

# **Topic: Psychological Aspects of Diabetes.**

## **Faculty Dr Savita Date**

Dr Savita mentioned that she firmly believed, that by managing stress, diabetics could reverse diabetes & prediabetes.

She emphasized that diabetes was an insulin related disease, but pointed out that the National Inst of Health & NIH journal of diabetes studies, had indicated that Stress, Anxiety & Depression, could give rise to diabetes, since they directly impacted the hormone, immune & glycemic systems in the body.

Dr Savita said that, as compared to earlier times, where stress was isolated & mainly related to livelihood, in these modern times stress was everywhere. We had stress at work, with rush hour traffic & work deadlines. We had stress at home relating to family & friends, we had health issues & financial stresses. The list was endless. In fact many of us even had stressful personalities, we were perfectionists, we preferred to micromanage everything, & most of all we were hyper-stimulated adrenaline junkies. This often results in the body being overloaded with the stress hormone adrenalin, also known as the fight or flight hormone , causing early burnout, body breakdown, & psychosomatic ailments. .

Beyond the endocrinic, nervous & immune systems, stress in fact impacts all organs & systems in the body, emphasized Dr Savita. It increases blood circulation to the brain, increases heart rate & blood pressure, promotes shallow & rapid breathing, cuts off the digestive process, & increases the glucose utilisation in the body. Repeated episodes of stress, accordingly results in increased glucose remaining in the body, & consequently, increased HbA1c levels.

In a free flowing talk, Dr Savita, touched upon several methods which would help us to cope better with issues, & manage stress. In so doing she mentioned, that our autonomic system would respond by , lowering the heart rate, reducing respiration, relaxing the muscles, reducing metabolism, inducing relaxation & consequently reducing glycemic utilization & diabetes. Some of her suggestions included.

**Conflict Resolution & Problem Solving.** Dr Savita said that stress in the geopolitical hot spots was certainly high, with casualties, homelessness & starvation. So was stress in areas of natural calamities of earthquake & floods. In spite of these situations being outside our control, yet every attempt is made to manage these conflicts. Similarly we too have to manage our own personal problems of Health, Finance, etc by seeking expert advice, & to resolve social conflicts in our groups & communities, by cooperation, accomadation, collaboration & communication. Confronting & managing problem relating to diabetes, was not only good for diabetes, but also was a good way to reduce stress

**Sleep, Relaxation & Meditation.** In ancient times, sleep was all we needed to balance our physical & mental stresses after hunting & gathering, & when the sun went down, there was natural darkness to induce sleep. In modern times, our stresses are multipresent relating to work & livelihood, home & family, financial & health, societal etal. After sunset, electricity has banished darkness,& the global economy & work shifts require many of us to work at night. Our restive recuperative 8 hours sleep is consequently compromised. Relaxation & Meditation are our modern day substitutes to make up for reduced sleep. Relaxation could be achieved by listening to music, pursuing a hobby, having a holiday, getting a massage. Meditation is the ancient way of lowering the brain waves, also lowering

respiration, heart beat, blood pressure & metabolism. All of these are good for diabetics & Glycemic regulation.

**Family, Friends & Support Groups.** In a practical way having the support of family for planning your diet & ensuring medication is invaluable. Support groups usually comprise of individuals who have the same problems or issues . They meet periodically & share experiences. The group allows a non-judgemental sharing of feelings & emotions, & often provide practical solutions. Friends are persons with whom you share a special bond, with whom you can be honest about your feelings & about yourself & share confidences. With whom laughters & tears flow freely & cleanse the spirit. Dr Savita emphasized that family, friends & Support Groups for diabetics were vital for managing stress & controlling diabetes.

**Exercise & Activity.** We all know that 30-60 minutes of exercise or physical activity is excellent for managing diabetes, mainly because it utilizes glucose for the energy required during exercise. While exercising, the heart rate increases, the respiratory rate increases, the body utilizes more sugar, the metabolism increases. All this is good for managing sugar in diabetics. Dr Savita mentioned that while exercise was good for health, it was also excellent for managing stress. This was due to the relaxation response at the end of each exercise session. During this relaxation or cool down phase of exercise, the muscles relax, the heart rate drops, the breath returns to normal & the brain waves decrease. Consequently healing endorphins flood the body, giving a feeling of wellbeing.

**Locus of Control** In conclusion Dr Savita spoke about the things we couldn't control & the things that we could control . We cant control things like fate, destiny, luck , our future & so on, but we can control our behaviour, our habits, our routine, & so forth. She emphasized that it was important for a stress free life to concentrate on what you can control & not worry too much about the things we have no control over. As regards diabetes, she mentioned that there are several things we can control viz a viz diabetes. We can control our intake of daily medication, we can control our diet & avoid sugars, we can exercise daily, we can sleep regularly, & this is what we should concentrate on.

Article Link: <https://uaenews247.com/2024/10/23/rak-diabetes-challenge-2024-highlights-the-critical-link-between-diabetes-and-stress/>

Webinar Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFqK3GkJB0>