I considered Type 2 to be the more manageable of the two – I struggled with the reality of living with a chronic medical condition.”

Initially, Liam was advised to manage his condition through weight loss and dietary changes but found this challenging due to his struggles with anxiety and depression, which often led to emotional eating.

He said: “A lot of my depression came from body image when I was younger, and my coping mechanism was food; in my case, the diabetes could possibly, in part, be a result of these eating habits. It’s a perpetual cycle of the thing that comforts me leading to the thing that causes my anxiety and depression.”



Living with the condition has been an ongoing learning process

The reality of managing diabetes was worlds apart from what Liam perceived of the condition when growing up.

He said: “I always had the misconception that being diabetic just meant keeping a chocolate bar with you and having that if you didn’t feel well. As a child, I thought that would be great.”

Living with the condition has been an ongoing learning process, and he now understands that diabetes management is highly individual. However, the emotional burden of diabetes remains significant.

Liam said: “I do feel guilt and shame around my food choices, and it’s heightened by societal stigma and assumptions around my condition. My doctors’ appointments are often a source of anxiety, as discussions inevitably return to my weight.”

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Despite these challenges, Liam has recently found renewed motivation to take control of his health.

He said: “My new motivation is my son. He’s seven months old and I want to be there for him until I’m old and can enjoy his life and his family. I always say that I’m much better at caring for others than myself. But now, caring for myself is part of that deal.”

Liam hopes that technology will be able to help him prioritise his health and keep himself in check. After recently receiving the Abbott FreeStyle Libre 2 Plus sensor, he’s eager to explore how using a sensor that enables him to measure his glucose levels in real time, compares to traditional finger pricking. He believes continuous glucose monitoring systems (CGMs) like this should be more widely accessible and that healthcare professionals should discuss other options.

He said: “My advice to others living with Type 2 diabetes, especially those struggling with mental health, is to practice self-compassion. Managing diabetes is not about perfection but about making small, sustainable changes.”

He acknowledges that the emotional burden of Type 2 diabetes can be overwhelming at times, but emphasises that self-acceptance and patience are key to long-term well-being.

Liam said: “For those experiencing guilt or shame, you need to remember the importance of focusing on your well-being rather than external pressures and knowing that your health is your own individual journey.”

Liam continues to navigate life with diabetes, determined to prioritise his health—not just for himself but for his son’s future.



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